

PURSUIING GODLINESS

I. Review:

- A. Last Sunday I showed you, from the example of Israel taking the Promised Land, that for the Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus, it requires God doing His part and you and I doing our part. In other words, God is not going to drive the evil out of you and put godliness in its place without you willingly and genuinely doing your part.
- B. Today I want us to look at God's part in sanctifying us, that is, in taking us from hopeless, pathetic sinners to godly Christian's who have taken on and are continuing to take on the likeness of Jesus Christ.
- C. Prayer

II. God Gives Us Everything We Need For Sanctification

- A. **II Peter 1:2-4** . . . Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; [3] seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything** pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
 - 1. The God who created the universe and all that is in it, who made us in His own image, who flooded the earth, who parted the Red Sea once and the Jordan river three times, who fed the Israelites manna for forty years, who brought down the walls of Jericho, who defeated Goliath, who raised Jesus from the dead, and who broke the power of sin's hold over us so that we would no longer be slaves of sin, is the same God who provides us with **everything we need** to live a godly life – in spite of our fleshly desires and fears, in spite of the allurements of the world, and in spite of the devil's temptations.
 - 2. Through His glory and goodness, He makes known His longing to reconcile us to Himself and to parent (*disciple*) us to spiritual maturity – teaching us to love as He loves and to be holy like He is holy.
 - 3. And as if that were not enough, He makes it possible for all who pursue godliness to take on His nature, so that not only He himself dwells in us, but also His nature dwells in us.
- B. How does God do all this? According to **II Peter**, one of the ways God does this is through the many precious and magnificent promises He has

given to us. Therefore, we are going to look at a number of God's promises for working through, and bringing to completion His method of purifying our lives and conforming us to the likeness of Christ. As we review His promises, make a list of the ones that you think would be most beneficial to you. Then in the coming week, examine your list and determine how you can use God's promises to go further at growing in godliness.

III. God's Promises Regarding Assisting Us In His Sanctifying Process

A. **Hebrews 2:17-18**

1. God promises to deal with us in an understanding way, and He gained first hand, personal knowledge of our human weaknesses and what we are up against by coming to earth and living as one of us.
2. Therefore, He understands the strength of our enemy, the devil. He understands the power of our flesh and the power of fear to turn us toward sin. He knows about the accumulative and addicting power of sin. He understands the treachery of self-deception and the difficulty of breaking sinful habits. He understands the power of society to influence us toward selfishness and self-rule. And He understand how easily unjust suffering prompts sinful responses.
3. The point here in **Hebrews 2:17-18** is that God understands and therefore He is able to give us real help in our time of need.

B. **Hebrews 4:15-16**

1. But more than that, in **Hebrews 4:15-16**, we see that Jesus not only understands what we are going through, He sympathizes with us in our time of temptation.
2. You see, not only did Jesus face the same kind of allurements, enticements, and reasons to choose sin as we face. He also felt, in his own mind, conscience, emotions, feelings, and body the same great challenges we feel when tempted to give in to sin. And because He felt what we feel, He sympathizes with how hard it is for us to do what is right when faced with certain temptations.
3. Therefore, when we are struggling with a particular temptation, He invites us to boldly and confidently come to Him and draw on His gentle, patient help in order to move forward in our pursuit of victory.

C. **I Corinthians 10:13; II Thessalonians 3:3**

1. Going a step further in relation to temptation, God promises that He will not allow us to be tempted with any temptation that we are not yet strong enough to resist. In other words, God will not allow anyone

to place a temptation before us that is stronger than our current spiritual strength and spiritual maturity, and therefore our ability to resist. This means, God shields us from any allurements, circumstances, relationships, or hardships whose temptations are so strong that we are unable to resist their allure. In addition, God promises to provide a way to escape each temptation's seductive and captivating allure.

2. Therefore, we never have to face overpowering, irresistible temptations. And the temptations we do face, we can escape if we will take God's escape route.

D. **James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9; Luke 4:1-13; II Peter 2:9**

1. God promises that if we resist the devil, he will flee. Of course, it is not our power or the act of our resisting that makes the devil flee, it is God's empowerment of our resistance that makes the devil flee.
2. Now it is important to note that resisting the devil **once** does not free us from being tempted again (**Luke 4:13**). The truth is, any temptation that we are especially susceptible to comes from the outside and the inside – from the devil and from our inner desires or fears. This means such a temptation can return in moments.
3. However, if we use this method of dealing with temptation, it will free us for the moment which in turn gives us time to confirm our determination to do what we know is right. And if we persist in resisting the devil over an extended period of time on a particular temptation, such persistent resistance will, in time (*three to six months or so*), drastically reduce or end those temptations.
4. When resisting temptation, I believe the method used by Jesus in the wilderness is the method we all should use. When He was tempted, He resisted the temptation by quoting scripture appropriate to the temptation. I encourage you to do the same.

E. **I John 1:9, 2:1-2**

1. God promises to forgive us, if after sinning, we confess to Him what we have done. To confess our sin includes four things.
 - a. First, it requires truthfully (*fully*) acknowledging to God what we have done, that we knew it is wrong when we did it, and that we have no excuse for having done it.
 - b. Second, it requires making things right to whomever was harmed by the wrong we have done – first to God of course (by confession and repentance), and then to whomever else we hurt by the wrong we did.

- c. Third, it requires taking serious action in an effort to put an end to the possibility of repeating the sin committed.
 - d. Finally, it requires a humble acceptance of the consequences for having done what we knew was wrong.
2. There are several cautions related to this promise that I want to give you. **First**, beware of false guilt, it is the devil's tool and its only purpose is to keep you from getting back on track with God. **Second**, beware of thinking that God wants nothing to do with you after you have sinned. Such thinking only serves to keep you from true confession, returning to the active pursuit of godliness, and restoring your relationship with God. **Finally**, beware of confession without reformation. The purpose of confessing and receiving God's forgiveness is to regain right standing with God, to demonstrate your love for God, and to affirm your commitment to godliness. Use it this way.

F. Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; I Peter 1:6-9

1. God promises to sanctify us and conform us to the image of His son (**Ephesians 5:25-27; Titus 2:14; Romans 8:29**). To cleanse us from the sins of the flesh, double-mindedness, and an impure heart, and to build godly character in their place, God primarily uses undesirable circumstances, such as trials, testing, tribulation, disappointments, irritating people, injustice, and persecution.
 - a. We should note that though God's method is hard on us for the moment, or even for what seems like a life-time, if we cooperate with Him through the time of training, it will produce spiritual results that are worth far more than a mountain of purest gold. This is why it is vital for us to run **from** wanting relief and run **toward** wanting spiritual profit when faced with hard times.
 - b. Take courage and encouragement from those who value this method of training, for after passing through a training session and looking back, they never regret what they had to go through to obtain the spiritual profit gained.
2. And so I urge you, put your faith in God's decision that this is the best method for producing godly character, a pure heart, a good conscience, stronger faith, inner peace, true contentment, enduring perseverance, godly behavior, and greater intimacy with the Father. At the worst, your suffering will be limited to this life. And at the best, you will love and revere God all the more for His having changed you – even though He used this method.

G. Matthew 7:7-8; James 4:3; I John 5:14-15

1. God promises we can come to Him in prayer with the confidence that He will hear and answer. So we should pray earnestly and often about the many aspects of spiritual growth until we see God's answer.
2. This promise does not mean God will spoil us by giving us whatever we ask – such as asking God to do our part in the sanctifying process. But it does mean we can pour out our heart in prayer about those things we deem vital to our spiritual development, and He will answer accordingly.
3. Therefore, pray wisely, sincerely, and often. Note **Psalm 119**.

H. John 14:26; I John 2:27

1. God, through the working of His Holy Spirit, promises to teach us what we need to know about how to live godly lives. The Holy Spirit teaches us through things like circumstances, family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church members, ministers, the Bible, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, our ability to reason and think, our conscience, good books, and of course, hard times.
2. Bear in mind, however, that He is able to teach us the most when we are hungry to learn and eager to apply what we are taught. So look to God, the source of truth, to teach you what you need to know.

I. James 1:5-8

1. God promises to give us heavenly wisdom – if we ask for it. And though we can ask for God's wisdom in relation to any need to which heavenly wisdom would apply, the context of God's promise speaks of seeking wisdom for dealing with the trials, tribulations, testings, and challenges of life – just the things we are talking about today.
2. However, there is one restriction. God requires us to ask in faith, that is, we are to ask fully expecting that the wisdom given is applicable to our situation and worthy of use.
3. You see, praying for wisdom is not asking God for more options from which to choose according to what you deem best. Rather, it is trusting that the wisdom given will enable us to see and do what is best. So ask God for wisdom, often, and in extraordinary amounts. You will never regret it.
4. One final thought – If we ask God for wisdom and then doubt its sensibleness or usefulness, we are doubting not only the wisdom given, but the giver of wisdom, as well.

J. John 14:27; Philippians 4:6-7

1. God promises that He will give us a calm assurance and deep inner peace in the face of turmoil and difficult times. All we have to do is tell Him what the problem is, tell Him what we would like Him to do, and then leave the rest to Him. He may or may not handle the matter the way we request, but He will take care of it. And as we give Him full rein to do what is best for all involved, He pours peace into our heart and mind.
2. So, don't waste precious time on anxiety and fear. Go to God in prayer. Tell Him what the problem is, and then leave it with Him. Trusting God to care for us as our loving Father frees us from inner turmoil, even if everyone or everything around us is in turmoil.

K. Romans 8:1

1. God promises that when we are in Christ there is no more condemnation. You see, God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, but to save all who repent of sin and put their trust in Him (**John 3:17**). God takes no pleasure in sending anyone to hell (**Ezekiel 33:11**). And God does not want anyone to die in their sin (**II Peter 3:9**). Therefore, when we are in Christ, there is no more condemnation.
2. Now it is important to understand that "no condemnation" does not give us a free pass to sin, or for that matter, to no longer fear the effects of sin on our standing with God. In fact, those who think their sin no longer matters because of this promise do not yet know God or the ways of God.
3. This promise is a wonderful promise, and those who are truly born again feel the assurance of this promise deep within when they sin. But they also feel deeply saddened – to the point of tears and a broken heart – when they sin, and they devote themselves that much more to making forward progress in becoming holy like God is holy.
4. So I urge you to live within the reality of this promise, not the words or theology of this promise, for only then will this promise produce a deep inner assurance that there is no condemnation for you.

L. Matthew 6:33

1. When our primary concern is the building of God's kingdom and the advancement of His will, He promises to make sure all our physical needs are cared for. Living in this promise requires taking our focus off ourselves and what we need, and putting our focus on God and His will so that we are free to accomplish His purposes, first in

ourselves, and then in our home, church, community, workplace, and world.

2. And the beauty of this promise is that it makes it realistic to set our primary focus on God and His will, because God's provision and protection are always greater than what it costs us to live according to God's will and word.

M. **Philippians 1:6**

1. God promises that He will bring to completion His sanctifying work in us.
2. Before repenting of sin and putting faith in God, we spent too many years selfishly gratifying ourselves in an effort to find happiness and fulfillment in the wrong places and in wrong ways. Some of us feasted on things like alcohol, drugs, sex, food, physical fitness, laziness, entertainment, acceptance, power, fame, possessions, and money. Some of us feasted on fear, self-pity, discouragement, depression, bitterness, hatred, and even revenge.
3. Whatever we have done, and however bad we have been, we have not been bad enough to keep God from making us new creatures in Christ Jesus. No matter how sinful we've been, God's power to change us is greater than our sinfulness. He will perform His sanctifying work in us until every sinful thought, habit, word, and deed is gone and righteousness, love, and purity of heart are put in their place.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. The promises of God are sure, dependable, eternal. He has given them to us, to free us from the power and practice of sin, and to make us progressively more and more like Christ. Be assured of this, no one who seriously seeks to grow in godliness will ever lack the power and assistance of God to do so.
- B. However, it is up to you to make proper and full use of God's promises. If you do, you will grow to Christian maturity and Christ-likeness. You will bring honor to God. You will be a blessing to others. But even more, you will come to know God, and walk with God in ways that you can only imagine today.
- C. So I urge you, make full and proper use of all God's promises to grow in the grace, the knowledge, and the life of Jesus Christ.