

1 Peter 3:8-12

1Pe 3:8 (NKJV) **Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."**

So far in this passage we have looked at what it means to “**be of one mind**” and of “**having compassion for one another**”. We have seen that what Peter is doing is summarizing the various attributes that identify and characterize both a church and a believer who are living out a mature Christian life. We have called this a “spiritual checklist” for anyone who “**would love life and see good days**”. No matter who we are or where we see ourselves in our Christian life, it is critical that periodically we do a very honest personal self-assessment of where we are in our Christian walk. Hopefully, everyone clearly understands how easy it is to “**drift away**” from those things that are important and vital for the Christian life. For instance, [Hebrews 2:1-3](#) says,

Heb 2:1 (NKJV) **Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,**

It is a very serious matter to treat the things of God lightly, and to spurn and casually disdain His Word and His commands. Listen to how [1 Corinthians 3:13](#) says this,

1Co 3:13 (NKJV) **each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

[2 Corinthians 2:9](#) and [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) emphasize this issue even more.

2Co 2:9 (NKJV) **For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.**

2Co 13:5 (NKJV) **Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.**

The Greek word for “**examine**” is “*peirazo*” and in v5 it is in the present tense, imperative mood, active voice – which is the strongest parsing of a verb in the Greek language for a command. It is something that every believer is commanded to constantly and habitually be doing in their life – that of making sure that they recognize where they are spiritually. It is just a kind of spiritual fool’s gold to think that we are somewhere in our Christian walk when in reality we are not even close to where God would want us to be. “**Examine**” is a word that refers specifically to testing the quality or character of something.¹ I.e., I am commanded by God that I have to personally and continually test the quality of my Christian life,

¹ Harris, peirazo, #3847, ep.

to test the character of my Christian life. If an unbeliever, our children, our mate, our friends, or those in our workplace were to give a candid and honest assessment of our Christian life, I wonder what it would be on a scale of 1-10. The AMP and ISV seem to best translate this verse.

2Co 13:5 (AMP) **Examine *and* test *and* evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith *and* showing the proper fruits of it. Test *and* prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize *and* know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial *and* rejected?**

2Co 13:5 (ISV) **Keep examining yourselves to see whether you are continuing in the faith. Test yourselves! You know, don't you, that Jesus Christ lives in you? Could it be that you're failing the test?**

So what Peter is doing in this checklist that he has provided is giving the believer various attributes that should mark their life, attributes that identify the quality and character of their profession. I have said this often, but there are plenty of Christians who have all of the right information, correct knowledge, and biblical insight on what it means to live out the Christian life, but they never get it translated into their life - never. Week after week, month after month, and year after year they just keep ignoring what God is constantly trying to change in their life. Stated more emphatically, if a believer knows that God is dealing with them in a particular area of their life, but they casually refuse to work on that area and spiritually snub God's work in their life, at that point they become fairly useless to God. At that point in their life, they may be more than satisfied with where they are in their Christian life because it fits their lifestyle and suits their idea of what the Christian life actually is. However, the problem with that perspective is simple – it does not fit with what God says the Christian life is.

It is important to recognize that God is not going to just casually say to someone “*Oh, that's okay son. It's really not that important that you respond to My work in your life. It's not really a problem that you are constantly ignoring what I am trying to change in your life. We can just work on something else if that suits you better.*” Now, obviously that sounds ridiculous, but unfortunately it seems to characterize how many believers actually approach all of this. Listen carefully. Personal spiritual growth does not happen in a spiritual vacuum. Everything in the Christian life has to become very intentional, very purposeful, very deliberate, very calculated, and very premeditated. Believers will never grow without this kind of intentionality and driving purpose in their life. If God has identified areas of a believer's life that they know need His work in their life, and they just casually ignore it and nonchalantly disregard and pay no attention to it, chances are that they will be quickly sitting on God's shelf because they simply are not useful to Him. The idea here is that the believer is commanded to “**keep examining**” so that they will keep “**continuing in the faith**”. Listen to how Jesus said this to His disciples in [John 15:2](#),

Jn 15:2 (NKJV) **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

If you as a believer become satisfied with spiritual mediocrity, then do not blame God when life becomes sour for you. As a pastor, I have come to clearly recognize that believers do not grow spiritually by just coming to church and listening to messages on spiritual growth. That would be great – right? Well, it just does not work that way. There is no such thing as a kind of spiritual osmosis. Spiritual growth is very personal and very intentional. In my mind, at periodic times in their walk every believer should

write out some of what they believe Scripture defines as a meaningful Christian walk. They have to give this thing called “the Christian life” some kind of definition, some kind of explanation, some kind of spiritual focus and exactness that will serve as the measuring rod for their Christian life. I.e., the believer needs to personally describe and clearly define what the Word of God delineates as the kind of life that pleases God so that they can measure if they are making any progress in their spiritual life. Please understand that the Holy Spirit is the One who actually provides spiritual growth in the Christian life, but at the same time it is important to recognize the criticality of placing ourselves in a position to grow. So, if a believer sincerely wants to grow in their spiritual walk with God, then they at least need to identify what those areas of their spiritual growth should actually be. Until this is personalized in some way, then in all likelihood, the believer will never make any progress. They will come to church, say “*Hey, that was good and I enjoyed that*”, and then walk away with God’s truth having absolutely no lasting impact on their life. In my mind, this is the norm for most Christians – listen, forget, and ignore. With the Emergent Church mentality encompassing so much of the Christian landscape today, churches have become filled with people who think of church as little more than a place where they can be entertained. The result? Churches are filled with “spectators” who have no intention whatsoever of ever changing their life as long as they can be entertained on Sunday morning.

One of the lessons that every believer needs to heed is that as a Christian that they are compelled by God to obey the Word of God. Jesus said the following in [John 10:27](#),

Jn 10:27 (NKJV) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Every believer who is going to lead a meaningful and powerful Christian life must make the decision that they are going to fully submit their life to the Word of God and to the authority of Christ in their life. All the time people will talk about “*hearing that still, small voice*”. Honestly, I have no clue what a statement like that even means. It is so subjective that it makes the Word of God subservient to what they are “hearing” – whatever that is. Listen. God is not whispering nice things in our ears. God has already spoken to us, and what He said was very clear, very understandable, and very unmistakable. There is nothing nebulous and vague and unclear about what God demands of a believer’s life. Where in the world would anyone ever get that idea? When the Scriptures speak about life, about behavior, about lifestyles, about priorities – it literally thunders with authority to our life.² There is no still, small voice involved. That perception is for dreamers and people who are not serious about their Christian life. As we have heard so often, if you want to hear God speak to you personally, then read the Bible out loud. Stop waiting for some kind of esoteric, mystical, cryptic experience that has no value whatsoever.

Mark this down. What God is interested in for the believer’s life is that their life become conformed to the Scriptures. Loving and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ is what should mark every believer. It should be those two characteristics that define their life, that distinguish their life from the world. This love for God and this love for His Word is something that has to be guarded, and something that has to be nurtured and developed in the Christian life. In order to do that, every believer has to find meaningful ways to guard their life against all of the distractions that diminish their love for Christ and deplete them of their personal time in His Word. It only takes a small effort to place everything else ahead of God, His Word,

² MacArthur, 47-48.

and His church. Mediocre, indifferent, and unresponsive believers have found ways in their Christian life to completely rationalize away anything that resembles spiritual commitment to Christ. From schedules to activities to exhaustion to priorities – anything, virtually any reason, excuse, or rationalization can be found to replace and ignore having a vital living commitment to Christ that will place Him first in everything.

Listen very carefully. Whatever area of your life that God identifies that needs to be conformed to His Word, in that area of your life, God will demand change and He will demand obedience. I am always somewhat bewildered at how little most believers refuse to stop very harmful habits or patterns of behavior in their life. Let us just assume that someone struggles with anger or with impatience or with pride. It could be anything. They know that they struggle in that area. They hear the Word taught, the Holy Spirit clearly speaks to them and identifies that area of change in which He wants to work, and yet nothing, absolutely nothing ever happens in that area of their life. I am not sure what to actually call that other than spiritual indifference, or maybe even a subtle form of spiritual rebellion. When the Scriptures clearly identify something in a believer's life that God wants to change in them, at that point God is not going to do it for them. That individual has to make a spiritual decision that they are going to change and fully yield that area of their life to Christ. That is the way the Christian life works. Some believers seem to think that they just come to church, hear a message, and that God somehow supernaturally puts that area of their life on autopilot. The Christian life only becomes meaningful, functional, and practical when we as individual believers purpose to follow Christ with our whole heart and our entire being – and not before. This idea that we can just be casual with God and His Word will completely undermine everything of spiritual importance and value in the Christian life – everything. I have never met another Christian that God was using who took their personal spiritual growth lightly – never.

Now, someone is thinking to themselves at this point, “*I thought that we were studying 1 Peter 3:8-12*”. We are, but it does not do us any good to study these attributes of a meaningful and purposeful walk with God if we are not willing to become intentional about incorporating these things from God's Word into our life. We just completed 19 messages on [1 Peter 3:1-7](#) on the husband / wife relationship. There was enough content in those 19 messages for every marriage to benefit from them – but only if the principles were intentionally incorporated into the marriage. Once again, spiritual growth and maturity does not happen in a vacuum. We learn, we trust, we incorporate. We must recognize that God has given to us everything that we need to grow spiritually. Stated another way, God has removed all of our excuses and rationalizations as to why we do not grow or make progress. Listen to exactly how He does that in [2 Peter 1:3-8](#) which says,

2Pe 1:3 (NKJV) as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. ⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The phrase in v5 “**giving all diligence**” is what we are addressing here. The word “**giving**” is “*pareisphero*” and it literally means to bring something into or alongside something else, to contribute to, to add to.³ It is an aorist imperative participle. The NASB translates it as “**applying all diligence**” which seems to capture the idea of being intentional in this effort. The word “**diligence**” is “*spoude*” and it means to do something with speed. In fact, we get our English word “speed” from this Greek word. It means to be eager, to be earnest, and to do something with haste.⁴ The actual verb form of the word is “*spoudazo*” and it means to exert oneself in doing something.⁵ Zodhiates defines the word as “earnest effort”.⁶

Honestly, from both a biblical and a pastoral perspective, it is confusing to listen to all of the excuses that Christians entertain to justify why they are not growing in a certain area of their life, and of why and how they are excusing themselves from meaningful change. When v3 is read with openness and sincerity, what it clearly says is that God’s “**divine power**” has provided the believer with everything that they need for living a godly life, but it comes “**through the knowledge of Him**”, through the knowledge that is given the believer in the Word of God. Without sounding overly critical, it is my personal contention and belief that the reason that most people who go to church regularly, but never grow spiritually, is because they are not in the Word of God. They get the Word of God at church, but rarely anytime else in their life. They have all of the excuses as to why they consistently neglect God’s Word – work, priorities, the kids, interruptions, schedules, being tired, housework, yardwork, projects, time constraints, etc., etc., etc. I always wonder what God really thinks about all of those excuses and how much weight they really carry with Him. Every believer should be willing to tell God something like this – “*Lord, I will put you and your Word and obedience to your Word as the ultimate priority of my life no matter what interruptions and distractions may come into my life and no matter what other priorities and goals I may have.*”

Now, in our message next week, we will look at the [1 Peter 3:8-12](#) text where Peter provides a trilogy of additional attributes that serve to mark the kind of lifestyle that God desires for our life. He says that we are to “**love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous**”, and then he adds “**not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing**”. When we examine those attributes, we have to use them with the other previously studied attributes as a measuring rod as to where we really are in our Christian life. These terms all sound nice and pleasant – “**love, be tenderhearted, courteous**”, but they are as demanding on the Christian life as they can be. These are what I want to call a “litmus test” for where we really are spiritually. For instance, if we do not love our brothers, it simply means we do not love God. As we close, just listen to these three verses in [John 13:35](#), [John 15:12](#), and [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#),

Jn 13:35 (NKJV) **By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

Jn 15:12 (NKJV) **This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

³ Zodhiates, 1117.

⁴ Strong's, 1376.

⁵ Strong's, 1376.

⁶ Zodhiates, 1307.

1Th 4:9 (NKJV) But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

We will find that these are the litmus tests of the authenticity of our faith in Christ, so their importance in our life cannot be minimized and overlooked.

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