

Prayer

Almighty God, this day is a day of light and not darkness. May we live in the light of God ourselves, may we take the light of the World to wherever there is darkness, and may we cherish this light all our days. Thanks be to You, Almighty God, for Your victory over darkness and death, and the light of Resurrection! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Prayers about Television

We will spend this coming week praying about different aspects of the use of television media in the home. Whilst we all use the television to bring us a vast array of information and entertainment, there are many serious concerns about the way the medium has developed and how it governs our lives. Please pray for the Lord to lead us into all truth as we pray about this.

Meditation

Our souls are thirsty when they miss out on the water of life;
 Our minds become clogged up when not inspired by the Spirit of God;
 Our lives are pointless without being given direction by Almighty God;
 Our emotions overcome us unless we allow Jesus to stay close to us;
 Our hearts do not know what to do unless driven by the eternal will of God;
 Our bodies are temples to ourselves unless we are connected to the Body of Christ;
 Our eyes wander wherever they will without being focussed by the life of Christ;
 Our feet walk the paths of this world unless they are guided by God's truth;
 Our time is spent in aimless selfishness without the love of Jesus on the Cross.

And we carry on, day by day, and the world doesn't stop; yet;
 But the more we yield to the love of the Father and the Son,
 The more we find our purpose in life and in eternity.

Bible Study - 2 Peter 1:5-11

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith the quality of goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities and grow in them, they will keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten what it means to be cleansed from past sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, my friends, be all the more eager to be well-founded in your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Bible Study

Having greeted the church generally, Peter launched immediately into one of the most powerful statements about Christian maturity in the Bible. It is not a passage of Scripture which receives the attention it is due, but the elements of it are straightforward. Peter outlines a path of spiritual growth which at first appears random, but as soon as it is unravelled, it becomes crystal clear.

The path of spiritual growth is a list of qualities which starts with faith (1:5), and ends with love (1:7). The starting point is 'faith'; our response to the grace of God by which we are made acceptable to the Father through Jesus Christ. Much Christian preaching emphasises faith and its vital role in our salvation, but faith is not an 'end' in itself, it is the starting point for our spiritual journey. The early disciples knew well that their faith in Jesus had to be tested within

life before they could become mature leaders of the people of God. The end point of this spiritual path is the quality of 'agape' love, the subject of Jesus' command to His disciples before His death; 'love one another ... as I have loved you' (John 13:34). The word 'agape' was and is unique because it mirrors the love of God, who was prepared to love despite being sinned against; it is a mature love of the will and the heart, rather than of the emotions; and it is the goal of Christian holiness to be 'perfected in love' (1 John 4:12; Heb 12:2).

So how do we get from faith to love? Our text tells us that we must build from one quality to another, following this list: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, love. This is not a 'representative' list, such as the lists of Paul (for example, the list of the gifts of the Spirit; Rom 12:7-13). Peter placed these qualities in order, like a step-ladder; for we have to go from one to the other, and it is hard, if not impossible, to jump from one to the other and miss some out. The problem is that many people today, for social or prejudicial reasons, try to avoid some of these qualities, and so fail to arrive at the goal of love, God's command to us in Jesus Christ!

A brief look at the qualities between faith and love shows this. 'Goodness' literally means 'moral excellence', and is what Peter said must be our first goal after expressing faith; we need to know what sin is, and do all in our power to stand against it. Next comes 'knowledge'; a vital ingredient to Christian growth, for without knowing your faith from the Bible and from Christian history (stories of great people of faith, for example) you will soon be lost or led astray. Built upon knowledge must be 'self-control'; Peter knew that knowledge of itself could be destructive, and self control guided by the Holy Spirit was and is essential for the development of 'godly knowledge'. On this must be built perseverance; and we surely recognise that perseverance is almost impossible without the previous qualities, for what other grounds does anyone have to persist in faith? Added to perseverance is 'godliness' which literally means 'religious living'; yet again, we all know that those who claim a religious or godly life, or who are ordained, for example, will appear as a fraud to the world unless they exhibit the qualities that have gone before. Lastly, before the final 'agape' love, Peter includes the quality of 'mutual affection' otherwise called 'friendliness'; this means an open and generous attitude towards all people.

It is essential for us to follow the logic of this great list which is one of Scripture's great guides to Christian maturity, showing the steps we need to take to build the life of faith. There is more in this text, but this is a vital message for today and worth our very careful attention.

Space for notes

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. The study has focussed on verses 5 to 7. Read through the other verses of this text and discuss whether they support what the study says.
2. Discuss whether it is possible for us to grow in faith by jumping the ladder at any point.
3. Why is it that people do not want to face some of the qualities that are mentioned by Peter as essential to Christian maturity?

Discipleship

Write down the list given to us by Peter, and think about each step on this ladder of Christian maturity. How do you measure up to each step and at what point do you feel that you are either inadequate or in need of help? I suggest that each of us, including myself, will feel disheartened at some point as we look at this ladder. Most importantly, what will we do with this? I suggest that we pray about the results of this exercise and pray about it with others, if necessary. If we talk to God and each other, He will show us the way forward.

Prayer

Dear Lord and Father of all, grant us the humility to accept our own failings and those of others. May we always seek to support each other within the fellowship of the church on the journey of faith and of life; and so build the Kingdom of God as our Lord commanded: AMEN