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Adding The Christian Graces

By Erwin Cowen

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue; knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."
(2 Peter 1:5-8.)

Salvation for man began with the divine mind of God, who provided the way for our salvation which is in Christ Jesus the Lord (2 Tim. 2:10). Through obedience to the will of God, man can come into God's family, and into the hope of eternal salvation. In the above Scripture, Peter shows that though God has provided the way for our salvation, we must put forth great effort to walk in this way. We must give "all diligence," or, we must interest ourselves most earnestly in accomplishing the task before us, and we must expand upon that which the Lord has made possible in the way of salvation. In the Scriptures God has provided everything necessary "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:17.)

The purpose for adding the Christian graces mentioned above is to develop the kind of character which is acceptable unto God. The Christian life and the resulting personality of it is not accomplished by accident. First, faith is the basic element of this desired character. Faith is the basis upon which the other Christian graces can be added, but, as Peter stated, diligence is required, otherwise the result will be disappointing. In verse 9 Peter said, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

Furthermore, each grace is ordained of God in such a way that each has a certain effect upon the preceding one. Peter urges his readers to equip their lives generously with all things necessary to eternal life. We must never be content with the average, but must hold out only

for the best and most splendid life possible, therefore, we are to add to our faith all of the graces mentioned. First, we are to add to our faith, virtue. This means moral energy, courage, and fortitude to confess the faith before others. It means to stand up for that which God has revealed through his word, with love and purity.

Second, we are to add to virtue, knowledge. This knowledge is gained through the study of God's word. We also learn much through our experiences in living the Christian life and by observing the righteous conduct of the faithful. Courage without knowledge may become dangerous. Therefore, assurance and confidence depends upon this knowledge in the stand we take, the life we live, and the faith we confess.

Third, we are to add to knowledge, temperance. Temperance is self control. A person controls himself when he is able to keep himself within safe limits in respect to pleasure, duties and in every activity of life.

Fourth, we are to add to temperance, patience. Patience is bearing the trials and difficulties with an evenly controlled mind. It involves endurance, putting up with, and tolerating the weaknesses of others in a spirit of love.

Fifth, we are to add to patience, godliness. Godliness involves being reverent, respectful, and showing piety toward God; and like all graces, it must be learned. One of the first places where godliness should be learned is in the home.

Sixth, we are to add to godliness, brotherly kindness. As members of the Lord's church we are the family of God, brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to express kindness toward each other. Kindness is the gentle expression of love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1 John 3:4.)

Seventh, we are to add to brotherly kindness, charity. Charity is another word for love. As Christians, we are not only to love God and our brethren, we must also

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No Condemnation

By Harold Turner

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans 8:1).

Condemnation is a word suggesting harsh judgment and punishment. The apostle Peter speaks of God's judgment toward Sodom and Gomorrah as an act of condemnation, saying, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter 2:6.) God's condemnation of these cities was to rain upon them fire and brimstone. They were literally burned and left in ashes. And Peter reminds us that this act is a reminder of what awaits all who live ungodly. In 2 Thess. 1:7-9 Paul warned, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

There is nothing pleasant awaiting those who refuse to bring their lives into harmony with the will of God. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus pictures the condemnation of a man who died and was lost. Jesus said, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." This man was further reminded that there was no release from this place of torment. In Matt. 25:30 Jesus pictured condemnation as a place of "Outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In Mark 9:43-48 He spoke of this place as hell, "the fire that never shall be quenched."

Man may choose to refuse to think about what awaits him on the other side of the grave, but this doesn't change its reality. Many have worked hard to

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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How Should One Decide Good?

By Donnie F. Mangrum

More or less, we are talking about a study of God's character; because all good would be in God's image. No bad is in the image of God.

Of course we know that God being supreme has the wisdom to reason and write rules of good. But we, as humans, must have something to base good and evil on. Since all good is of God, and since the character of Jesus is also perfect, we have his example and teachings for the basis of what is good.

In 1 Peter 1:14-16 we read, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." So, first of all, in our decision to be good we should work to glorify the image of God by being holy in all things.

We might compare our decision making to that of a child. A child does not know what is best apart from the guidance of his parents. The parents have experienced things of life and have gained more knowledge with which they can help their children in making right decisions. Christians are the children of God. Our knowledge of good is limited to such a small degree when compared to the knowledge of God. He knows what is good and right for us, and as his children we must look to his knowledge and guidance for doing good.

In 1 Peter 2:21 we learn that Christ left us an example that we should follow in his steps. He experienced life here on earth as we do, and he learned what was

good by always trying to improve the image of God.

Now let's move on to one very often stated reason for not doing good - ignorance. Ignorance is defined as not knowing a thing, but ignore is defined as refusing to take notice to a thing. To ignore Christianity or God does not excuse us. God does not allow any room for our ignoring his word, which is the prime reason for ignorance. We must read and study his Word. Apart from the study of his word, we cannot know or be familiar with God's character, which is our guide to goodness. Ignorance is no excuse for the mentally capable person who has the opportunity to learn.

Another reason why one fails to do good is idolatry. Webster defines idolatry as excessive and devoted admiration. It is anything that we desire, which is unneeded, that causes us to be unrighteous. This might be any thing of a material nature, such as money, cars, homes, etc. To want or desire items is not wrong within itself, it is becoming unrighteous in our efforts to attain them that is wrong. In Eph. 5:5 we learn that an idolater cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

God is our friend. He sent his Son to encourage us to follow his example of goodness. We must learn to decide good by trying to be like the example of our Lord. We must try to change our character to be like that of the Father and His Son. We cannot be perfect as they are, but in all of our decisions, whatever they may be, we must try to be holy and righteous, and try to decide on the basis of the knowledge which God has revealed to us.

ADDING THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

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love the whole human race, even our enemies. It is this that identifies the Christian to a life of serving others. This kind of love is not directed by emotions, but rather by choice; for it seeks the highest objects. True love is not selfish, but rather seeks the interests of others.

Now, let us notice again the warning given by Peter concerning these very graces. "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged of his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (2 Peter 1:9-10.)

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"The life of blessedness comes not by hoarding, but by sharing. Give, and you shall live."

"Always smile when you meet people. If you can't make them think you're happy, you can at least make them wonder what you've been in to."

FAITH OR TRADITION

By Ted Mountjoy

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free.

Thus ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."
(Matt. 15:1-6.)

There are many man made traditions that are imposed upon people who really want to serve and please God. Unfortunately, most of these man made doctrines or teachings made void the word of God, in such basic areas as acceptable worship, teaching, daily living, and salvation.

There is, of course, an attempt made to justify these traditions; traditions such as confirmation, Lent, infant baptism,

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CHOOSING OUR LIFE'S MASTER

By Robert Ball

In Joshua 24:15, Joshua tells the children of Israel "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Man is a unique species to any other creature on earth; because God has given him the power to choose. Man is the only creature who has the power to choose whether or not to serve the Creator.

Like Israel, we too have to choose whom we will serve. But we only have two choices — we may choose to serve God, or Satan. In Rom. 6:16 Paul said, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" In Matt. 7:13-14, Jesus indicates that there are only two gates, two roads, and two destinations. We have to make the choice of which way we will follow.

There are three things involved in our choice. Our choices are individual, immediate, and unavoidable. Every person has to make their choice personally. There are choices that others may make for us. For example, our parents may choose where we live, what food we eat, what clothes we wear, etc. But no one can make our choice for serving God.

Suppose Paul had asked his parents about obeying Jesus, or supposed he had asked the Jewish counsel. What kind of advice do you think he would have received. Certainly it would not have been to obey Christ.

Our friends may influence our choice for serving God, but we must all be very careful, and especially the young, because our friends may also lead us astray (1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 1:10).

What does our choice for serving God involve? Like Israel, we too must forsake our past lives. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23.) There are many ways that we must practice self-denial. We must deny ourselves in the use of our time (Eph. 5:14-16). We should not only find some time each day to serve God, but actually every minute of each day should be spent in service to God, no matter what we are doing. All of our time belongs to God. Too, we must deny ourself in some of the activities of this life (Heb. 11:24-25). Actually, this should be very simple for us if an activity is not in harmony with God's will, don't do it. We must always seek to do those things that will bring glory to God.

Our choice must also be made immediately. To delay making a choice is to continue to serve Satan. In Acts 24:25 Felix wanted a more convenient season, but he made a decision, a choice. In 2

Cor. 6:2 Paul said, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Our choice must be immediate because we have no guarantee of another minute on this earth. Our soul could be demanded of us at any time. We must be ready at all times.

And whether we like it or not, our choice is unavoidable. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24.) And in John 8:34 he said, "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." We cannot avoid making a choice of masters. In Matt. 27:24 Pilate washed his hands, but he made a choice. In Acts 24:25 Felix wanted a more convenient season, but he made a choice. And in Acts 26:28 Agrippa was "Almost persuaded", but he made a choice.

Have you made the right choice for your life? Remember, to delay is to continue serving Satan. Too, we do not have forever to choose to serve the Lord. Our days of choice will end at death. Then we will have no choice. After death we have nothing more to say about it. Let's not serve Satan by doing nothing. But let us channel all of our efforts to serve our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

"People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing."

ARE YOU TRYING TO GO TO HEAVEN?

By Larry Corbett

The probability of a Christian going to heaven alone is that he will never make it. Most of us seem to be mostly concerned about our own salvation, and not the salvation of others: when the fact is, the salvation of others should be our life long goal. We are the most mobile nation on earth. We go everywhere we want to go. But we do not go everywhere we need to go teaching the gospel of Christ. In fact, most Christians put forth very little or no effort at all to teach their neighbors, relatives, or the people they work with.

Why is it that Christians, after learning the glorious truth of the gospel, are so unwilling to share this good news with others. We always hear the same excuses — "I don't have time", "I can't", "I don't know how", "We pay the preacher to do that", or "I'm too tired after working all day." The real reason is fear of failure, which grows into apathy, the do nothing,

bench warming, lost condition that so many fall into. We must not let ourselves fall into this condition of unconcern which will lead to our own destruction.

We must each strive to become personal soul winners. God does not expect us to be successful on every attempt to save souls, but he does expect us to try to do our best. It is true that some may have more talents in this area of work than others, but everyone that can talk or write can teach the gospel, and invite others to worship services.

We have many New Testament examples and commands that Christians are to win souls. Christ is our example, for one. In Luke 19:10, he said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And in Matt. 4:19, he said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." The early disciples were soul winners, see Acts 8:1-4; 5:42; 20:20.

If we follow the examples of these early Christians in other things, such as observance of the Lord's Supper and giving of our means, shouldn't we follow their example in soul winning?

Saving the souls of others is the greatest work we can every possibly do for them. In Matt. 16:26 Jesus stated that man's soul is worth more than the whole world. Saving a person from personal harm, or even physical death, does not begin to compare with saving his soul from eternal punishment.

Soul winning is good for the soul winner also. Personal evangelism will cause the one who engages in it to be more faithful, consecrated, prayerful, and more active in Bible study. Therefore, if you are trying to go to heaven alone, stop and think. "He that winneth souls is wise." (Prov. 11:30)

FAITH OR TRADITION

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etc. Many reasons may be given; everything from catechism to having a good feeling about practicing these traditions to saying that those who claim to be Christians have practiced these for centuries, therefore they must please God to practice them. However, there is no scriptural basis given for these things.

When we think just a little bit, we can easily see that feelings and length of time cannot be the authority in what pleases God. Ask Khomeini how he feels about Islam. I am sure he would tell you he feels it is right, that he has a good feeling about it. Yet, the Islamic people do not recognize Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior. Jesus said, "I am the Son of God," in John 10:36, and goes on to say in John 14:6 that no one can come to the Father except through Him. It is obvious, then, that we cannot go by what makes us feel good. Even God's word tells us that in Jer. 17:9, saying, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceeding corrupt, who can know it."

We cannot say that a practice is authorized by God simply because it has been practiced for centuries by those who claim to follow God. Islam has been practiced for well over a thousand years, but this does not mean it is pleasing to God. Some man made traditions have been practiced for centuries by those claiming to follow Christ, but that doesn't mean they are pleasing to God.

The only way we can KNOW what is pleasing to God, is to go to the only authority -- the Bible. After all, it is by His word that we will all be judged (John 12:48), not by our feelings, and certainly not by traditions of men.

What are you practicing religiously? Are you practicing it because men have said so, or because God says so? Does the religion you practice come by faith or tradition? Remember, faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17).

"One of the hardest things in the world is to open a closed mind."

"One life showing the way is better than ten tongues trying to tell it."

"No use sitting and fretting, you cannot change your fate; God provides the fishing, but you have to dig the bait."

NO CONDEMNATION

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explain away the Bible teachings on hell and eternal punishment, but the promises of God will stand sure. Peter reminds us of the judgment of God in the days of Noah, when he brought the flood upon the earth, and adds, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7). In verse 10 He adds, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Refusing to believe this promise of God will not change it from happening. We have the same reason for believing in eternal punishment as we do to believe in eternal life and happiness. The same God promised both.

There is only one way to escape the condemnation of eternal punishment; we must be "in Christ." Those without Christ are also without hope (Eph. 2:12). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . ." (Rom. 8:1.) Until we get into Christ the penalty of eternal punishment awaits us. Paul tells us in Eph. 1:7 that in Christ "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." In 2 Tim. 2:10 he tells us that it is God's will that man "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." In Christ is the place of safety and refuge from the wrath of God, which will be poured out upon all those outside Christ.

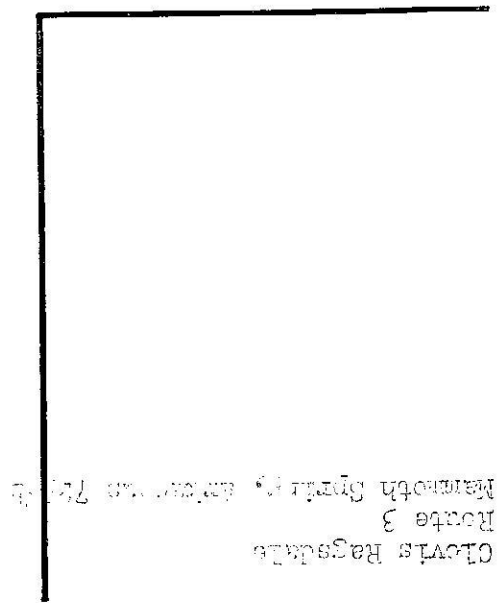
God is not willing that any perish (2 Peter 3:9), but rather that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). And through the gospel He has given clear instructions as to how man can bring his life into harmony with Christ and live in harmony with his will. But just as men have tried to destroy God's teaching about eternal punishment, they have also worked to destroy His teaching about how to be saved. While most believe it to be essential for man to believe in Christ and repent of his sins, they deny that baptism is essential for salvation. The apostle Peter stated plainly, "baptism doth also now save us." (1 Peter 3:21.) And Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16) In Acts

2:38 the apostles preached that all must "repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins." And In Rom. 6:3 Paul said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" And in Gal. 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." We are baptized INTO Christ, and In Christ is the place where there is NO condemnation. If the devil can keep you from being baptized into Christ, he can keep you under condemnation. We had better be sure that we have obeyed God rather than man. The judgment will be a poor place to find out that we were never in Christ. The only way that we can be sure is to study God's word with an open heart and mind, and then obey exactly what it teaches. It takes the same thing today to save us as it took to save the people in the first century. Peter urged people to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) And in 2 Cor. 13:5 Paul urged, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves."

Condemnation is a harsh judgment, may God help us to be wise in making sure that this sentence is not awaiting us.

"The reason most folks have no interest in the church is because they have no investment in it."

"A closed hand can neither give nor receive a blessing. Selfishness defeats itself."



CLAVIS REPERTE
 ROTE 3
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