

November 9, 2008 by Steve Brandon



# Are You Growing?

## 2 Peter 1:5-9

### 1. Sign of Life (verses 5-7)

### 2. Are You Increasing? (verse 8)

### 3. Are You Lacking? (verse 9)

Have you ever noticed that when people are trying to get to know you, there are certain questions that are asked of you. Where do you live? Where are you from? What do you do for a living? Are you married? How many children do you have? If you are from some foreign country or far away state, people will ask you how it is that you came to live here in Illinois. If you work for some interesting company like Pixar, you will get inundated with questions about your work. Depending upon your answers, conversations can go down a predictable path. For instance, when I tell people that I have five children, they almost always ask how old they are. And so, I say, "14, almost 13, 9, 5, and 1½." Upon hearing the spread of ages, they often say, "Wow, that's quite a range. Your children are really spread out."

Well, indeed, our children are spread out. However, our first two children (Carissa and SR) are not. There is 15 months difference between them. Life back then was a blur. But as they have grown, the oldest two have known a great blessing. Carissa and SR have were often accused of being twins in their younger years, as they were close to the same size for many, many years. However, Carissa seemingly was always an inch or two taller than SR. It seemed as if they were always growing at the same rate.

Well, a few years ago, Carissa really started to make her move, growing more quickly than SR. The difference that was perpetually one inch had grown to three or four inches. However, in recent months, SR has been gaining on his sister. In fact, it happened yesterday evening. We stood each of them back to back in their bare feet, and SR has finally caught Carissa. However, he has the momentum and will soon pass her, I'm sure. At the rate he has been growing recently, I think that it might be next week that we'll be able to notice the difference in their height. SR has been growing by leaps and bounds in recent days.

This morning, my message is entitled, "Are You Growing?" I'm not talking about growing physically. Many of us adults haven't grown an inch in years. In fact, some of us may have dropped an inch or two in recent years. But, I'm talking about growing spiritually.

Are you growing? This is Peter's question that he asks in our text this morning.

#### 2 Peter 1:5-9

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

As you read these verses, you can tell that they tie to what came before. Peter begins our text with these words, "Now for this very reason also." Whenever you read anything like that, you ought to ask yourselves, "For what reason?" Because of everything that's true in verses 1-4. Now, last week, we looked at these verses. It would be good for us right now to review what Peter told us. Because, they are the grounds of our text this morning.

Peter's point was that we are "Ready to Grow." Everything is all set for you and for me to live a godly life. God has given us everything that we need to live a godly life in Christ. There is nothing that we lack. This is especially communicated in verse 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."

Please catch the significance of this verse. Read these words slowly. "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (verse 3).

He has given us faith (verse 1). He has given us grace (verse 2). He has given us peace (verse 2). He has given His promises to us (verse 4). There is nothing that we lack to live a life of godliness. We have every resource at our disposal. All of the supplies that we need are in the store room. Every tool that we need is in our tool bag. The blueprints are before us, laid out on the table. We lack nothing to grow in godliness. We have all of the gas and electricity that we need. We have all of the building supplies ready to go. We have all the knowledge that we need. We are "ready to grow." We don't have to look elsewhere for the supplies we need to grow in Christ. We have everything that we need to grow.

Think about all the we have in Christ. We have the forgiveness of sins, which keeps us from despair (Col. 1:14). We have the "promises of God," which gives us hope of victory (Rom. 8:37). We have the faith to press on in our fight (1 Tim. 6:12). We have the grace of God, which is

sufficient for the times of trouble we will face (2 Cor. 12:9). We have the peace of God, which helps us when the outlook seems bleak (Phil. 4:7). We have the mind of Christ, which gives us all the wisdom and knowledge we need (Col. 2:3). We know the love of God, which gives us power and reason to love (1 John 4:19). We have the power of God, "who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). We have the presence of Christ, dwelling in our hearts (Eph. 3:17). We have the Spirit of God, who has gifted each and every one of us to serve in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

Beyond that, we have a God, who is in the heavens, strengthening us for the task set before us. Jesus Christ is before His throne, always making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). In our weakness, the Spirit, Himself intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit works in us to manifest His fruit of godliness, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Jesus Christ works in us, giving life to our spirit to conquer sin (Rom. 8:10). God, the Father, works in us blessing us with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). We have been given the armor of God to fight the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:13-17). We have been promised that no temptation will be too great for us (1 Cor. 10:13). We have the word of God, which is profitable to equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The examples of many that have gone before us have been given to us as an encouragement to persevere until the end (Heb. 11).

On top of all of this the promises of God to keep us until the end are breath-taking. We have been sealed "with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:13-14). Jesus has promised to be with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). When Jesus gives eternal life, He says, "They will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of [the Father's] hand." (John 10:28). "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). God has promised never to desert us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

This is only a sampling of some of the ways in which we have "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (1 Peter 1:3). Certainly, we could go on and on and on but, if we do, we will never get into our text. But now we shall, as the stage has been set.

In verse 5, Peter says, "Now this very reason also, ..." Or, to summarize, "Now because you have been given everything that you need for life and godliness in Christ," you are ready to grow, so "applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love." In other words, because God has given to us everything that we need to be godly, work really hard to grow in your godliness. This is Peter's point when he says, "applying all diligence."

This past summer, I spent a fair number of evenings watching the summer Olympic games held in Beijing. I know that many of you joined me in watching them as well. We watched gymnasts do amazing things with their bodies. They flipped all around and demonstrated incredible strength and balance. We watched track and field runners run at incredible speeds. We watched swimmers swim through the water with incredible swiftness.

Without question in my mind, the athlete that I was most intrigued with was Michael Phelps. Eight gold medals is spectacular! But, seven world records to go along with the eight golds is incredible. Certainly, Michael Phelps has been given talent to swim. But talent alone didn't accomplish these great feats. He achieved these things through incredible discipline and hard work.

When Michael Phelps was interviewed about his training regimen, he commented, "Eat, sleep and swim, that's all I can do." And that's all that he did in the many months leading up to the Olympic games. His diet consisted of 12,000 calories. That's 4-5 times what most men will consume in a day. Regarding his sleep, he made sure that he was well rested. No late nights for him. Regarding swimming, Phelps trained every day, often including Sundays. During his peak workouts, he was swimming 50 miles a week, practicing two or three times each day, sometimes training at high altitude. When out of the pool, he lifted weights to give him added strength. The man was extremely motivated to obtain his goal, which he did. He went all out to accomplish what was set before him. He worked hard.

Now, when it comes to our life, Peter tells us likewise to "apply all diligence" in cultivating our godliness. In this way, we are to be like an Olympic athlete, who sets his eyes on the prize and let's nothing get in his way. Such thoughts are entirely Biblical. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul spoke about the athletes who compete. He said, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things." We know what bodily discipline is. We know what it means to make sacrifices. We know the reward of such sacrifices. But, the rewards have their limits.

Our prize is far greater than any gold medal that an Olympic swimmer might win. Our prize is eternal life with God. Continuing on in 1 Corinthians, Paul said, "They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we have an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." Paul applied all diligence to cultivate a godliness in his life.

Back in our text this morning, Peter calls us to work hard in our spiritual lives. He calls us to "apply all diligence" to cultivate godliness in our lives. Discipline your soul. Make your body your slave. Press on for the prize! "Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

Now, before we actually look at the ways in which we are called to pursue our godliness, we need to place Peter's argument in context. Peter's argument goes like this: "We have received everything that we need to live godly, so work hard at living godly." This is far different than the other way around. He didn't say, "Work really hard at living godly, so that you might receive the precious promises of God."

Do you see the difference? Peter's reasoned this way: "God has miraculously saved us and called us and has given to us everything in Christ. As a result of that, we are to be diligent in our use of the gifts we have received." The false argument goes something like this: "Don't you want to have the blessing of God in your life? Work really hard, that you might obtain it! The Bible never argues this way. It always argues like Peter."

Such reasoning is found in other portions of the Bible. For instance, consider Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Do you see the pattern? God has graciously saved us. We are His work. Therefore, we are to walk in the works that He has prepared for us.

Another good verse that says this is Philippians 2:12-13, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." In other words, work hard at your salvation, because God is the one working in you, according to His own sovereign pleasure. It's not, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, that you might become a partaker of God's promises. That's not it. Rather, you work out your salvation, precisely because God is working in you!

Because we have received all things, we are to give all diligence to cultivate godliness in our lives. Is that clear? I hope so, because this is the fundamental divide between the truth and error. Some think that you strive to obtain God's grace. But, the Bible teaches that we have obtained God's grace in our lives, so we strive to cultivate it, for His pleasure. Let's press on to my first point, ...

## **1. Sign of Life (verses 5-7)**

Here in verses 5-7, Peter lists seven characteristics of godliness that we are called to pursue in our faith. He begins by saying, "In your faith supply ..."

### **a. moral excellence.**

Some of your translations here might read, In your faith supply "goodness" (NIV), or, In your faith supply "virtue" (ESV, KJV). These are all fine translations of Peter's thought.

This word describes a righteous, attractive, excellence about our life. This word is used in verse 3 to describe Jesus, who has "glory and excellence." That is, "glory and virtue." "glory and goodness." He also used the same word in his first epistle, telling us to proclaim the "excellencies" of Christ (1 Peter 2:9). That is, ... telling others how lovely and sweet and precious Jesus is.

In all of this, Peter is getting at the savor of our lives that we ought to pursue. We ought to live our lives in such a manner that the excellence of our Savior comes through us, both in what we say and in how we behave. But, we aren't supposed to stop there. Peter calls us to go further, "in your moral excellence [supply] ..."

### **b. knowledge.**

We don't need to spend much time here thinking about the meaning of this word. I believe that it is clear for all of us. We know what it means to have knowledge of something.

The sports fan has knowledge of his favorite team. The contractor has knowledge of how to build homes. The judge has knowledge of how the law works. The chemistry professor has knowledge of chemistry. And Peter calls us to have a knowledge of our Savior.

But, please notice that Peter isn't calling all of us to be Bible scholars. Rather, he is calling us to grow in our knowledge with what ever little we have. You should have a bit more today than you had yesterday. You should have a bit more knowledge of Jesus tomorrow than you have today. You are called to grow in your knowledge in Christ. But, we aren't supposed to stop there. Peter calls us to go further, "in your knowledge, ..."

### **c. self-control.**

I love the picture that the Greek word describes for us with this word. Literally, this word means, "holding yourself in." It pictures a strong man inside of you that desperately wanting to escape your body and thereby cause you to sin. But, as strong as the pull of the flesh inside of you is, you are stronger and you hold in your wicked desires.

That's the picture of the Greek word. Our English translation of this word does a good job of getting this across. "Self-control" is made up of two words, "self" and "control." It describes us having the restraint to keep the lusts of our flesh from taking over our lives.

Again, Peter's exhortation to us isn't to "have self-control." Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit that is present in all believers (Gal. 5:22). Rather, we are to be increasing in it, becoming better and better at subduing the flesh. We have more self-control today than we had yesterday. By God's grace, we'll have even more tomorrow. Peter calls us to go further. He says, "in your self-control, ..."

#### **d. perseverance.**

Some other translations of this word use the words, "steadfastness" (ESV) or "patience" (KJV). They are all good at capturing the meaning of this word. "Perseverance" is a character trait that is seen over time. Self-control can be witnessed in a moment. Moral excellence can be seen in a few minutes. But, perseverance can only be seen over a long period of time, after being tested and tried.

Perseverance is a bit like our maple tree that we have in our yard. Yesterday morning, I was looking out our kitchen window at our maple tree. All of the leaves have fallen from this tree, except for 5 leaves, which are at the very top of the tree. These are the leaves that are persevering. They are hanging on for dear life. Peter says to us that we are to keep on hanging on. Calling us further, Peter says, "in your perseverance, ...

#### **e. godliness.**

This term, "godliness," can easily be misunderstood. I believe that there are many who equate godliness by the things that you do or things that you don't do. The godly person attends church each week. The godly person wears a suit to church. The godly person only reads from a particular version of the Bible. The godly person doesn't go to movies, or drink alcohol, or smoke cigarettes. Those who think this way have their "godliness" codified into a series of "do's and don't's."

But, I don't believe that this is what godliness means. Rather, godliness is a disposition of the heart that pursues God. And in the pursuit, the godly person actually achieves a measure of God-likeness. The characteristics of God become the characteristics of the godly person, full of truth and mercy and compassion and love. The godly person has a confident trust in God's faithfulness in the future. Peter says, pursue your godliness. But, he doesn't stop there. He says, "in your godliness, ...

#### **f. brotherly kindness.**

Literally, this is a "brotherly love." The Greek word here is *filadelfia* (philadelphia), which is an obvious combination of two words. *filos* (philos) meaning love. And *adelphos* (adelphos) meaning brother. This is a love for brothers. Brotherly kindness extends itself to others, in serving, in helping, in

Brotherly kindness would welcome the prodigal son home as the father did (Luke 15). Brotherly kindness would wash the feet of others (John 13). Brotherly kindness would be loyal to one another (John 21).

There's a family in the church that consistently extends brotherly kindness to me. They know that I love Twizzlers licorice. Every now and then they give me a bag of Twizzlers. In the past, they have handed the licorice to me by way of expressing their kindness to me. But now, it's to the point that it merely shows up on my seat at church (which happened last week).

Peter calls us to increase in our brotherly kindness toward others. This calls for creative thought toward other people to know think how you might be a special encouragement to others by showing kindness to them in some special way. But, again, Peter doesn't stop there, he continues on, "in your brotherly kindness, ..."

#### **g. love**

In some ways, this is redundant from the previous item. But, this term describes and even greater love than "brotherly kindness." This is *agape* (agape) love, which is the most self-sacrificial of loves. In the Greek language, there are three kinds of love: *eros*, *philos*, and *agape*. The first one, *eros*, describes a sexual love. The second term, *philos*, describes a brotherly love. The final term, *agape*, describes a divine love. The first love (*eros*) has been described as a "take" sort of love. The second love (*philos*) has been described as a "give and take" sort of love. And, the third love (*agape*) has been described simply as a "give" sort of love. That's the love that Peter calls us to here.

Peter is describing the love that is patient, kind and not jealous (1 Cor. 13:4). It's the love that doesn't brag or boast (1 Cor. 13:4). It's the love that will not seek its own or take into account a wrong suffered (1 Cor. 13:5). It's the love that "bears all things, hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

This is the love of self-sacrifice. Obviously, the greatest model of this is the cross of Jesus Christ. It's because of His great love for us that He died for us, even when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10). We are called to grow in love.

These are three signs of life that Peter gives us to pursue with "all diligence": moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Now, before we go on, I want for us to spend a few moments thinking about how exactly they relate to each other. Taken at face value, Peter seems to indicate that these virtues all build upon each other. Beginning with your faith, you can achieve a moral excellence, which, in turn, leads you to a knowledge of Christ, which helps you in your self-control, which produces a perseverance, which ultimately adds to your

godliness, which cultivates a brotherly kindness, which culminates in love. However, if this is the case, it's very difficult to figure out how each of these characteristics link together with one another to form this progression. Each of the connections made seem contrived at best. Furthermore, when are you ever done with any of these characteristics, so that you move on to another one? And how is it that you can't love until you grow in your perseverance.

So, don't think of these signs of life as sequential. Rather, think of them as simultaneous qualities that help you grow in Christ-likeness. Instead, you might think of them as skills that a pianist might cultivate. A pianist practice scales, chords, arpeggios, other technique exercises so that when time comes to work on a particular piano piece, all of these skills assist in its playing. Or, you might think of a basketball player who practices dribbling, passing, shooting, rebounding, free-throws, defensive technique, and stamina. In the game all of the skills come together to produce good basketball player. Or, you might think of them as a vine, which grows up a wall of Christ-likeness. The vine puts out it shoots of moral excellence and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love. Some of these vines grow quite rapidly up the wall. Others are a bit slower in their growth. But, all of them are growing and are working toward covering the wall with ivy. In the same way, believers in Christ are to grow. They are plants that are alive and ready to grow. They are to grow up the wall. And now comes my question from verse 8, ...

## **2. Are You Increasing? (verse 8)**

Look at verse 8, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the burden of the text this morning. Are you "increasing" in moral excellence and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love. Are you that living vine that's growing up the wall of Christ-likeness, increasing in all of these qualities?

Now, it may be that some of these qualities are increasing slowly in your life. And, others may be increasing rapidly. But, are they increasing in your life? That's Peter's main burden in these words. God doesn't call us to instant perfection. God doesn't call us to instant maturity. Rather, He calls us to grow.

Think about the farmer, who has planted his crops. He doesn't put the kernel of corn in the ground and expect it to be eight feet tall overnight does he? No. Rather, he's happy for the seed to germinate. He's happy when the seed first begins to sprout up. He's happy when his corn is "knee-high by the fourth of July." He's happy when the tassel begins to sprout. He's happy when the seed is pollinated. He's happy when the corn cob is produced. The farmer delights to see the end, certainly. However, as long as he sees progress, he is happy. So also with God. As God looks down upon us, certainly, He wants to see us entirely conformed to Christ, but He is mostly concerned that we are growing. He is concerned that we are increasing in these seven qualities.

And if these qualities are increasing, Peter gives us an incredible promise. And here is the promise: you will be useful and fruitful in the true knowledge of Christ. In other words, growing in Christ leads to knowing of Christ. And then (filling in the full thought from verse 5), as you know of all of the incredible blessings that you have in Christ Jesus (spelled out in verses 1-4), you have the opportunity to grow in Christ. And growing in Christ leads to knowing of Christ. And, knowing of Christ leads to opportunities of growing in Christ. This is Peter's message of His letter: know and grow.

Perhaps the question is now coming into your mind, "How do I increase these qualities in my life?" I have two answers for you. And they both come from verse 5, ...

### **1. Be diligent.**

That is, I mean, apply yourself. Do what you can do to cultivate these things in your life. There are some practical things that you might do to cultivate these realities in your life.

You can cultivate moral excellence in your life, by being a thankful person, by being a joyful person, and by being a helpful person. As you do these things, Jesus will shine through you.

You can cultivate knowledge of Jesus in your soul, by being a praying person, by being a Bible person, and by being a learner. As you do these things, you can grow in your knowledge of Christ.

You can cultivate self-control in your life, by living consciously in the presence of God, by laying your "rights" down as Jesus did on the cross, and by practicing self-denial.

You can cultivate perseverance in your life, by accountability, by staying true to commitments, even when difficult, and by keeping your life-goal in front of you at all times.

You can cultivate godliness in your life, by pursuing God, by worshiping Him, and by cultivating a heart of compassion for others.

You can cultivate brotherly kindness in your life, by using encouraging words or notes or emails, by thinking about ways to help your brother, and by helping your brother.

You can cultivate love in your life, by setting aside your own interests, by considering others as more important than yourself, and by willingly serving others in your life.

We all are disciplined in one way or another. Many are disciplined when it comes to physical exercise. Many of us are disciplined when it comes to having enough sleep. Many of us are disciplined when it comes to eating enough food. But, the call this morning is to be disciplined in your pursuit of godliness. Paul wrote to Timothy, telling him to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7).

But, as much as you try, discipline alone isn't going to help you in your growth in godliness. There is enough residual sin in each of us to bring us to failure and frustration in each and every one of these qualities mentioned above. So, my second point of counsel to you who are wanting to see these qualities increase in your life is this.

## 2. Trust the Lord.

Ultimately, this is where all of our growth comes from. We are sanctified as we believe and trust in the Lord to grow us. I believe this to be Peter's point in verse 5, when he talked about "applying all diligence **in your faith**." Your faith is where all of your growth in Christ-likeness takes place.

It is no accident that Peter begins his list of the virtues with the beginning point of it all: your faith. You won't grow in Him apart faith. It is your faith in Christ that fuels all of these character qualities in your life. Without faith you won't be increasing in your moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, etc.

So, you want to be increasing in them? Trust the Lord.

In fact, faith is where the true work is. Paul told Timothy to, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). In other words, "Fight hard to believe." We are prone to wander. We are prone to set our hearts upon the here and the now. We are prone to be distracted by our lives. To combat this, we are to fight the good fight of faith. We are to pray to God, "I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

When the Pharisees asked Jesus, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him, whom He has sent." (John 6:29) The work is to believe.

Earlier, I gave the illustration of growing in these characteristics like a growing vine, with branches growing outward, representing our growth in Christ. Well, there was a day when Jesus talked about Himself as a vine, and we as His branches. And the only way that we grow, is by abiding in the vine. Consider what Jesus said about the vine, ...

John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Let those words sink deep into your soul, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." Tell me, what can you do apart from Christ? "Nothing."

It means that all of your diligence and all of your hard work and all of your discipline is ultimately useless when it comes to cultivating a life of godliness. It is when the branches are connected to the vine that they have the power to live a godly life. It is when you trust the Lord that your diligence and discipline and hard work will end in these Christian virtues. And how are you connected to the vine? By faith in Him.

These character qualities aren't a matter of your own self-sufficiency. To be sure, they are a matter of your diligence, but they are not a matter of your ability in and of yourselves to change yourself and conform your life to godliness.

Do you want to increase in these things? 1. Be Diligent. 2. Trust the Lord. And now, comes my last point this morning that is found in verse 9.

## 3. Are You Lacking? (verse 9)

My point comes from verse 9, "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."

If you are here this morning and are a professing Christian, but don't see these characteristic in your life, then Peter says, "You are blind, myopic, and you suffer from amnesia." In other words, you are not living consistently with your profession. As one commentator said, "a person who neglects the cultivation of spiritual values is blind to the truth of God's Word. Such a man is able to see earthly things that are nearby but unable to see heavenly things that are far away." [\[1\]](#)

You are like the blind Pharisees of old, who said, "We are not blind too, are we?" (John 9:40). Jesus told them, "If you were blind, you would have not sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains" (John 9:41). You profess to see, but in reality, you are blind.

You are like Ananias and Sapphira, who thought that they could lie to the Holy Spirit and get away with their deception (Acts 5:1-11). Their vision of the future was short-sighted. They weren't living with the realities of heaven in view. Their hope was still upon the earth.

You are like Saul, who could never quite remember that David was loyal him (1 Sam. 24, 26). David had several opportunities to kill Saul, but he didn't want to touch the Lord's anointed. But, Saul forgot what David was really like, and sought to kill the man at every turn.

So also, those who fail to see the fruit of God in their life have no assurance of their faith at all. There may have been a moment of cleansing for you. Perhaps you look back at your baptism, thinking yourself to be cleansed of your sins at that time. Perhaps you look back at a prayer that you prayed, seeking the Lord's forgiveness. Perhaps you made a break with your sin at one time. At this point, your condition may be simply one of neglect.

However, if these qualities are lacking in your life, it may very well be that you don't have life itself. You may be like a fake plant. Oh, you may look good. You may look from afar that you have life. You may have all of the external trappings of religion. You may know the words to say. But, would the truth be known, you don't have life. Rather than organic material, you are made of plastic.

Perhaps your faith is genuine. Perhaps your faith is not. At any rate, your condition today isn't good.

What should you do if you are lacking in these things? Think back on the things that you may have forgotten. You may have forgotten what took place at the cross of Christ. You may have forgotten that He paid for your sin. You may have forgotten that you are now blameless before Him. You may have forgotten that purpose of the death of Christ. Peter said in his first epistle, "He Himself bore our sins in this body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." (2:24)

One of God's aims in our redemption is our sanctification. So, pursue it. Pursue it in faith!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 9, 2008 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Simon Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary, Volume 11, p. 254.