

June 2, 2019

## ***Strangers in this World***

*"To God's elect, strangers in the world..."*

I Peter 1:1



*"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."*

*"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

II Peter 1:3-8

Choosing the life of a disciple does not mean that we get to coast through waiting for God to change us into the image of his Son. Make no mistake, becoming a disciple will change our lives; it has to. But, as Peter will make clear in our context for today, we have a major role in that change process.

So, while the Holy Spirit of God is working to produce his fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23) we must also make every effort to add the qualities that Peter addresses in his second letter. And, of course, our walk with Jesus will begin with our faith.

Just as those earliest disciples chose to follow Jesus because they believed that he was *"...the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Matthew 16:16), so we too must make that faith choice. And, it is a choice because ultimately faith is always the choice to believe.

So, we begin with our faith, and we work to add goodness to that faith. Goodness is more than the way we sometimes behave. For the disciple goodness becomes not a list of actions and attitudes, but a quality of character. As we grow and develop as believers goodness is not what we occasionally choose to be, but who we always are.

In turn we will need to add knowledge to our goodness. There are many in this world who pressure us to accept things that are evil and call them good. This pressure is often connected to the desire to let our emotions dictate our standard of good. While we work to develop a nature that is goodness, we need, at the same time, to understand how the God of heaven defines goodness. To understand that, we must increase our knowledge base of him so that we will not be deceived by those false pressures.

To our goodness and knowledge we need to add self-control. We've already talked about this in the course of these lessons. In practice, self-control has two functional parts. First it acknowledges that we have the absolute power to choose who and what we want to be. And second, it accepts that the only one we can choose for is ourselves.

Perseverance is the capacity to keep doing the same things over and over again without giving up. Living as a disciple is a life-long commitment. When we choose to follow Jesus we are not making that commitment for a day or a week or a year, but for the rest of our lives here. Day in and day out I must choose to live as a disciple. Sometimes that is easy and sometimes that seems nearly impossible.

As we begin to develop the qualities that Peter lists here we will become more and more godly. As we grow and develop the nature of God and his Son becomes more and more a part of who we are. As we become more godly, the outward expression of that godliness will be obvious in the way we treat others.

Our growing godliness will be obvious in the way we exemplify brotherly kindness; the love of those who love us. But our developing godliness will be even more apparent in the way we treat those who are not so easily loved. If the standard of our lives as disciples is bound up in our obedience to the 'Golden Rule'; "*...do to others what you would have them do to you...*", then loving as Jesus loved is an essential quality we must develop.

For the disciple following Jesus means that day by day I am working to become more and more the living form of the one who lives in me.