

S.N. - April 23, 78 P.M. - WXRJ

THE ALL IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE OF GOD

2 Peter 1:3-7

This whole passage really deserves our attention. For here is a comprehensive description of the Christian character. Here is a sacred chain - link after link - commencing with faith in Christ and closing with charity - the greatest of all. Here is a ladder put on the foundation of faith. And ultimately climbed step by step into great wisdom and knowledge of God.

Here is a progressive development of a holy character that becomes visible and grace after grace appears. I call this the all important principle of God. It should be in the memory, the mind, and the influence of each heart to conform to this.

Not School Principal - one assembly, 2 boys skipping, as witness - effort on 2 boys creating disturbance come by my office of the school. & apologizing for bad manners - and last week 32 boys lined up in front of the principal's office -

The principle of growth is one of the fundamental laws of all nature. Growth means to produce by cultivation, strength, and maturity. In order for anything to grow, proper care, nourishment, must be provided.

The moment growth ceases, decline and decay begin. The laws of growth and decay apply whether it be physical, mental, or spiritual.

An evangelist once was visiting on a farm. As they walked around the yard, a litter of puppies trotted out and in a moment the little runt of the litter emerged. He was about half the size of the other puppies. He could hardly run. The evangelist said, pastor, that is typical of many church members. There is no question about it - that they all belong to the same litter. They have the same mother. Now some church members grow and develop spiritually. Others remain dwarfs or runts. They

have all been born and belong to the spiritual family of God but they are of different sizes.

2 Peter 3:18 - But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Every person who becomes a child of God is a babe in Christ. Even Luke tells us that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. 2:52. To be like Jesus, we should desire to follow this principle.

The cradle roll or the Nursery is a fine place for babies. But it is not much of a place for adults. And Paul, I Cor. 3:1, reminding some of his hearers that they were babes in Christ. Some of them had been Christians for many many years. But they failed to grow up spiritually.

The entire admonition here of this principle is - having obtained like precious faith, in V. 1 - this is the religious beginning. That by grace we have faith as the basic beginning point. He has given to us the same faith - to each individual. And this is the point in which growth and development should begin. And rest assured there can be no growth until one is born. To understand V. 5-7, we have to understand first of all V. 1. Before you can add any part to anything, you must have faith, and that faith must have works. They must work in concert - to move forward. As Rom. 12:1 says - that we need to present our bodies. The chief thing here is, the center must be right. And we must advance in holiness - and we must be conscious of this. Adding on your part - means bringing in or supplying. This is a picture of a choir. If we could use that term - of well-training musicians. The idea implied here is that the growth of the Christian life - there should be harmony and development with each of the moral qualities of grace. The parts blend in and make a beautiful rendition.

Peter lists the excellency or the graces of the faith. He has a ladder we pointed out, that he has (planted) here in faith. Virtue is placed to it. And this is the characteristic of Christ's life. A Christian goes by distinct, separate steps. But it is all founded in one principle. And your faith supplies that. And then you add these other things. Faith is the root, to which brings the stalk and the flower. No Christian grace is complete without faith. If you have faith, you are going to add some of these other things in your life.

That is what HOSEA said to the people of God. Let us follow on to know Jehovah. They needed first-hand knowledge of God. And if any man willeth to do his will, he will know of the teaching - whether it is of God, or whether I speak for myself. John 7:17.

The bridge that builds in this matter, as you add on - such as godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. It takes its root in your view of God and faith. I think this is a basic error today. We have lost the sense of a majesty of God. The only way we are going to recover this spiritual loss is to go back. And correct this truth with the re-discovery of God. No people have ever risen above in spiritual history, their attitude and idea of God. The greatest question before the church today is God himself. What kind of mental image do you have of God. What comes to mind when you think about God. There are so many today who think as men think. And we need this right of concept - of what God is like, this right belief. In God, and then our problems will be handled.

This principle that we speak about will lead us into the fullness of Christ.

The hymn writer put it in these words. More like the Master, I would live and grow. More of his love to others I would show. More self-denial like his in Galilee. More like the Master I long to ever be.

To the Christian, such a desire is very plain. He is to live for Jesus and to grow in his likeness.

This life of faith is the very simple question that answers all of our basic needs.

Peter says, we - ~~and besides this~~, V. 5. He is implying there is something more. There is no degree of grace, no position of religion, and no high enjoyment where we may not hear the voice of God saying - and besides this. Giving all diligence, there are yet higher, brighter, better positions to which we are invited to give diligence.

It is a great mistake to suppose that it require no exertion to be a Christian. Many would gladly so believe, and would rejoice to go to Heaven on a flowery bed of ease. And there is no such way, for either rich or poor, high or humble.

There is one way pointed out by Christ. Strive to enter in at the straight gate. For many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Laziness and self-indulgence are great fools. There is nothing worthy of our attention, that requires exertion, effort, and men do not become rich, great or learned by simply idle wishes. But they have to have an earnest desire, and they have to put forth some labor. It requires effort to achieve. We do not value highly what costs us nothing.

And if we just make our religion of no effort - we do not think much of it.
If our religion does not cost us something, if it does not challenge us to make
a few sacrifices. Peter says, with (all diligence) - not simply to be diligent.
He says all diligence. Nothing is to be left undone. Every effort, he says, is
to be made. If men were only as diligent, and made the same effort in the cause
of religion as they do for riches, and for worldly honor - they would prosper
greatly and they would rejoice in the Lord always.

Peter is giving here some equipment that you need. And it is needed and it
is very expensive to produce some of it. This duty of training, equipping. He
says you are going to need every virtue, that the provisions are a kind of a
necessary minimum. But he is talking about something that is generous and
gracious. So you add virtue to virtue - and you add these and you make moral
progress. And you advance like an Army toward an objective.

The Christian life is a steady moral advance. Moffett quotes and says, the
Christian life must not be an initial spasm, followed by a chronic inertia. Now
it is very apt to be just that, if you just take a moment of enthusiasm and say
that is all the religion that I need.

Peter says to the people - (bend every energy) to do this. The Christian's life,
the supreme effort, is to co-operate with the grace of God. Everything is a faith,
and all of these things are promised in Christ.

What Peter is saying is - that some of this comes from the formation of right
habits, of training, and learning about the divine allotments in the gifts of God.

And as Christians, your happiness is going to depend upon God's gift. And it is going to depend upon your effort. Well, we do not earn salvation. At the same time, we have to bend every energy toward our progress as Christians to live this kind of life. The five foolish virgins you remember, the Bible speaks, should be a truth for each of us. That a man must pour into his life by his own faithful effort, so that the flame must be fed and increased. Faith never exempts a man from works. Abraham had to put forth some works. And this is what Peter is talking about. That there are special directions in which we must move in adding these things to our lives. But at the same time, there is much ground that needs to be occupied. We must go up and at once possess the land. To many live in the past and when they desire to think about some pleasant religious feelings, they desire to go back and think about the days when they were converted. It is all the joy they have. They remember how they felt and this gives them pleasure. Paul says forgetting the things which are behind and reaching unto the things that are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. It is this continual adding victory to victory, work to work, improvement to improvement, that we climb this ladder.

I think all true Christians who ever pray - nearer my God to Thee, the starting point is faith. And they add to that faith. This is the ground work of their religious life. They start out toward that wonderful city toward Heaven. You can't start without faith. You enter the wrong gate, you travel the wrong direction. And poor man, you have lost your way in darkness. You must first of all come to Christ as guilty sinners. And ask the Lord to save you or you will perish.

Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow thee

Naked, poor, despised, forsaken
Thou from hence my all shall be.

Peter bears down on the matter of adding virtue. Add this principle he says, he says add to your faith virtue. Which means religious, moral, goodness. Make this addition to your life of courage and moral principle.

The great word translated here (virtue) means courage, goodness, or principle. We are using the last meaning of it, principle. Add to your faith principle. Which ought to be a settled rule or a settled law in your life.

Let us point out two or three things now about this. That we need to consider in this all important principle.

I. FIRST, EMOTIONAL AND EXCITEMENT

This is the wrong principle when you think about it. True Christianity has naturally some wonderful movements in the heart, as well as in the mind, and in the soul. But this is not all. There are many reubens unstable as water. Many ephramins whose goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away.

Like Peter in the early going, denied his master. Like Demas, who loved this present world. So there are many revival Christians.

Now let me point this out to you. I think there are many who get active in times of religious excitement. They are lukewarm and indifferent at other times. There are so many summer, and fair weather Christians. Who are seen at the house of God when the weather is pleasant and warm. And when it requires self-denial to attend - you see no more of them. So many who are regular and attend when certain shows are being put on in the church. Or certain attractions are being developed. And they are charmed by them. But at other times, they go not at all or very seldom. So many who serve God when adversity comes. They lose the cross of consolation and hope. There are others when prosperity comes, they forget God.

The question arises, does Christianity really approve this state of the situation? Does Christianity just spring from this sort of foundation. Can Christianity be so changeable? Can the influence of our religion be regulated by such external things? If so, then we ought not to condemn these people. If on the other hand, we ought to say that Christianity does not demand any development of character. When we say, well, you folks have true religion.

When you investigate this question, the answer which settles a matter is this - is religion merely an excitement of the emotional nature by the presentation of religious truths, or is it more. Think about that question. Is it not whether religion excites emotional feeling? This is known to be true. God has not ignored the emotions. Religion is not simply for the intellect. Nor will the conscience be excluded. But the whole man is involved. His emotions, his intellect, and his conscience. A religion that does not effect the heart is worthless. And probably unsuitable for man's nature.

I do not understand this question to say that religion is all excitement. David

was excited when the ark of God was brought back. Solomon was excited when the temple was dedicated. Moses was excited when he saw the promised land from the top of the mountain. Paul was excited when he was caught up in the third Heaven. He heard unspeakable words. People have felt excitement and power at times. There are times when we experience an excitement of feeling. That a very unnatural. But the question is whether religion consists in excitement of emotions, or is there something more?

Peter is laying down here something that is very permanent and abiding. Emotional excitement is in our nature. But it does not remain long. It soon wears itself out. And are we to believe that we have no religion when we are no longer excited. Now this is inevitable if religion is not more than excitement or emotion. We must conclude that religion is something more than feeling. It has to have a principle.

And this Scriptural phrase is not mistaken. St. Paul said, that the spirit dwells and leads us, and controls our heart. Peter says the same thing in V. 1 - we are partakers of this divine nature, and we have the active principle of life, a power inward that motivates us. This seed is imparted to every convert. And he is inclined to be changed by it. David spoke of himself as being in a very unsatisfactory religious state. From which he sought relief. He said I waited patiently for the Lord. And he inclined and heard my cry, and brought me up out of a horrible pit. And out of the miray clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. Then he proclaimed, oh God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed.

David Pringle
We recognize in this a principle. And it is something more than mere feeling.

This is what Peter is talking about when he talks about being steadfast and unmoveable as Paul referred too also. He says I have written unto you young men because ye are strong. And the word of God abideth in you. Here is a principle that has a source of Spiritual strength. There was everything to excite his feelings and to leave him on a different course of conduct.

Moses followed this principle. He had gratitude for Pharoah's daughter that preserved him, educated him. Her kindness and care. But when it came to the wealth and the treasures of Egypt, his desire for ease and pleasure - his emotions did not operate in that choice. Why then, did he chose to sup with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. This was no matter of emotional feeling - there was more involved. It was because his religion had a principle of influence and power.

Abraham offered the same illustration - Isaac, the promised son. In his old age, and yet God demands him to take him up and to offer him as an offering. What about his feelings - what about his emotions. Shall he commit murder. Shall he offer a burnt offering. How is it possible for him to do it. Now, had he depended upon his feelings, he certainly would have failed here.

Job was a wealthy man. Surrounded by family. He had everything to make him happy. Riches, possessions, affection, friendship. But one day all of this was swept away. He was not permitted even to see his children die or buried. His friends forsake him, and his wife turns against him, he is sick of body. Now if his religion is no more than feeling and emotion, he would never have possibly sustained his soul through that time. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. And blessed be the name of the Lord. Now this came from a religious principle. More powerful than feeling.

How glorious it is.

Daniel was tried - that he was to make no petition for 30 days. And trust in other Gods. He was put in the lion's den. Now if he had complied, and disobeyed God - he would not expose himself. But Daniel kneels down before that window three times a day and firmly prays. Is not this from principle.

Nothing less could have sustained him and other martyrs when you think of those who died at the stake - noble men, the world was not worthy of some of them. Such then is the nature of religion. It is an abiding principle. That works in the hearts of individuals.

And Peter sees faith and unfaith as an issue of white and black. The grays are left out. It begins with faith. Unfaith is disastrous. It makes one blind and barren.

✓ 14
As we are partakers of the divine nature - V. 4. It does not mean that we become little Gods. But that we enjoy more and more of God's fellowship and God's likeness. The corruption that is in the world through lust shows us that the elements which are about us, have their roots in this world.

So a man, to have this abiding principle in him is to give diligence. V. 1.

There is never anything to take for granted on divine grace. But a Christian does not work for his salvation - but he works it out. Phil. 2:12-13.

So the addition here is not like a pagan would work. And say, now this year I am going to concentrate my strength on my will power. Next year, I am going to work on my patience. The next year, I am going to work on controlling my passion. Now those efforts may be great but they are not Christian. No, a Christian has received a life. And the additions that he is to make are here.

They are defensive additions - temperance, patience, and control of the inner self.

And there are aggressive additions - godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Therefore if we investigate these principles and these properties, we are going to find that there is life and there is power.

III. A LIVING PRINCIPLE

Now there are some people who are content by imagining that they have a sort of an indefinite something in their souls, but no life or no power. Their religion is like a tree whose roots are rotten. It is dead and ready to fall when the storm comes. Or it is like a watch with a worthless mainspring that will not work or keep time.

There is a class that think too much of excitement and feeling. They suppose

that there is no religion where there is no excitement. And that the excitement will be in proportion to the degree of religion. There is another class who are going the other way. And their boast is that the only evidence of Christianity is that which is solemn. But both of these are in error and inactive as a principle. Religion is a living principle and feeling is the result of life. Where there is life, there is conscious feeling. The religious principle fixed in the soul, imparts life. Life in its proper conditions are always conscious. So wherever this is found, you will find that there will be some emotion. David so declared, I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined into me and heard my cry. He took me up out of a horrible pit and set my feet upon a rock. And established by goings. He has put a new song in my mouth - even praise unto God. He says, my heart is fixed, oh God, My heart is fixed. The principle produces joy. He is happy when his feet is on the rock and his heart is fixed. And that is an important thing.

We might illustrate it with three human bodies. Say two of them are dead and one is alive. We will not touch one of the dead bodies. But the other we apply a galvanic battery - what is the result. As soon as the battery acts upon the body - it starts moving. And staggers about until the influence of the battery is passed off. But it is still a dead body. It is just as dead as the other body. The only difference is, that under the influence, of an outward appliance, it starts some sort of motion. Now the living body is warm and it moves regularly. Because it has an inward principle of life. Now these bodies represent classes of professing Christians. The body acted on by the battery represents the noisy Christian who during times of great religious excitement gives some seeming evidence of religious life. And as soon as the excitement passes - he relapses, into his former lifeless state. He becomes cold and indifferent. The other dead body is a professor whose excitement passes away. The dead body prides himself on being a Christian from principle. He cannot bear excitement. He never goes into it. He has not patience with shouting or any manifestation of religious feelings.

These bodies are both dead - equally dead.

The living body represents the true Christian, who is alive. He has a principle of religion in his heart. The feeling of a living Christian. He moves regularly, acts consistently, and goes on steadily. How different he is from the cold, feelingless body. Having no life within. A Christian who does not feel is not conscious of religious feeling. Life is characterized by love, hates, joys, sorrows, and struggles. So is the religious life. The true Christian loves God with all of his heart. And he melts with eagerness at the name of Jesus. He hates sin. And Satan with a perfect hatred. He rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. His are the joys of freedom. He struggles against the joys of temptations. Sometimes the principle of life becomes very weak and is ready to die. In this condition, men do many things as they have done. Some have deluded people. The truth is, the religious principle is too weak to give them any trouble. Or to offer resistance. It is like a reed that leans away from the wind when it blows. It is fast declining - it grows weaker. We need to wake up and examine our lamps to see whether there is oil in the vessel. This is a living principle.

IV. IT IS AN ACTIVE PRINCIPLE

Now life is active. And the religious life is the highest form of living power. It comes from God. It does not come from self. What may we expect of it then. Activity is the law of all principle. All that has power moves. Plants, vegetables. The seasons change. These principles of nature work. And here is the origin of the doctrine of salvation. We see that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. But faith is following by an indwelling and active principle.

And here is the origin of the doctrine of salvation. And that produces the works of righteousness. And an obedient spirit acts upon Christ and serves. The religious man, even of the past, like Enuch, like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel have been great men.

We often hear people say, I wish I was as holy as Moses. Or John. They wish that they could be great Christians - great saints. And why are they not. Certainly they have more light, greater advances, greater assistance and stronger encouragement. And they have the same religious principle.

They are not in it for their holiness. The difficulty is in themselves. They restrain and hold the religious principle in check. They grieve and resist, and quench the spirit. It leads them but they follow not. It moves them but they go not. It draws them but they yield not. Often has the religious principle pointed to some duty which they would not perform. Urging the house of God, the prayer meeting, to attend the class, to have family altar, and prayer. To make restitution, to visit the sick, to speak to an unconverted soul. Some of these duties have been pointed out to you. But you have neglected them.

I will say to you very plainly - if you resist and restrain this principle, you cannot become holy. But if you will only give your free course and be led by its influence, you can go to glorious heights in God's service. Now and then we see that there is a Christian who has allowed the religious principle to have influence. And it has led him above the world and has surrounded him with Heavenly influence. How pure is his spirit. How great is his meekness. How ready is he to enter the Heavenly world.

Yes, my dear friends, you have religion. And you have a principle of great active power. It is one that is all important. And if you would only follow its leading, it would cause you to mount up to high places as an eagle. You would take upon his wings.

A man in Baltimore many years ago, bought a young eagle. Kept him caged until he was full grown. When he determined to give him liberty, he got a number of his friends and went to a public square and he opened the door of the cage. The eagle walked out - after several times around the cage, stretched himself, arose and flew slowly around a few times. Looking down upon the spectators. Then he darted upward to the sun, rose, higher and higher, and still higher. Until he was but a little speck before the sun. Just so, with that eagle - as you yield to the power influence of this Christian principle - you may look earthward awhile. But finally you will fix your eyes on the glories of Heaven, and you will mount higher and higher. True religion is like that. And true religion is like water - water will not be hindered. It will find it's level. When you place a vessel that is full of water beside one that is empty, and you establish communication between them, and that water will pass from one vessel to another until it rises as high as it is in the other. Religion comes from God. It flows from the throne of God. And this blessed truth - there is no habit but what can be reformed. There is no vice that can't be rooted out of your life. It is the power of God, the salvation is for everyone that believeth.

You have a divine, living, active principle. And you will keep this like a treasure - like a precious stone.

But I must impress upon you that it is more than a single individual experience.

It is far more - a matter of vital interest in the church. There is no greater want at this time. Than Godly living in the church. The impression of religion is not just some passing fancy. Men must be taught that here is something that is a controlling power. That people need. Let this be properly understood, taught, and published, in our lives.

Dr. B. H. Carroll tells about Hosea Garrett, president of the board of trustees, Baylor University. He talks about a sermon a man preached. And he was talking about his text from Peter. He said that he had little education. But there were rules that he found in Smiley's arithmetic. And I do not forget that the first rule in that arithmetic is addition. But in his text he said there is some spiritual arithmetic. Adding unspiritual things to another. The sum of result - two ways. He that lacks these things are blind. He has forgotten the cleansing of himself from old sins. To add these things - you reach this man - V. 9. And then he points his finger, he says, at different persons in the audience. Have you faith - then, have you virtue that has been added? Have you courage? If you have added courage, have you added knowledge? Have you added self-control? He said, I looked and listened to that old man in his quiet way discuss spiritual multiplication. And then he says I thought about hearing somebody else - trying to scrape down some stardust and try and cover himself with glitter.

How true it is - here is a principle that works. Like two ships sailing from the port. The captain and sailors of one ship had this and that, everything that is necessary. They have added to co-operate with the winds and the tides. They reach their destiny. They got there with the sails standing. Safe. The passengers safe.

The other ship neither added any part that was necessary for the safe journey and indeed they reached their destination - but they had to be towed into the harbor

by tug almost a wreck.

Yes, faith is the thing that point

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21

Faith Can Grow

Luke 17:1-6

The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.
—Verse 5

I met the woman in a hospital room. "How long have you been in here?" I asked. "Seven months," she answered. Then, after a pause, she continued:

"This has been the most wonderful experience of my life. When I was young I had a fairly meaningful Christian life. Then I married and started my family. This led to active participation in PTA. Later I joined the Garden Club, the Woman's Club, and by degrees became a crusader for every worthy cause that requested my help. I was too busy to realize that somewhere along the way I had lost personal touch with God. Bible reading had faltered, then stopped altogether. Prayer life had almost become nonexistent. My church attendance had grown spasmodic. I had been so involved with many good things that I had lost touch with the best!

"Then came this tragic break in health. In despair, I sought God's help. I was astonished at how far I had drifted from him and how difficult it was to pray. I went back to my Bible and to praying all through the day. These months of limitless time to draw near to God have given me a richer spiritual life than I ever realized it was possible for one to experience."

Pray that you may not neglect your spiritual growth by being too busy to stay in touch with God.