

Subject: "I'm Working On My Spiritual Side"

Text: 2 Peter 1:1-11 (NLT)

This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ. I am writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁹ But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Some of us work on our financial side – we make investments, we work two or three jobs at once, we shop wisely, we spend money only when it's necessary, we recycle clothing rather than buy new things, we would rather get a \$10 haircut instead of a \$100 haircut, we track our savings accounts and checking accounts and stock portfolio and retirement accounts daily and sometimes several times a day. We do this, to work on our financial side.

Some of us work on our physical side. We are constantly looking for something new to enhance our physical beauty or attractiveness. We spend more time in spas than in prayer; We spend more time in the beauty shop than we ever have; We select the best style, the best cut, the best weave, the best facial, the best makeup to present ourselves in the best manner possible. We go to the gym, we run, we walk, we jog, we yoga, we sweat to the oldies, we leg lift, we kick box, we do whatever it takes to still squeeze into those smaller sizes. We do this, to work on our physical side.

Some of us work on our emotional side. We work on firming our relationships with

our spouses, our girlfriends, our boyfriends, our children, our parents. We seek to get help by watching Oprah and Dr. Phil for free. Some of us go to mental health professionals and drop \$100 an hour to lay on a couch and will drop a dollar in the offering basket to sit on a pew. Some of us are into the Zen philosophy, some of us meditate, some of us buy books for better mindsets. We do this, to work on our emotional side.

It's good to work on your financial side. It's good to work on your physical side. Yes, it's good to work on your emotional side. But what about the part of you that is not going to perish? I have discovered that your finances are only temporary – you're not going to take a dime with you when you leave from here. I have discovered that your physical side is temporary – you can look like a He-man today and be in a Rest Home tomorrow. I have discovered that your emotional side is temporary and changing and one day that physical portion of you will cease to be. But what about the part of you, which really my brothers and sisters, is the most important part of you – that when this life is over – the physical will be buried, the financial will be passed on, the emotional will cease – but there is a part of you that needs your attention. There s a part of you that is crying out for some help. There is a part of you that if you gave it just a little attention, it will not only benefit you, but God will be pleased – ladies and gentleman, it's time to work on our spiritual side.

The Apostle Peter, writer of this pastoral epistle, makes an assumption in this letter. He is not writing to the heathen, nor is he writing to potential believers, he is writing to those who already have faith and already walking in the faith. Peter opens by suggesting that God, in His divine power, have given us everything that we need. Is there a witness here? I said everything :

- He's given us air to breathe;
- He's given us the sun to heat us and the moon to light the evening;
- He's given us a mind, a body, and a soul;
- He's given us joy unspeakable;
- He's given us mercy when He didn't owe it to us;
- He's given us peace when He didn't have to give it to us;
- He's given us grace that's amazing; and most importantly,
- He's given us salvation for our souls.

Peter, in his dogmatic presentation, says that you and I need more than just possessing faith – at the end of this portion of the pericope, he says that we must make our calling and election sure – and what Peter is saying that is God has called us, God has selected to save us, even before the world was created, and we have

faith through God's son, Jesus Christ – but that's not enough for my spiritual side, because spiritual growth is not automatic. Just because I'm saved doesn't mean I'm spiritually mature. Just because I'm saved doesn't mean that I think like the Lord wants me to. Just because I'm saved doesn't mean I pray like I should. Yes, I have the faith, but I have a responsibility to work hard to prove, not to God, but to the world, that God has called me and chosen me. And therefore, there are five interlocking Holy Spirit based principles that Peter raises up, to help us on our spiritual side.

Before I go further, I don't want to bore you or disinterest you – but is there anybody here that needs to work on your spiritual side? I'm been saved for 31 years and preaching for almost 30 years and been in Sunday School and Baptist Training Union and YPWW and been to National Conventions and State Conventions and District Associations and Congresses and Workshops and Institutes and Retreats – but I still need to work on my spiritual side! Peter goes on to say later in this chapter that if you don't have these five qualities operating in your life, Peter said you are near-sighted and blind! You have forgotten that you have been cleansed of your past sins. Look at somebody and say “I'm working on my spiritual side.”

These five principles are simple: **Self-Control, Perseverance, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Love.**

First there is **Self-Control**. Peter says that if I'm going to reflect why God saved me in the first place, I need to work hard in self-control. The problem in self-control is that self-control means I have to control a friend of mine – myself. And I have to grab the reigns of myself and discipline myself.

I will admit the hardest person to control is not someone else, but yourself. God does not make us holy against our will or without our involvement. It takes not only the Holy Spirit, who can change us, but I have to willingly submit myself to change.

The problem is that some of us don't want to change. We enjoy being the rude, obnoxious, over-opinionated, bull-headed, loud, crazy, messed up, high, provocative, off the chain, individual, I've don't give a doggone, I'm my own man, I'm my own woman, type of personality – and we even have the audacity to tell those who we meet, “this is just how I am – take me or leave me – I'm just like this.” God's word tends to differ with us – you're only like the way you are because you like being what you are.

Proverbs 25:28 says that the person who has no rule or self-control over their own spirit is like a city where the walls are torn down and destroyed. We don't want to get a hold of ourselves to make ourselves look good, we want to get a hold of ourselves to testify that God is really in control of our lives.

If you walk around like a loose cannon – how do other people surmise that you're a Christian? I never shall forget I worked with a fellow church member that cussed and drank and smoked and lied and stole and did everything on the job, and when I invited those co-workers to come to church, on Monday they didn't talk about how good the choir was or how well the sermon went, they were surprised that she went to church. You've got to have some self-control – baby, get a hold of yourself before you wreck yourself, stop tearing your body up, stop all that foolishness that's going on in your life – get some discipline – clean up your room, clean up your mouth, put some decent clothes on, stop all that lying and backbiting and rumor mongering, stop all that drinking and get high – get some self-control.

Secondly, **you need to develop perseverance.** Peter said before we even identified this as a doctrine of faith, Peter says that you and I need to develop the next level of patience which is perseverance, which is learning to endure life – even if it's not what I want it to be – and even if things don't go my way.

One of the things that most believers credit is that immediate turnaround when they come to Jesus. But I have found out that God is not just concerned about how well you did the day you got saved, he is more concerned about how you're doing a year later, two years later, ten years later.

I've watched track and field events, especially the sprints – the 100 meter dash or the 100 yard dash in this country. I've yet to see a medal given to the man who blasted off the blocks first or the woman who looked the best leaving the starting line first. No, the award is given to the one who finishes!

Let me help Peter out with this. Perseverance is the art of bearing up and pressing on in the face of what's against you in this life. And believe me, just because you know Jesus does not mean that you won't have some trouble and issues in your life.

You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and unemployed.
You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and get lied on.
You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and arrested.
You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and your husband

walk out.

You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and cancer invades your body.

You can be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost – and you'll cry all night long.

The difference in this principle is that no matter what you keep on keeping on. No matter what. That's why I'm encouraged by members who are going through divorce, lost their job, experiencing ill health, and then have the nerve to come to church and lift up holy hands, and worship – because they know that God is still God. And things happen in this life, but they understand that no matter what you're going through, it's better to go through it with God than without God!

Third point, Peter says you have to display **Godliness**. I will admit, I had some trouble with Peter for trying to tell me to be godly when he has a record of being hot-headed, quick tempered, an assaulter, especially when the Greek word Peter uses speaks more about being right in my relationship with God.

Godliness is a supernatural quality of my daily conduct. It's when I mirror God's image and ways to the world. It's the ability to live about the petty things and petty people of this life, to live above the passions and pressures of this world.

But Godliness, used in this context also means “to worship well.” Let's recap – I've got to get control of myself, I've got to demonstrate patience, and then I must be a worshiper. I have to be godly and when I examine godliness – it's going to make me look at myself.

Let's be honest, we don't always act godly. We don't. Sometimes, we do some things that don't reflect godliness, but reflects our own will and desire.

Godliness is sometimes difficult because we pattern ourselves after people and Christian celebrities only to find out that they too have some character flaw and some character tick. That's why I have learned to pattern myself after someone who is really worthy of doing so. The way, I'm told, of making a garment is to lay the pattern down, attach it to the fabric, and then cut the fabric in the form of the pattern. And once that fabric is cut, it will forever resemble the original pattern unless there is an alteration made.

Some of us need some alterations. You patterned yourself after people who have let you down, tore you up, cussed you out, took your money, took your pride, made

you cry, made you want to quit, made you suffer – and God says you need an alteration – Jesus will never leave, Jesus will never forsake, and He won't change.

Lastly, you need **Brotherly Kindness and Love**. I want to group them together, because Paul says you need to love both saints and sinners. You need to love people because of our likenesses and because of our differences.

Peter says you can't just love the folk in the church and then hate the folk in the world. And you can't just love folk in the world and hate folk in the church.

Jesus says that we will show that we are his by our love of each other in the church. It takes the Holy Spirit to do that, because some people in the church don't want to be loved, makes it difficult to love them, and gives you every excuse not to love them.

Also, people in the world do things against us, make fun of our God, ridicule our faith, dig ditches for us, but Jesus says, love your enemies. It takes the Holy Spirit to do that as well – even bill collectors, doctors, lawyers, executioners, jurists, we have to love them anyway.

Peter says in 1 Peter 1:22 that we should not engage in “fake love.” Our love must be real. So real, that the World will know that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

I'm glad that Peter says that if you possess and operate in these five areas, that God will be pleased. I don't know about you but I want to please the Lord. I want the world to know that my calling and my selection is sure. That God chose me, even though I didn't deserve it. He chose me, even though I was still a sinner. He chose me and let his Son die, even though I didn't ask for it. Peter says that when you have these five components, you are neither useless or unfruitful. I'm glad that I'm not just a piece of furniture in God's house – I want the Lord to use me!! I want Him to be pleased with me.

The reason I know He will be pleased is that Peter says that if I operate the way He wants me to, then God will open wide the gates of heaven for you. One of these days, this will all be over. I want the Lord to swing those gates open! I want the Lord to say to me, “well done, thy good and faithful servant.” I want the Lord to say to me, my son died for you. I want the Lord to say to me, my son was buried for you. I want the Lord to say to me, my son, got up for you. Come on up, and when I get inside those gates – my soul, will look back and wonder, how I got

over... (CLOSE)