

Sequences of Redemption #4

In previous studies, we looked at the “theological sequences” in Rom. 8:28-30: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. We then looked at some others in Rom. 5:1-5 which concern our life in this world (peace with God, access to the Father through Christ, rejoicing in hope; then tribulation, endurance, experience, hope, and confidence). Now to 1 Peter, to look at “sequences” of the fruit of our Christian lives.

2 P. 1:5-9 – “And beside 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. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

πίστις (pistis) – “**Faith**” (being convinced of the truth of something)

We begin spiritual life by being convinced that there is one true God who exists as the Creator of all, that he is a holy God against whom we have sinned, and that we cannot in ourselves stand before his righteous judgment. We then hear and believe the gospel – that the eternal Son of God came as a man (Jesus) who died as a sinless and holy Substitute for sinners, bearing the penalty of our guilt, that he was really, physically raised from the dead, and has ascended to heaven.

We come to believe much more than this, yet the statement above generally describes “the faith” which leads a person to salvation in Christ. But we do not simply believe those things, we personally respond by repenting of sins, publicly confessing that belief and receiving Christ as our Savior. We believe that we have become sons of God, and are at peace with him, no longer fearing a dreadful judgment. Jn. 1:12-13

This faith is the “starting point” of the Christian life, but Peter is saying it is not enough simply to hear and respond to the gospel. We need to continue in the faith and grow as Christian sons of God. He explains that to that faith we need to add certain things.

ἀρετή (arete) – “**Virtue**” (dictionary definition: moral excellence; goodness; righteousness)

This Greek word can be used generally of a human excellence either in body or mind, but in this context it is describing a virtuous life, in thoughts, feelings, and actions – in other words, “moral goodness”.

It is obvious that we cannot have virtue before faith, because before being born again, we were anything but virtuous. One of the things that brought us to Christ in the first place was the belief that we were really, completely, and thoroughly lost in sin, and that we had no virtue. But Peter says that starting with faith, we should then add virtue. We are said to have been “converted” (Mt. 18:3, Ac. 3:19, 26), and that should be evidenced by a real change in the way we think, speak, act, and even feel. All that we now are, should be characterized by what is morally right and spiritually true. Phl. 4:8

γνῶσις (gnosis) – “**Knowledge**”

As stated above, we start out as new believers with a rudimentary faith by believing “the gospel” as presented to us, and responding to it. We must not think that is all we need to believe though. We should be striving for true knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. This seeking of truth and understanding should be a life-long pursuit. However much we may know, it is never complete. We seek this understanding through the Word (the Bible), supplemented by church teaching and personal prayer and diligent study. Beware of an attitude that says “I have enough knowledge of the Bible to get into heaven, and I do not need any more.” We should be hungry for knowledge – not mere knowledge, but the wisdom and understanding that leads us progressively closer to Christ-like living. True knowledge is not boastful or self-serving, but humble. The more we know, the more we know we don’t know. Hos. 3:6, 14 - experiential knowledges, not mere education. Prov. 1:1-6

ἐγκράτειαν (egkrateian) – **“Temperance”** (self-control)

Besides faith, virtue, and knowledge, we should be developing self-control, concerning our physical appetites (food, drink, sleep, sex, etc.) but also over our emotions, words, and actions. 1 Cor. 6:19-20, Eph. 4:29-32

ὑπομονή (hupomone) – **“Patience”** (steadfastness, constancy, perseverance or endurance)

This we discussed last time, from Rom. 5. Remember, the word commonly translated as “patience” in the KJV is better understood as “endurance”. God doesn’t want “snap-shot” Christians, but those who will endure to the end, through all difficulties, persecutions, temptations, and weariness. Mt. 24:13 – “But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.”

εὐσέβεια (eusebeia) – **“Godliness”** (reverence and respect; piety towards God; godliness)

This word is well-translated as godliness, which is really “God-likeness”. Our day-to-day goal should always be to become more like God, to let the Holy Spirit work in us holy ways of thinking and acting. We are forbidden to make graven images of God, but instead are to let him create in us the very image of Christ. 2 Cor. 3:17-18

φιλαδελφίαν (philadelphian) – **“Brotherly kindness”**

This is one of the Greek words for love that describes a kind of love we have for other people. We should view our fellow Christians, not just as people with whom we are doctrinally compatible, or just as being members of the same church, or community, or ethno-religious background, but as our own brothers or sisters. Why? Because we all have one Father. We treat each other as brethren “in the Lord”.

Brotherly love is to extend beyond those we agree with. We should love our enemies, and those who do not yet know Christ, but “brotherly love” is what we have to other believers. Naturally, we feel this love more intensely with those in our own local church, but you have surely experienced that same love toward people in other churches, even though you may be aware of significant differences in doctrine or church practice.

ἀγάπη (agape) – **“Charity”** (the “God-kind” of love)

Agape is the word for another kind of love, that was rarely used outside of the Bible and ecclesiastical writings. It is not a sexual love, nor a love of family/clan/nation, and it even goes beyond brotherly love. It is the kind of love that exists in the Godhead, and from God towards man. As God’s children, we are to exercise “agape” love toward God and other men. It is the most noble and selfless kind of love, as seen in the motivating Christ to die for his people. So we also should act in ways that express our love for God and man, even under changing circumstances and costs.

Look back at 2 P. 1:8-9.

So to insert everything in the Rom. 8 sequence it would look like this:

God’s Eternal Plan

Foreknowledge

Predestination

Calling

Justification by faith

New Relationship to God

Peace with God → Access to God → Rejoicing in hope

Practical Results of Justification

Tribulation → Endurance → Proven Experience → Hope → Confidence (not ashamed)

Moral and Spiritual Fruit of Justification

Faith → Virtue → Knowledge → Temperance → Endurance → Godliness → Brotherly kindness → Love
Glorification