

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 5: *Our Productive Faith, Part 3
(The Backbone of Christlike Character)*
Text: 2 Peter 1:6
Date: Sunday, September 23, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 5: *Our Productive Faith, Part 3
(The Backbone of Christlike Character)*
Text: 2 Peter 1:6
Date: Sunday, September 23, 2012



TEACHING TIP

Be sure that you are taking time to think through application for each lesson. Where we do not offer application, we're much more prone to be exemplifying and leading self-deceived believers who are hearers only and not doers of the Word (cf. James 1:22-25). If I do not go far enough with application, please feel free to go farther. While only so much can be accomplished in a 35-minute Sunday morning Bible study, I do hope that we can at least begin practical application which the Holy Spirit can develop in individual lives throughout the week.

Also, for your information, starting this week, endnotes will take the place of footnotes.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 1:7 – *Our Productive Faith, Part 4 (The Trademark of Christlike Character)*

INTRODUCTION

Last week, we began to “work the farm” of our sanctification. Having “explored the farm” or scrutinized our salvation by faith (i.e., “being a ‘partaker of the divine nature’ through the righteousness of Jesus Christ), we now begin to cooperate with God in its production. In lesson 4, we studied the groundwork for Christlike character and its virtues of excellence and knowledge:¹

- *Excellence* – “capturing the heart for Christ,” or “cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies of Jesus Christ”

- *Knowledge* – “informing the heart about Christ” or “cultivating a God-taught understanding of the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ”

In this lesson, we’re going to build on that foundation and consider the backbone of Christlike character.

THE BACKBONE OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 6)

The three virtues of verse 6 comprise the backbone of Christlike character.

Illustration: In this point/column, we are entering into a gymnasium in our sanctification as we “train the heart for Christ”:

While our heart desires an intimate relationship with the One we have chosen [via faith, excellence, and knowledge], our heart is not yet trained to live for Someone else, for it certainly is not natural for us to do so.

Thus, we see our need in column two to enter the “gymnasium,” where the spiritual muscle needed to protect and reinforce our commitment to Christ is developed by repetitions on the workstations of daily responsibilities, trials, and temptations in the power of God’s Spirit. Thoughts and words must be checked; reactions must be restrained; personal desires must sometimes be sacrificed; ideas and standard operating procedures must be blended into the ways of Another. Our well-intended and perhaps well-informed spiritual desires must be turned into reality. The backbone of our Christian character will be forged here in column two. (cf. 1 Timothy 4:7b-8)²

1. *Self-Control*

BDAG defines this Greek word (*egkrateia*) simply as the “restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires: self-control.”³ The lexicographers, Louw and Nida, build on that definition quite helpfully:

An adequate rendering of the expression ‘to exercise self-control’ may require an idiomatic equivalent, for example, ‘to hold oneself in,’ ‘to command oneself,’ ‘to be a chief of oneself,’ ‘to make one’s heart be obedient,’ ‘to command one’s own desires,’ ‘to be the master of what one wants,’ or ‘to say No to one’s body.’⁴

In its etymology (i.e., the stem *krat-*), this word has the idea of “power or lordship” and this virtue was held in great importance in the Greco-Roman world, especially in relation to food, sex, and the use of the tongue, although “it extends to all areas of life where the discernment between good and evil is important.”⁵ It idealized the man who was truly free, for if one cannot say “no” to his passions, then he is enslaved to them (cf. 2 Peter 2:19).⁶ Colloquially, it has the same basic meaning as the phrase, “Get a grip!”

In every day living, this self-control takes two basic forms (cf. Luke 9:23-24): (1) entirely repudiating sinful desires (e.g., these usually manifest themselves in wrong priorities and pursuits), and (2) denying the unscriptural gratification of natural desires (e.g., the desires for food, sleep, sex, etc. can be gratified in the wrong time, wrong place, wrong motivation, wrong way, etc.).

This is what Paul had in mind when he used the illustration of an athlete’s self-control in 1 Corinthians 9:25 to picture the believer’s need to practice self-control in order to avoid spiritual disqualification. In that passage, he defines self-control as “[to] subdue my body and make it my slave” (v. 27 NET). In 1 Corinthians 7:5, 9, Paul specifically refers to this need in the realm of sexual desires.⁷

The New Testament both accepts and builds upon this basic understanding of self-denial, for we discover in Galatians 5:23 that this “self-control” must be generated by the Spirit. In other words, self-control is not simply self-restraint by oneself upon oneself (“human reason over passion” in Greco-Roman thinking). While we cannot ignore the fact that we will need to lecture ourselves in order for self-control to be known (cf. Psalm 42), biblical self-control is accomplished by a submission to Another’s “power or lordship.” The self-controlled individual has already laid a foundation of submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ through *faith* (in which the penalty and dominion of sinful desires were completely taken care of through Jesus) *excellence* (in which the believer commits himself to repudiate sinful desires and reflect Jesus in parallel to and practice of His new creation standing), and *knowledge* (in which the believer recognizes his sinful desires in the light of his increasing knowledge of the person, work, and ways of Jesus). Therefore, “at every crossroad where [the believer] must decide whether he will please himself or please Christ...he must then die to himself...in order to receive the divine help—the grace—to carry out the right choice (1 Peter 5:5; 2 Corinthians 9:8).”⁸

This virtue—if it is to be genuine, spiritual, Christlike self-denial—*must* be built on the first three.⁹ “To develop Christlikeness, [the believer] must interact with Christ Himself in response to what Christ has said in His Word....The believer can and will say no to any wrong desires when he has said a bigger yes to Christ’s will for him.”¹⁰ Therefore, we will define this virtue as the cultivation of “a God-empowered mastery of my internal desires.”

Illustration: Dr. Berg provides an illustration that I believe really helps us understand what is the difference between the human virtue of self-discipline and the Christlike virtue spoken of here.¹¹

A college student who knows he needs to develop the virtue of self-control so that he can stick with his studies for the evening and not be distracted by the technology or friends around him cannot merely say to himself, “I’ll fail this course if I don’t study, and I’ve got to prove to Mom and Dad that I can make it. Therefore, I’m going to buckle down and study.”

A student operating this way may, indeed, earn better grades and perhaps the commendation of his parents, but he won’t have developed any Christian character in the process. He will have developed only a human virtue of self-discipline—something an unbeliever can do as well.

To develop Christlikeness...his conversation with Christ might go something like this:

“Lord Jesus, right now I’m tempted to shut my books and waste a lot of time doing something more pleasurable like surfing the Internet or hanging out with my friends. I know, however, that if I do, I would not be living to please You but myself. You’ve done so much for me at Calvary, and I want to become someone You can use in Your kingdom work here on the earth. Therefore, with Your help I’ll buckle down and study tonight.

I acknowledge that I have wasted the last several evenings. I ask forgiveness for my self-indulgence and my failures to be a good steward of the time and opportunities You have given me.

I need Your grace to resist the distractions and to concentrate on what You want me to learn in these courses. Thank You in advance for fulfilling Your promise to me that “I can do all things through You—the One Who strengthens me.” Help me to do right tonight. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.”

He then must obey God by applying himself to his studies that evening. This student is cultivating Christlike self-control.



Application: According to Proverbs 4:23; 25:28; 21:25 why is self-control so important? *“Solomon teaches that a man who is ruled by his desires will be destroyed, for he is like a city without walls. He has no defense against his enemies. Everything he holds dear is inside those walls—all the issues of his life. They all will be pillaged by the enemy if he does not have the defense of self-control.”*¹²

Consider these questions—either in discussion or in personal meditation—as a barometer to determine how consistently the Holy Spirit is enabled to display self-control through your own submission to displaying the excellencies of Christ:

- Is your life characterized by order or chaos?¹³
- In your thinking, do you allow yourself the opportunity to die to self in order that Christ’s will might be accomplished in the moment of temptation?
- How do you view God’s “orders”—as burdens that weigh you down and ruin your fun, or as divine revelations of God’s nature and privileged will?
- Do your choices reflect that the particulars of life are regulated by revealed universal principles?
- Do you find yourself constantly dealing with the consequences of disorder (e.g., late penalties, parental scoldings and spankings, traffic points, fines, suspensions, prison sentences, etc.)?
- Are you burdened about the disorder in the lives of other believers (e.g., your children)?
- Where does this world assault God’s order, and where are you being negatively affected by those assaults? *“Today’s terrorism, corporate scandal, sexual promiscuity, materialism, deceit, rebellion to authority, pop culture’s rock idiom, and other assaults in the arts all are reflections of disorderly hearts and breed chaos among men to the glory of Lucifer and the dishonor of the God of order.”*

2. Endurance

Illustration:¹⁴ Robert Edwin Peary finally planted an American flag at the North Pole on April 6, 1909 on his sixth expedition—he sacrificed many years of his life and eight toes to this endeavor.¹⁵ Roal Amundsen encountered ice floes, arctic temperatures worsened by 35-mile-per-hour winds, and hidden ice crevasses that claimed his sleds, but he finally reached the South Pole on December 14, 1952. Edmund Hillary followed several unsuccessful attempts when he finally conquered Mount Everest’s 29,028 feet on May 29, 1952. Jacques Piccard braved the dangerous descent to over 6 miles below the surface of the Pacific Ocean on January 23, 1960 and rested on the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

These grueling and adventurous journeys to remote parts of the earth had many things in common—careful planning, extensive funding, and exceptional support teams. These particular explorers, however, all boasted one quality which many other equally-supported adventurers lacked—endurance.

“Most of us will never have our endurance tested by extreme arctic temperatures or the deadly water pressures on the ocean’s floor seven miles below the surface, but all of us will face circumstances of other sorts that test our resolve to remain faithful to a task or to a mission God has given us to do.”¹⁶ These circumstances and pressures may be physical torture, natural affliction and disease, poverty, pressure from family or friends, pressures from the external culture, etc.

Endurance (Gk. *hupomone*) is “the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty: patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance.”¹⁷ One modern translation identifies the contemporary meaning to be “stick-to-it-iveness.”¹⁸ However, lest we understand it too passively, it is helpful for us to recognize that “the New Testament uses the word frequently to refer to remaining strong in unwelcome toil and hardship (cf. Rom. 5:3–4; 12:12; 2 Cor. 1:6; 2 Thess.

1:4; James 1:12; 1 Peter 2:20; Rev. 2:2–3), the kind that can make life extremely difficult, painful, grievous, and shocking—even to the point of death (cf. Rev. 1:9; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12).¹⁹

Nonetheless, the Christlike version of this virtue rescues it from a purely negative connotation and demonstrates a consistently “forward look in it. It is said of Jesus...that for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2). That is *hupomonē*, Christian steadfastness. It is the courageous acceptance of everything that life can do to us and the transmuting of even the worst event into another step on the upward way.”²⁰

Therefore, endurance is tied to faith in the promises and plan of God, as we continually look to God for the strength and reward that He guarantees (cf. vv. 1-4). The endurance described in Hebrews 11:32-38 follows the faith detailed in Hebrews 11:1-31. This is epitomized in Moses who “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). We can, therefore, define this virtue as the cultivation of “a God-sustained faithfulness under external pressure.”

It makes sense that endurance follows self-control, for it may be relatively easy to deny oneself once or even twice, but to make this the consistent pattern of one’s life requires the endurance of commitment to excellence and the application of the knowledge of Jesus and His ways. Indeed, a Christian’s faith is productive only because of its perseverance over time. Therefore, by God’s grace and through faith, we need to add to our self-control, endurance. Furthermore, endurance feeds off of self-control, for “a man cannot effectively say no to the pressures outside himself [endurance] until he is skilled at saying no to the pressures that come from within [self-control].”²¹

Illustration: Think of someone you know who has been through a tremendously difficult valley in life and maintained a sweet testimony of joyful submission to the lordship of Christ. Perhaps you can contrast that with the memory of

another saint, equally tested, but unequally manifesting of the grace and peace of Jesus Christ. The difference between those two cases was probably endurance.

For the first individual, the valley of testing was the opportunity to enter into new depths of the fellowship-knowledge of Jesus Christ. This was a natural, albeit hard, mindset to choose, for his commitment to displaying Jesus’ glory (the virtue of excellence) grounded him in this resolve. God was able to use his Bible study to cultivate within him a faith-filled acceptance of and obedience to the promises and ways of Jesus Christ, simultaneously enabling him to say no to attitudes of anger, fear, bitterness, and despair. With God’s Word offering eternal perspective on earthly particulars, relationships and responsibilities took their proper place, and even the deepest valley was an opportunity to “greatly rejoice though now for a season, if need be, [he was] in heaviness through [various trials]” (1 Peter 1:6).

Even that illustration is someone artificial, for “this kind of joyful, hope-filled, and courageous endurance does not break on the scene unexpectedly at a crucial time of need. It is forged on the anvil of years of daily commitment to Jesus Christ followed by countless daily surrenders to Him as each new challenge and temptation arises that day. Endurance is cultivated in this way. It is the ‘trying of [our] faith that worketh [endurance]’ (James 1:3).”²²

Application: Dr. Bob Jones Sr. is known for his “chapel saying,” one of which is “The test of your character is what it takes to stop you.” With that perspective on endurance, contemplate the following questions.²³

- Do I stop being kind when another person offends me in some way or there is something about the person that does not appeal to me?
- Do I stop being obedient just because I don’t agree with the policy or because it inconveniences me?

- Do I stop exercising self-control because I'm discouraged at the moment and want to do something that will make me feel better or because my friends are indulging sinfully in something and I don't want to be left out or thought of as a coward?
- Do I stop seeking God in my Bible and praying daily just because my schedule gets full or something doesn't go the way I want it to go and I'm upset with God?
- Do I stop maintaining pure thoughts and actions when I'm given the opportunity to feed my lusts undetected through the Internet, movies, or television or when I'm alone with a member of the opposite sex who is not my spouse?
- Do I stop being honest when shading the truth would keep me from being held responsible for wrongdoing or would bring me praise I didn't earn?
- Do I stop sacrificing for people when they don't seem to appreciate it or when no one seems to notice?
- Do I stop taking hope in the promises of God and become discouraged when I don't see circumstances working out the way I want them to or as fast as I want them to?
- Do I stop being a diligent worker when no one is present to hold me accountable for my work or when the work situation isn't what I had expected?



(1) What are some other ways that betray a lack of endurance? *Open discussion.* (2) What are some "great and precious promises" that we need to memorize and meditate upon in order to fuel the flame of our endurance? *Open discussion—consider what truths and promises the believers in Hebrews 11 claimed; consider the message of Hebrews 12:1-4; consider the honesty of Jesus in Matthew 10.* (3) How are those promises and truths undermined by the

solicitations of the world? *"We are promised popularity, ease, and fun if we will pursue the lifestyles presented to us by the world. We are promised easy credit, 250 channels, unlimited minutes, all you can eat, no-fault divorce, free wireless, confidential abortions, and safe sex."*²⁴ (4) Who are you listening to? God's promises breed endurance; the world's promises breed disillusionment.

3. **Godliness**

Godliness is both a natural by-product of the first two and a necessary complement to them. We could simply and helpfully organize these three qualities this way:

- Self-Control – saying "no" to what is not Christlike
- Godliness – saying "yes" to what is Christlike
- Endurance – saying those things every day

Dr. Berg defines godliness (Gk. *eusebeia*) as "cultivating a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that promotes righteousness and opposes evil" and BDAG summarizes it as "awesome respect accorded to God: devoutness, piety, godliness."²⁵ MacArthur adds that it simply means "reverence for God (1:3; 3:11; 1 Tim. 2:2; 6:6; cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). It could also be translated 'true religion,' or 'true worship' and conveys the idea that one who has it properly honors and adores God (1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:1; cf. John 4:24; Phil. 3:3)."²⁶

Bottom line, the godly person is the direct opposite of the fool in Psalm 14:1 and 53:1. Instead of denying or rebelling against God, the wise Christian recognizes what the unbelieving Benjamin Franklin declared—that "God governs in the affairs of men"—and he lets that shape the way he thinks, chooses, interacts, and behaves on any given day. Berg takes it a step further, "He may be Christian, but a man is not godly if he will not open his mouth and put the weight of his influence and life into the cause of righteousness."²⁷ Thus, he needs to be

able to endure first, for “All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Notice again the placement of this quality in our sequential list of virtues—it both crowns and summarizes the “personal virtues” (excellence, knowledge, self-control, and endurance) and launches one into the “social virtues” (brotherly kindness and love). The social virtues encapsulate “loving our neighbor as ourselves” and the “personal virtues” depict one who “loves God with his whole heart.”²⁸

This virtue, then, lies at the heart of what a Christlike character is—it was God’s heart for us when He saved us (2 Peter 1:3) and is His heart for us as He sanctifies us (2 Peter 3:11-12).²⁹

Application: What is God asking you to become when He summarizes this list so far with a call to “godliness”? This term reminds us that without God, Christlike character will not be cultivated. Is God a part of your daily routine, a regular recipient of your prayers for help, a consistent impact upon the way you view your day? Or have you “left your first love” (cf. Revelation 3:4).



What are the marks of a godly person? Of an ungodly person? *Open discussion* (NOTE: *ungodly* ≠ *debauched* and *wicked*; it simply means “un-godly” or “without God”).

CONCLUSION

Illustration: William Wilberforce is best known as the man who rid England of the slave trade. In his own admission, however, his burden had always been two-fold: “God Almighty has put before me two great objects—the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of the [morals] of England.”³⁰ Regarding the religiosity of his countrymen, he wrote:

Take such people aside at an opportune time and lead the conversation to the matter of religion. The most that can be done is to get them to talk in general terms about religion.

They appear lost in generalizations. There is nothing specific, nor determinate. There is nothing to suggest a mind that is used to contemplate on specific realities.

Vainly you strive to bring them around to speak on this topic. One would expect the subject of God to be uppermost in the hearts of redeemed sinners. But they elude all your endeavors. If you make mention of it yourself, they do not give it a cordial welcome; indeed they greet it with unequivocal disgust. At best, the discussion remains forced and formal.

Regarding their morality, he added:

However, at home the progress of irreligion and the decline in morals is enough to alarm every thoughtful person and to fill us with foreboding about the growth of evil. We can only depend upon true Christians to give some remedy against its decline....Singleness of purpose [i.e., excellence], consistency of behavior [i.e., self-control and godliness], and perseverance in effort [i.e., endurance] are needed. Only true Christians can provide these qualities.

Will you be a “true Christian” who professes and practices “true faith” and “cultivates the conditions” in which God can produce the character of Christ in you?

ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

Loving God with My Whole Heart	Loving Neighbors as Myself
<p>THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 5)</p> <p>Saving FAITH</p> <p>Being a “partaker of the divine nature” through the righteousness of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pursuing the EXCELLENCE of Christlikeness</p> <p>Cultivating a God-mandated purpose to develop and display the excellencies (character) of Jesus Christ</p> <p>↓</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-taught understanding of the person, the work, and the ways of Jesus Christ</p>	<p>THE BACKBONE OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 6)</p> <p>SELF-CONTROL</p> <p>Cultivating a God-empowered mastery of my internal desires</p> <p>↓</p> <p>ENDURANCE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-sustained faithfulness under external pressure</p> <p>↓</p> <p>GODLINESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-honoring devotion to Jesus Christ that promotes righteousness and opposes evil</p>
<p>COMMITMENT to Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a wholehearted disciple who chooses the appeals and ideals of Christ and rejects the appeals and ideals of the world.</p>	<p>COMPASSION like Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a tenderhearted disciple-maker who seeks the lost and who by his example and effort disciplines others to live a Christ-centered life.</p>
<p>THE TRADEMARK OF CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER (v. 7)</p> <p>BROTHERLY KINDNESS</p> <p>Cultivating a God-engendered affection for and service to those in the “household of faith”</p> <p>↓</p> <p>LOVE</p> <p>Cultivating a God-imitating mindset that scripturally and sacrificially meets the spiritual needs of others</p>	<p>COURAGE for Christ</p> <p>These traits produce a bravehearted disciple who advances Christ and His ways and opposes evil in himself and others regardless of risk to himself.</p>

ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

CORE VALUES

ENDNOTES

¹ Again, our outline and many of our observations are taken from Dr. Jim Berg, *Essential Virtues*, an excellent resource for studying this list in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

² Berg, Jim (2011-09-07). *Essential Virtues* (Kindle Locations 1129-1136). BJU Press/JourneyForth. Kindle Edition.

³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 274.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 750-51.

⁵ Berg, Kindle Location 1216.

⁶ Vol. 2, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 339-41.

⁷ According to 2 Timothy 3:1-3, this virtue will be largely absent in the “last days” and certainly seem to characterize our own culture. Indeed, even the church is dominated by false teachers who “are characterized by sensuality (2:2), inflamed by sinful desires (2:10); [who] live for soft and comforting pleasures (2:13), never cease thinking of adultery (2:14), and are enslaved to corruption (2:19)” (Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, 1, 2 *Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003], 300).

⁸ Berg, Kindle Locations 1182-1184.

⁹ “Aristotle saw through the shallowness of Socrates’ dictum that no-one willingly rejects the best course once he sees it. He knew full well that men do willingly and wilfully sin, and he has a lot to say about *akrasia*, being mastered by one’s lusts. But he had no answer to the problem of human wickedness. That answer is to be found in the Christian way of life. For Christian self-control is submission to the control of the indwelling Christ; and by this means mature virtue (what Aristotle wistfully called ‘divine virtue which is beyond man’) does become a possibility for men. Once again Peter uses a word which must have cut the false teachers like a whiplash. They claimed that knowledge released them from the need for self-control (2:10ff.; 3:3). Peter emphasized that true knowledge leads on to self-control. Any system which divorces religion from ethics is fundamental heresy” (Michael Green, vol. 18, 2 *Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987], 88).

¹⁰ Berg, Kindle Locations 1192-1193, 1225-1226. “The root problem is obvious. Most who know Christ live for themselves rather than wholeheartedly for Jesus Christ. Their failure to pursue the excellence of Christlikeness and the knowledge of Christ—column-one virtues—is obvious by their failure to exercise self-control. They are ruled by their passions....Self-control born of Spirit-enabled self-denial [is] a natural byproduct of the gospel. Anyone who [has] experienced the grace of God and [is] growing in that grace should [be] experiencing greater measures of self-denial and should [be] living an increasingly well-ordered life. God’s priorities [are] becoming his in every area of life” (Kindle Locations 1374-1376, 1402-1404).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1186-1203.

¹² *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1149-1151.

¹³ “We must not miss the point that disorder is an attack on the character and purposes of God. Today’s terrorism, corporate scandal, sexual promiscuity, materialism, deceit, rebellion to authority, pop culture’s rock idiom, and other assaults in the arts all are reflections of disorderly hearts and breed chaos among men to the glory of Lucifer and the dishonor of the God of order.

All history is an account of God’s design to restore the order lost in the fall. One day it will be restored completely, and Lucifer will be forced to recognize his place again as a creature under the Creator. All mankind—redeemed and damned—will acknowledge that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord [Ruler over all] to the glory of God the Father’ (Philippians 2:11). Everything will be put back in order.

Ultimately, a man who rejects God’s priorities will pay the price of his rebellion—temporally or eternally. Self-will—the disorder of a man asserting his will against God’s—in all its forms of stubbornness and rebellion is an imitation of Lucifer’s original disorderliness. Unless pardoned by the Creator, it will bring the same doom that awaits Lucifer. The seriousness of the penalty for disorder should instruct us as to the seriousness of the crime of disorder.

Late penalties, parental scoldings and spankings, traffic points, fines, suspensions, and prison sentences are all human “disorder indexes” by which a person can measure the degree to which his life is out of order. They show the extent of a man’s lack of self-control.

But what is even more grievous is that this cultural disorderliness has infected the church and the Christian family. Permissive parenting on the one hand and mean-spirited authoritarianism on the other hand are both evidences of disorderly living. Maxed-out credit cards, obesity, laziness, dysfunctional marriages, the prevalence of sensuality in language, dress, and entertainment choices, outright immorality, unfaithful employees, and the disrespect to authority so commonplace today all testify to the disorderliness of God’s people.

Parents who tolerate in their children behaviors that indicate and promote self-indulgence—hours watching television, playing video games, or surfing the Internet; purposeless hanging out with friends, whether online, on the phone, or in person; disrespectful body language and words; childhood obesity; and sloppiness in dress or living environments—are part of the problem. Such parental failures often reveal their own disorderliness. They are either too busy with their own activities, too afraid of their child’s reactions, or too blind to spiritual things to see the need to actively disciple their children in the first place” (*Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1329-1342).

¹⁴ Adapted from *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1409-1423.

¹⁵ One time, he even came within 174 miles of the pole, but had to turn back due to delays that had dwindles his supplies (*Ibid.*, Kindle Location 1411-1415).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1424-1426.

¹⁷ Arndt, 1039.

¹⁸ NET Bible, note #25 on verse 6.

¹⁹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., 2 *Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 41.

²⁰ William Barclay, *Letters of James and Peter*, 303, quoted in MacArthur, 41. Also, “[Endurance] springs from faith in the promises of God, knowledge of Christ, experience of his divine power (vv. 3–4). And so it produces in the Christian a deepened awareness of a Father’s wise and loving hand controlling all that happens” (Green, 88-89).

²¹ Berg, Kindle Locations 1530-1531.

²² *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1561-1564.

²³ *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1495-1510.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Kindle Locations 1663-1665.

²⁵ Arndt, 412.

²⁶ MacArthur, 41-42.

²⁷ Berg, Kindle Locations 1735-1736.

²⁸ Adapted from Berg, Kindle Locations 1747-1751.

²⁹ “To put it all together, let’s think of it this way. Godliness represents all that makes up the ‘engine’ of loving God with all our heart. Godliness is made up of devotion (aretè and knowledge) and discipline (self-control and endurance). It welds these four virtues of the first two columns together into a focused and powerful combination of spiritual commitment and strength engaged in the Lord’s cause on the earth.

The commitment—the devotion—to Jesus Christ of aretè and knowledge points the soul in the right direction and keeps it on track, but the believer will never go very far without the ‘horsepower’—the discipline—of self-control and endurance. Godliness molds all these together into a package of Christian maturity that captures what it means to love God with your whole heart.

Godliness as a way of life then becomes the force that pulls along the ‘cars’ of good works (brotherly kindness and love). Good works will not get down the track very far without the strength of discipline and the Christ-centeredness of devotion pulling together. The ‘personal virtues’ that make up columns one and two—the vertical dimension of a man’s relationship with Christ—provide the core character for living the ‘social virtues’ of column three—the horizontal dimension of a man’s relationship with his neighbor. The ‘engine’ of godliness must be ‘firing on all four cylinders’ of aretē, knowledge, self-control, and endurance. Only then can it pull the sometimes heavy loads of brotherly kindness and love” (Berg, Kindle Locations 1787-1801).

³⁰ William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity*, ed. James M. Houston (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1982, 1997), xii, 23-24, and 129-130 quoted in Berg, Kindle Locations 1697-1702, 1728-1731.