

Second Peter 1:8-9
 Spiritual Transformation
 2P1010

Golden Chain of Virtue
 May 9, 2010 pm

“PARALYZED BY GRACE”

INTRODUCTION: The greatest challenge in life is the challenge of balance...

1. Sinners are, by nature, imbalanced people. Sin skews us one way or the other.
2. People are prone to *binges, fads, movements, and excesses*. They seldom display the well-roundedness of **balance**.
3. **For example:** To where could you turn on Television for an objective, fair-handed and balanced view of the news?
 - a. **Fox:** right-wing and sensational (mildly Republican)
 - b. **CNN and HLN:** openly left and pro-Democrat
 - c. **ABC, NBC, CBS:** sophisticatedly PC
 - d. **MSNBC:** wildly, irresponsibly, crassly liberal
 - e. **PBS and NPR:** left-wing and socialist
4. We simply seem unable to look at current events from an unbiased and balanced viewpoint. Just can't do it!
5. This imbalance is not unique to the media, politics and the world. It also finds its way into the church:
 - a. **PCA** and other fundamentalist churches (right-wing)
 - b. **Baptists, Seeker-driven, New Wave:** popularly middle-of-the-road
 - c. **Roman Catholics:** liberalism in conservative packaging
 - d. **Emergent Churches:** the classical liberalism (revisited) (pc)
 - e. **Mainline Denominations:** neo-orthodox left field (pc)
 - f. *Not criticism; the point: We all lack balance*
6. And if we study the *spiritual swings* in my short lifetime, we'll discover that this **pendulum of imbalance** has swung from side to side 5 times in the past 60 years...
 - a. 1940's – 1950's: a benign middle-road, soft-centered liberalism
 - b. 1960's – 1970's: revolution to the right in radical jerks: Jesus-people, campus movement, Charismatics, Maranatha, etc...
 - c. 1980's – 1990's: The rise of the Evangelical Right: moral majority, Focus on the Family, American Center for Justice, talk-radio and “Take America Back for God”, etc. (Conservatism)
 - d. 2000's – 2010's: The Great Reaction: from activism to the “Me Generation” (young people separated into own churches, etc.)

- e. Now: Emergent Church: the old Liberalism in a 21st Century, postmodern format (back to the '50's)
- f. *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?
A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.
The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.
The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.
All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.
All things are full of weariness;
a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.
What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new" ?
It has been already
in the ages before us.
There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things yet to be
among those who come after. (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)*

7. And, with these sociological, generational and philosophical swings, there comes an *imbalance in theology*.
- a. 1940's – 1950's: Traditional religion (non-descriptive)
 - b. 1960's – 1970's: Personal Faith Movement (experience over theology; focus on being born again, personal Bible study, small groups, singing)
 - c. 1980's – 1990's: Activism of the 60's funneled into more mature causes. Confusion of Evangelicalism and Republican Conservatism. (Question: Can a person be a Democrat and be saved?)

- d. 2000's – 2010's: Triumph of emotionalism, music, “me and my kids”: Church reduced to programs, contemporary music, friendships.
 - e. Now: Entering into a stage of reinventing Christianity and denying Gospel faith. (*Brian McLaren and Emergents*)
8. **The point of all this:** *Christians swing back and forth between law and Gospel, works and faith, duty and grace, always searching for balance.*
9. In our own little PCA world, we can see these movements, left and right, within our own presbyteries, churches and ministries.
- a. Right: Law, works, duty, theology – *Southern Presbyterianism (TR's), Theonomists, Federal Vision*
 - b. Left: Gospel, grace, experience, emotion – *Sonship, Seeker-Driven, Emergent/Urban, Suburban*
 - c. Each appears to arise in reaction to and an effort at correcting the imbalances of the other
 - d. **Christ Covenant's history:** *Right-wing, conservative evangelicalism; then a move to the left and seeker-driven Christianity; then confusion and disruption; now the movement back to a place of balance in the 21st century.*
10. **I suggest to you** that this is nothing new in the Christian Religion, but has always been the pattern of church history and historical theology. Warp and woof of church life. Ebb and flow of the Christian faith.
11. The apostles faced these same issues and so they wrote letters to the churches, attempting to bring balance to the pendulum of experiential Christianity –
- a. To correct the imbalances of too much emphasis on law, we have *Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians*
 - b. To correct the imbalances of cheap grace without holiness, we have *The Corinthian letters and Hebrews, James, John's epistles, Peter's letters and the two Thessalonian letters, and Jude.*
 - c. *The Pastoral epistles:* Balance in the ministry
12. Peter's solution to imbalance is called **Spiritual Transformation**.
- a. The development of a well-rounded, Biblically balanced, Christlike character, rooted in faith, empowered by grace, moving toward virtue.
 - b. **The Golden Chain of Virtue:** grace, faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, piety, brotherly affection and godly love.
 - c. A very **balanced** list of Christian virtues:
 - i. All flowing from grace
 - ii. The duty and the experience
 - iii. The cognitive and the relational
 - iv. The duty and cognitive: *knowledge, virtue, self-control, steadfastness*
 - v. The experiential and relational: *faith, piety, brotherly affection and love*
13. **Remember:** Peter was writing against the excesses and imbalance of *Gnosticism*.

- a. The first great *heresy* to confront the church
- b. Early Church tradition names **Simon Magus** of Acts 8 as the founder of Gnosticism
- c. **Hegesippus**, a second-century Christian writer, stated that Gnosticism was in existence before Christ and was the result of “seven Jewish heresies.”
- d. **Eusebius** (260-340 AD): *Ecclesiastical History* (Book 4; ch. 22; pp. 157-158)

The same author, also, treats of the beginnings of the heresies that arose about his time, in the following words: “But after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as our Lord had for the same reason, Simeon, the son of Cleophas our Lord’s uncle, was appointed the second bishop, whom all proposed, as the cousin of our Lord. Hence they called the church as yet a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses. Thebuthis made a beginning secretly to corrupt it, on account of his not being made a bishop. He was one of those seven sects among the Jewish people. Of these, also, was Simeon, whence sprung the sect of Simonians; also, Cleobius, from whom came the Cleobians; also, Dositheus, the founder of the Dositheans. From these also sprung the Gorthoeonians, from Gorthoeus, and the Masbothoeans, from Masbotheus. Hence, also, the Menandrians, and Marcionists, and Carpocratians, and Valentinians, and Basilidians, and the Saturnilians, every one introducing his own peculiar opinions, one differing from the other.

14. We have already spoken about the beliefs of the false teachers and their heresies:

- a. Condemned by 2 Peter, and Jude, and 1 John.
- b. Three key concepts: Old Testament God, creation, Christ
 - i. Old Testament God = evil, violent, tribal God
 - ii. Denial of creation (matter was evil)
 - iii. Christ: not God incarnate
- c. Result? *Immoral lives and false Gospel*

15. The late RTS-Charlotte professor, **Harold O. J. Brown**, wrote a book, now in its 4th printing *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*

- a. Dr. Brown covers *Gnosticism* as the first and earliest heresy to confront the church.
- b. **Harold O. J. Brown: Heresies; p. 49**

Fundamentally, it “transformed all ethical problems into cosmological ones.” Its shift of ethical interest away from the sphere of personal conduct—where individuals had to decide whether or not to obey God—to the realm of the cosmological is paralleled by the tendency of many modern theologians to neglect the ethics of personal conduct and to treat all problems as political ones—over which the individual seldom has much influence. In removing the accent from faith and placing it on a special kind of knowledge, Gnosticism was transforming the spirit of the Gospel as well as its content.

- c. Interestingly: We find these same tenets in the views expressed by the *Emergent Church*.
 - i. Belief in evolution and rejection of creationism
 - ii. Old Testament God portrayed as a mean, violent, tribal god

- iii. Jesus as the reconciler of the Cosmos – not one who would send people to hell because of sin
 - iv. Ethical views derived from popular thought and not the Scripture
 - d. And there are other tenets of the *Emergent Theology* that indicate that *Gnosticism* has made its reappearance in this, our American Hour.
16. One historic aspect of *Gnosticism* is its lack of balance that leads to a lack of holiness.
- a. Its struggle over the relationship of law and Gospel; duty and grace; justification and sanctification
 - b. Gnosticism bent toward *antinomianism* (lawlessness)
 - c. Gnosticism called for holiness but resulted in worldliness
 - d. **The same trend we find in American Christianity today**
 - e. *Another display of a lack of balance*
17. So...Peter addresses the *balance and beauty* found in the Christian message and its spiritual transformation.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1-11)

18. We focus tonight on 1 Peter 1:8-9...

- a. *Growing in Grace* (March 7, 2010)
 - i. *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. (2 Peter 3:18)*
 - ii. *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may*

become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

b. Golden Chain of Virtue (March 14-May 2, 2010)

- i. *Developing your Faith*
- ii. *Adding Virtue to Life*
- iii. *Adding Knowledge to Grace*
- iv. *Exercising Self-Control*
- v. *Maturing in Steadfastness*
- vi. *Rediscovering Piety*
- vii. *Living in Brotherly Affection*
- viii. *Reaching Toward True Love*

c. *For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)*

d. Tonight: “Paralyzed by Grace”

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:8-9)

e. Balance in the Christian Life

- i. A Work of God
- ii. And Acts of God

I. THE BALANCE OF SANCTIFICATION (2 Peter 1:8)

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

1. Peter reminds these early Christians that they have a moral and spiritual responsibility to grow in holiness.
2. He is not denying that they are justified by God’s grace, but rather is reminding them that God’s grace will empower and produce good works of holiness if and when Christians cooperate with that grace.
3. Peter is saying the same thing the other Apostles did: *Saving grace should lead to sanctifying work.*
 - a. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created*

in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

- b. *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)*
- c. *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11-14)*
- d. *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. (Titus 3:4-8)*

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:14-26)

- a. *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the*

children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4-10)

- b. *But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. (Jude 1:17-23)*
4. For obvious reasons, the Apostles did **not** have a problem with being saved *by grace* and being sanctified *by obedience*.
5. To the Apostles, the two go hand-in-hand
 - a. God desires to save us from sin and its consequences.
 - b. He sends His Son (Jesus) to "*destroy the works of the devil*" (i.e., sin).
 - c. Jesus redeems us for this very purpose: "*to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works.*"
 - d. He sends His Holy Spirit and His grace into us to empower us to become holy: "*...for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*"
 - e. He gives us the means of grace to build us up in His holiness: Word, Sacraments, Church Fellowship, Worship

And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)
 - f. God expects us to work with Him, Christ, the Holy Spirit, His grace and the means of grace in order to develop, grow and mature in Christlike character: *godliness and holiness...*

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)
6. Why do we struggle with and resist this clear, logical, Biblical truth: *True justification always leads to sanctification?*
 - a. **Grace...faith...justification...holiness**
 - b. **Westminster Confession of Faith (11-2), "Of Justification"**

Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. (WCF 11-2)
 - c. Faith without works (holiness) is dead (faith).
 - d. Why do we struggle with this? Answer: We are paralyzed by grace.
7. **Dallas Willard** is a Southern Baptist Minister, a Professor of Philosophy at Univ. of Southern California, and an author who specializes in the spiritual disciplines.

- a. He has written 4 well-known books
 - i. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (1988)
 - ii. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (the Sermon on the Mount; 1998)
 - iii. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (2006)
 - iv. *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (2009)
- b. His primary emphasis is to promote the practice of traditional spiritual disciplines in order to enable us to grow in discipleship and holiness.
- c. He is not a Calvinist; he reads and quotes medieval (Catholic) mystics; he is not a fundamentalist, but he is anti-liberal and an evangelical.
- d. He is not liked by Reformed types; is accused by some of being a Universalist and too inclusive of other religions.
- e. **Please note:** You don't have to like Dallas Willard. And I'm not asking you to read him. And if I quote him, I'm not endorsing everything he believes.
 - i. I quote **C. S. Lewis**, but I believe in inerrancy and do not believe in Purgatory.
 - ii. I quote **G. K. Chesterton**, but I'm not Roman Catholic.
 - iii. I quote **Luther** even though I'm a Calvinist.
 - iv. I quote **Chuck Colson** though I renounce "*Evangelicals and Catholics Together*" (about which I wrote to Mr. Colson).
 - v. I quote **R. C. Sproul** but don't subscribe to his eschatology.
 - vi. I quote **Tim Keller** but reject Sonship Theology.
 - vii. I quote **John Piper** but renounce his view of baptism and the spiritual gifts.
- f. But...most people who condemn Willard have never read him. For example...
 - i. One book review said...

"At the end of the book, Willard opens the door to inclusivism. He writes: Many people who are Christians by certain identifiable human standards – say, by baptism; church membership, having 'prayed to receive Christ,' or regular partaking of the sacraments – still lack the inward 'circumcision' of which Paul here speaks. On the other hand, any who lack those recognizable marks, but have the inward heart God looks for is acceptable to God – no matter in what other ways they may or may not be identifiable. (180)"
 - ii. **But...**here is what Willard **actually** wrote!

We should note very carefully that Paul is not saying that everyone is "okay" with God. He is not a pluralist in that sense. Far from it! He is trying to warn precisely those he knows are not "okay." His point is that one's identity as a Jew will not guarantee you are okay with God; you could be a Jew by the "recognized marks" and yet not be right with God. The same point applies to "Christians" today. Many

people who are Christians by certain identifiable human standards—say, by baptism, church membership, having “prayed to receive Christ,” or regular partaking of the sacraments—still lack the inward “circumcision” of which Paul here speaks. On the other hand, any who lack those recognizable marks, but have the inward heart God looks for is acceptable to God—no matter in what other ways they may or may not be identifiable. This is the Christian pluralism of which we here speak. The old apostle John, puts it all in terms of love: “Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). Does this mean that these people of love earned their salvation? That they deserved their acceptance by God? Not at all. It is simply a description of the wideness of God’s mercy. The idea that God works with humankind strictly on a basis of merit is a mistake—especially when that merit is defined in human terms, which is the usual case. But the idea that anything and everything is acceptable to God is likewise a mistake. In His goodness and wisdom He responds to the flawed efforts of humankind to reach Him—by reaching them. He looks upon the heart: (pp. 179-181; Knowing Christ Today)

- iii. Mr. Willard is **not** a pluralist, a Universalist, or a “key mentor of the Emergent Church.”

8. **Why do I quote Dallas Willard?** *To add to my teaching and your lives the balance his perspective gives to our “New Calvinism” views.*

9. Having protected myself, let me quote Dallas Willard:

- a. *The Great Omission (pp. 58, 62)*

As I often point out to folks, today we are not only saved by grace, we are paralyzed by it. We will preach to you for an hour that you can do nothing to be saved, and then sing to you for forty-five minutes trying to get you to do something to be saved. That is confusing, to say the least. We really have a problem with activity and passivity in our theology. If you preach a Gospel that has only to do with the forgiveness of sins, you will be as we are today: stuck in a position where you have faith over here and obedience and abundance over there, and no way to get from here to there because the necessary bridge is discipleship. If there is anything we should know by now, it is that a Gospel of justification alone does not generate disciples. Discipleship is a life of learning from Jesus Christ how to live in the Kingdom of God now, as He Himself did.

- b. This is **precisely** Peter’s point here: *“Don’t tell me you’re saved because you have some special knowledge about Jesus! Respond to God’s grace! Act on the Gospel! Obey the call of God! Receive justification as a gift; work on Christian character and holiness as your sacred duty!”*

- c. **Don’t be “paralyzed by grace”**

- d. ...that is, afraid to obey and work at spiritual transformation because ignorant Gnostics say, “That’s legalism!”

10. Look at Peter’s precise words: *Inspired words from God...*

- a. *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)*
 - b. First: God expects you to develop, grow and increase in the qualities of vv. 5-7 (the Golden Chain of Virtue).
 - i. *“For if these qualities are yours and are increasing...”*
 - ii. What qualities? Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, piety, brotherly affection, love
 - iii. *“are increasing”* indicates continuing growth
 - c. Second: *“...they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful...”*
 - i. God expects us to be effective in our faith
 - ii. God expects us to be fruitful in our lives
 - iii. *You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another. (John 15:14-17)*
 - d. Third: *“...in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
 - i. The false knowledge of the **Gnostics**: I can know about Jesus, be saved, live an unholy life.
 - ii. The true knowledge of Christianity: To know Christ is to love Christ, and to love Christ is to obey Christ.
 - iii. **Thomas R. Schreiner**: *1, 2 Peter and Jude, NAC; p. 303.*
The ineffectiveness and unfruitfulness relate to their knowledge (epignōsis) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps the opponents are particularly in view, for their libertine lifestyle contradicts their profession of faith. Peter likely meant that they give no evidence that their conversion is genuine.
11. Here is the apostolic truth: *To “Know Christ” is to love Him, to pursue Him, to seek to please Him, to want to be like Him. To know Christ is to pursue holiness. In fact, when we see a person steeped in unrepentant sin, overcome with spiritual backsliding, ignorant of Biblical truth, not engaged in the means of grace, we rightly say, “I don’t think he/she knows Christ.”*
12. The author of Hebrews put it this way: *“without holiness no one will see the Lord.”* (i.e., sanctification is essential for going to heaven).
13. In fact, holiness is the only **real proof** that you, in truth, are justified...

II. THE BALANCE OF JUSTIFICATION (2 Peter 1:9)

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:9)

1. Peter reminds us that those who lack this spiritual transformation, and the **Golden Chain of Virtue**, are people who have forgotten that Jesus died in order to cleanse them from all sin and to make them godly.
2. Peter's doctrine of salvation (*Soteriology*) is impeccable, simple and true: *Jesus died to do three things for us, (1) justify us; (2) sanctify us; and (3) glorify us in heaven.*

a. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)*

b. *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit... (1 Peter 3:18)*

c. *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8-11)*

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. (2 Peter 3:11-14)

3. Think of **justification** in these terms: "*a cleansing from former sins*"

a. *...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)*

b. Symbolized in *Baptism* (spiritual cleansing)

c. *...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:14)*

d. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7-9)*

- e. *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)*
 - f. *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit... (Titus 3:4-5)*
 - g. *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ... (1 Peter 3:21)*
4. When we repent of our sins, and put our faith in Christ alone for salvation, God credits/transfers Christ's righteousness to us.
- a. As a result, we are *cleansed* of all sin: we are spiritually clean in Christ
 - b. *All* our sins are forgiven: past, present and future
 - c. *All* of our *guilt* is cancelled out (washed away)
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)
 - d. We will *never* be punished for sin because of what Christ has done for us.
5. **Listen carefully:** If we really *know* Christ; if we truly possess a *knowledge* of the Gospel, this cleansing of justification will cause the following...
- a. **Not** a relapse into old sins, saying, "Oh, great! I can sin all I want; after all, I'm forgiven!"
What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Romans 6:1-6, 14)
 - a. **Rather**, this cleansing will lead to further efforts on our part to be more godly, Christlike, holy.
 - b. The *taste* of true cleansing will make us hungry for more purification and greater levels of holiness.
 - i. *Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression;*

*bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.*

- ii. *“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool. (Isaiah 1:16-18)*
 - iii. *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement
of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians
7:1)*
 - iv. *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of
God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not
know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet
appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall
see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.
(1 John 3:1-3)*
- c. This love of God, this *cleansing* of Christ, this *grace* of the Holy Spirit will **motivate** us to pursue spiritual transformation, godliness, Christlike character.
 - d. **And...note this!** *If we slip, fall back into sin, and get dirtied up a bit, this confidence in Christ's justifying grace will encourage us to get up, confess (clean up) and push forward in pursuit of holiness.*
- 6. If the doctrine of justification causes someone to backslide into lazy sin, then that person really did not understand justification, and, more than likely, is not really saved.
 - 7. **This is Peter's main point in this chapter:** *When grace really enters the soul, people rest in justification and push forward in sanctification. The result is this Golden Chain of Virtue – true, spiritual transformation. Holiness is evidence that grace is alive in the soul.*

CONCLUSION: Truth is truth wherever you find it...

- 1. In the Bible, in the Creeds and Confessions of the church, in authors like **Dallas Willard**, or in university professors like **Jean Twenge** of San Diego State University...
- 2. **Jean Twenge** states that research shows that “positive self-image/self-esteem” does **not** lead to success!
 - a. Students with positive self-image do not succeed in school or in life any more than students with low self-esteem.
 - b. In fact, the opposite is true: *success leads to self-esteem more than self-esteem leads to success!*
 - c. So...doting on your kids, everyone getting a trophy, and teaching your kids to think they're “special” does not help them.
 - d. In fact, it hurts them. **Jean Twenge** states that such false self-esteem does not prepare them for the rigors of real life.

- e. What does? Working at something, through trial and error, until they succeed.
3. Now, transfer this fact to the Christian life: *Constantly reminding people that God loves them, that they are “sons and not orphans,” and that they can never lose grace and be rejected by God, may build false assurance and not lead saints to the success and strength of holiness.*
 4. The Apostles teach something else: If grace is in you, if you’ve been justified by faith and if the Holy Spirit is in you and at work, then you will grow in the grace and knowledge of God, will develop Christlike character, and will experience spiritual transformation.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13)

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10)

5. Herein lies the **balance** of our Gospel faith: *We seek to follow Christ in obedience and know that if we fail, the justified grace of Jesus Christ will cleanse and forgive us, and that when we succeed, we will grow in confidence and assurance of His grace.*

By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God... (1 John 3:19-21)

6. **Don’t rob yourself of the confidence, strength and assurance of sanctification by being paralyzed by grace. Step out in grace, faith and obedience – again and again – and you will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ...**

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. (2 Peter 3:18)