

QUALITIES REQUIRED IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

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Today, I'm going to revise and replenish a very important teaching from Apostle Paul where he is exhorting the believers to increase and strengthen the qualities of Christianity. This teaching is stated in 2 Peter 1:5-15 and the qualities he stressed on are bolded in the verses below:

*“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your **faith** supply **moral excellence**, and in your **moral excellence**, **knowledge**, and in your **knowledge**, **self-control**, and in your **self-control**, **perseverance**, and in your **perseverance**, **godliness**, and in your **godliness**, **brotherly kindness**, and in your **brotherly kindness**, **love**. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they do not make you useless nor unproductive in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the one who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choice of you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.”*

Preconditions For Us to Enter The Kingdom Of God

From the verses, we can feel that Apostle Paul was having a desperate desire to urge and warn the believers to cultivate faith in God and then diligently build up in qualities of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love. He said, as long as he is still dwelling in this world, he wants to make sure the believers get this message clear. Seemingly this is a very important message, and we cannot overlook it. When you have growing faith in God, these qualities will be evident gradually in your life; on contrast, if you do not have faith in God, you are unable to live out those qualities.

I still remember the concept of my life before I came to know God was wanting to be known as a nice guy. I would try to be nice and get along with everybody because I wanted to be considered as good person. I don't care all the religious teachings as long as I have clear conscience. But when I came to know God, I echo perfectly with the Apostle Paul i.e., that is not salvation by work. If you want to assure that you are eligible to enter the Kingdom of God, you must oblige yourselves to possess these qualities and you must make sure that these qualities keep on growing and increasing in your life. This is because the scriptures said that we must found worthy of Him and we must prove to God that we are qualified for Jesus Christ to open the door for us to enter the Kingdom of God.

You might be wondering whether we still need these qualities when we are in the Kingdom of God and what we're going to do with these qualities when we are in His Kingdom. Before Apostle Paul drew his last breath, he still coaching the believers on these qualities. Hence, these qualities must be having more significant role other than permit us to enter the Kingdom of God.

Only those Who Are Truly Saved By God Can Reign Together With God

Have you ever imagined what would happen to us when we die? We would wait for the Kingdom of God, then God will reset us by forgiven our sins, turn us into new life and we will have a brand-new life. Is that true?

Let us read Revelation 20:6 and we might get the answer:

“Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”

For blessed and holy people will be saved by God, they will join the first part of resurrection. After that, the second death has no power on them anymore, they will be the priests of God and Christ will reign with them a thousand years. The thousand years may not be a literal thousand years because thousand years can be one day in God's eyes. Life will continue to go on and, and they will be reigning with Him like king.

Separately, in Revelation 22:5,

“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever.”

We know that after the judgment of the great white throne, the second judgment or more known as the final judgment will be coming. At that time, night will no longer exist, and there neither be any light nor sun because the Lord God will illuminate them. And these saved people will reign with God forever and ever.

Moreover, in Revelation 2:26-27, it tells that we are not only reign with God but we are ruling with Him:

“The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are shattered, as I also have received authority from My Father.”

Thus, this is very clear that the goal that we enter the kingdom of God after the resurrection or after we are being saved is to reign and rule together with God.

Although God Has The Same Plan For Us Like Adam And Eve, We Can Be Different From Them Because We Have Lord Jesus

In order to achieve this goal, we must equip ourselves with the qualities as instructed by Apostle Paul in 2 Peter 1:5-8, i.e. moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love, with strong faith as the base. This is the ultimate plan that God devises for us. There is no reason for us to escape it or shirk it. We can't give any excuse that we are not suitable or not keen to be a ruler. You must be able to see the big picture that God want us to rule and reign with Him. Otherwise, we will be a directionless Christians in this earth.

In fact, God has this plan in the beginning for Adam and Eve where He gave the authority to Adam with partnership with Eve to rule everything that God had created. Unfortunately, they failed because they didn't have the right quality to rule. Nevertheless, God's plan was not abandoned. God did not fail but He has a second plan. He knew that He could rebuild His purpose again through the new Adam. Who's the new Adam? Jesus, the Lord Jesus. Through the Lord Jesus, He will build this kingdom again.

We are all made in His image. We are all called to be in the image the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can reign together with God, we can rule over this new heaven and earth. The first one was a failure, the second one will be a success because we already have all the qualities required. However, are you able to reign with God? Or this is like a fairy tale to you where you hardly imagine that you are reigning and ruling together with God? We human are always so down to earth. We never think about our next life, all we want to do is to enjoy the

current life. Only when we feel that our life is up, then we will start to think of the next life. Will it be too late?

To Be Qualified To Rule Together With God, We Must Have 3 In 1 Personality: Doer, Feeler, Thinker

Last week in our Bible Study, our sister brought up a topic on 'What type of Christian are you?'. There are three known types, namely thinker (always want to move forward in spiritual growth by all kind of learning including bible studies), feeler (stress on building intimate relationship with others through expressive means like worship, prayers, and confession) and doer (prefer to learn to grow by doing action rather than knowledge). The key consideration here is, is it enough for us just to be one of these types? Are we in our comfort zone to be just only one type of those personalities? Are we reluctant to change and insist to remain the type we are used to be? For example, I just want to be a doer, it is the simplest one as I'm poor in study, I can't analyze any ideas, so I rather go out to do good. Even when pastor from church encourages you to explore yourself, you will give all sorts of excuses to turn him down.

As the truth is mentioned clearly in Scriptures, we need these three aspects working together to promote or to boost our spiritual growth. We ought to act as thinker, feeler, and doer simultaneously to experience God, to strengthen our spiritual life with God.

We Should Follow Authentic Teachings From Bible Wisely Instead Of Obey Dogma From Church Blindly

Generally, the three major churches in worldwide now are emphasizing their focal teaching point as shown below:

- I. Protestant church – very much emphasize on the dogma and the knowledge where they come out with all kinds of doctrines.
- II. Catholics – much more focus on hands-on because they believe in good works, justice, and to live morally upright.

III. Charismatics – revolving around on the ability to experience the presence of God or to feel the closeness with God. They stress on having visions, dreams and prophecies.

If we are to follow the truth in Bible, we should know that each one of these has a part to play to make our spiritual growth complete. It can be very dangerous to our spiritual life if we emphasize only on one aspect. It even can lead us to the downfall of our Christianity.

I can give several verses in Bible to proof that we can't overly emphasizing on just any one of these aspects of our spiritual growth:

- 1 Corinthians 8:1,

"... we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes one conceited, but love edifies people."

The scripture reminds us of that knowledge alone can make us arrogance, make us proud.

- Ephesians 2:8-9,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Bible also mentioned that it is not about works, but your faith and works working together to save you.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."

Apostle Paul who had experienced the closeness with God as he went up to paradise (2 Co 12:3-4), also stressed on that spiritual is not about work only. He said that you can speak a lot of thousand tongues, but you don't have love is useless.

If we only gaining knowledge without practicing, we won't have life; if we only doing good, we become no different from other religions which is for moral and charity purposes; if we emphasize only the feeling part, our attention will be fully on speaking in tongues and/or see visions. For example, for charismatic church, speaking in tongue is scale measurement for your spiritual level. If you do not speak in tongue, it means you're not spiritual and you're not good enough for God. I'd been to charismatic church, and I forced myself to speak in tongue. It was in fact all under human pressure and psychology factor rather than touching by God.

It is undisputable that there are people who can draw close to God and see visions, but as a church and as the house of God, we must wipe out from the mentality and attitude of being just emphasizing only one aspect. We must follow the teaching in the Bible which asking us to work on these three aspects together.

God Is Calling Us To Be His Shepherd To Look After His Sheep In His Kingdom

In Revelation 2:26-27, God said that He would give authority to people who can overcome to rule over the nations with an iron rod. I always have the impression that we will be ruling just like the King Charles holding his scepter in his coronation. For layman like us, this word 'rule' seems to be very solemn, dignified, and ceremonious. When we rule, we will possess great power and authority to control everything. Thus, we are scared to rule because we are nobody and, we are not interested to rule for it is like beyond our ability.

This word 'rule', as I know, in the Greek word is poimaino, which means the act of shepherding or act as a shepherd. It is the same word that we can see in 1 Peter 5:1-2, where Lord Jesus told Peter to shepherd the flock of God after his resurrection:

“Therefore, I urge elders among you, as your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and one who is also a fellow partaker of the glory that is to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God...”

Therefore, brothers and sisters, this is our calling! God wants us to be a shepherd to look after the sheep when we are in the Kingdom of God. Besides, we also need to look after the welfare of the sheep, lead them, guide them and help them to keep on growing. This is just like we are going to be like the pastor in church, taking care of the church members. We cannot reject this calling. I know many of you would reject this job as a pastor. In your eyes, pastor is a meddler and always wants to pry on the church members. For you, attending Sunday Service, taking part in church activities, and giving love offerings to church are sufficient for you as an ordinary Christian.

Nevertheless, I’m sorry to tell you that, if you are not interested to rule or to be the shepherd of the flock, you shouldn't be there in the Kingdom of God. This is because the purpose for you to be in the next kingdom is to rule over all the people who are there for the thousand years and beyond. This is the will of God that we must conform and set into our mind.

Criteria To Be A Good Shepherd

Next, we must equip ourselves with moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love. The Apostle Peter so urgently asked us to develop all these qualities so that we can shepherd the people that will be given to us in the next coming kingdom. These qualities reflecting that we must act as doer, feeler, and thinker simultaneously rather than just one type of personality according to our preference. In short, we must foster ourselves to nurture all these qualities so that we can act in these three types of personalities without any excuse.

Must Willing To Let God Change You

You might be very reluctant to be changed because you're happy as you are. But let us listen to Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10,

“For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”

Apostle Paul once was the enemy of Christ but after his eyes were opened by Lord Jesus Christ, he opened for God to change him and he's more than happy to be changed by God. That's why he said the grace of God towards him did not prove him vain. He was changed. He labored and pursued more to have all the qualities that is required for him, so that he can do the work of God which are to pastor and to lead people to God.

The attitude of Apostle Paul in shepherding the flock is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23,

“For though I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may gain more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, I became as one under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law; to those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

Become All Things To All Men For The Sake Of Gospel

For your information, Israel is a theocracy country where religion is their number one ruling authority. The Apostle Paul was a very decent Pharisee, he had very high in status in his community that was similar to the ministerial level. But he willing to change to become the fellow of partaker of gospel, he willing to go down and gave up everything so that he can become all things to all men. Being a fellow partaker of the gospel means he willing to change according to the need and the level of that person. When he wanted to reach the poor people, he will become poor in order to approach them. Regardless of any circumstances, all he thought about was the spiritual welfare of the person he interacts with, all his concern was to for the sake of the gospel. Apostle Paul was a very good example on how God changed his life to into the gospel.

Unless we are not interested in pastoring and we don't know what we're going to do in the kingdom of God when we get there, we may not take the words of Apostle Paul seriously. But if I only can be one type, I want to make sure that I can be all types. I want to become all things to all men; I want to have all the qualities that are necessary. The final purpose of becoming all things to all men is I may become a fellow partaker of the gospel.

My father came from China and he was very poor. He came to Malaysia empty handed and he worked all his way up. The possible reason that he could have made his living was because he has the concept of '见人说人话, 见鬼说鬼话' which literally means meet people and speak in human language, meet ghost and speak in ghost language. His way of communication and dealing with people is changing accordingly so that he was being adaptable to the various kinds of people and situation, or in other words, he was crafty or two-faced. I learned this from my father very well.

Now, Apostle Paul also using the same technique in dealing with people, but the major different is the purpose behind. My father did that to ensure he could made up business and did not displease his clients. However, the reason

of Apostle Paul become many faced was because he wanted to reach out to them, he didn't want to miss any chance to share the gospel to people he met.

A Mature Christian Will Put Priority In Edification Of Church

Are you willing to become like Apostle Paul? Are you willing to act as doer, thinker, and feeler at the same time? If you are, it means you are perfect in the sense that you are a complete mature Christian. At that time, you can truly do the will of God in either this world or the coming kingdom that God has appointed us.

In 1 Corinthians 14:12, it stated:

“So you too, since you are eager to possess spiritual gifts, strive to excel for the edification of the church.”

Meanwhile, we must remember that if we are zealous for spiritual gifts, it is all for the sake of God in edifying for the church. Regardless we are blessed with the gift to preach, to do good work or anything, these are for the sake of the church, to build up the church. We are not doing it to show off that we are more superior or more hardworking than others in the church. When we say edification of the church, it is not only building up the church but also building up of the faith of everyone through your life, through the words that you've spoken or through the work you've done. And I hope that when we pursue any of these qualities, it's always toward the building up of the church.

No Bias Or Prejudice In Church

Besides, we as Christians, we are not supposed to be bias or prejudice toward one thing especially the thing we are get use to but resist the thing we are not familiar or we not keen. It is like God has provided us buffet, but we only want our comfort food, we do not want to explore more exotic food. If we are insisting to stay in our comfort zone, it is dangerous and not healthy for our spiritual life, and even might impede our Christian life from growing. Similarly, you are only

happy with Paul but you're not happy with Apollos. So, is it correct that you only want to learn from Paul and reject Apollos? Let us read 1 Corinthians 3:3-4,

“for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people? For when one person says, “I am with Paul,” and another, “I am with Apollos,” are you not ordinary people?”

In fact, God gave us Paul, Apollos and all the apostles with their special qualities that we can learn from. We can't be selective to the apostle that we like while deny others. It is the same in our church nowadays, we can't say that we are belong to certain leaders while reject other leaders. If we are doing so, it is a sign that we are still fleshly and do not possess the qualities of spiritual life. Gradually, it will become the pitfall that stumble us.

Do Not Being Inattentive To The Privilege That God Gives, It Has A Time Limit

In my conclusion, I'd like to share some verses in the Book of Revelation with you all. The words in Revelations 22:10-12 keep on disturbing my mind:

“Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the one who does wrong still do wrong, and the one who is filthy still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous still practice righteousness, and the one who is holy still keep himself holy. Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to reward each one as his work deserves.”

As the last book in the Bible, it should encourage and ask us to prepare the coming of God. This book should have urged and warned us to change from unrighteous to righteous person, stop doing all the wrong and filthy but instead cleanse ourselves to do the right whereas those who are holy can just maintain

their holiness. However, I am wondering why these verses are like being sarcastic. It's like the parents telling the angry words to satirize their children when the children are ignoring their advises. For example, when the exam is around the corner, but the children take it for granted, the parents might purposely tell them, "Well, the exam is not important, you can keep on enjoy your time to play. Study is not important, so you do not have to do any revision."

God has been pronounced the day of judgement and giving out warning long ago, urging us to change to a righteous person, giving chance for us to repent, renew and regenerate. Unfortunately, we still consider that we are not guilty and not filthy, we just want to remain in our comfort zone to do what we like to do. I'm a doer, do not ask me to be a thinker and feeler as I'm not interested to those things. Though I don't know how God is going to judge us, but for sure you are doomed. That's not for me to say but the LORD says, there is a period for you to change, to get all the qualities that are required for us to prove that we have the passport to enter the Kingdom of God. These qualities making us fit and eligible to do the work of God in the coming kingdom.

But if we don't want to listen to that, we just want to do our own things, we want to live in our comfort zone, we want to live in our fleshly desires, we just want to be me. As the consequence of our stubbornness, God is gonna say this to you, "You want to choose this way then you go ahead. But I'm coming for sure. I will reward those who are obedient and those who have works to show me in the end."

We Are Not Barely Need To Understand These Qualities But We Must Practice Them In Our Daily Life

It's not easy to have all these qualities and advances for us. Just take myself as example, I'm not the study type but rather the playful and nice guy type. However, but by God's grace, He has changed me. Now, I want to serve Him properly. Thus, I need to have all these qualities, to be disciplined, to study Word of God. Besides, I need to be more sensitive to concern the needs of

people, and I also need to be able to experience God and to spend time in His presence.

I know this is the truth, so I'm striving by God's grace to become as excellent as I can in order to serve Him effectively. You all know that I'm English educated, and my Chinese is very poor. But my friends are curious why I'm listening to Chinese radio in the car. This is because I know my weakness is my language. But I can't tell God that I only want to serve English speaking people while Chinese speaking people is not under my area. Thus, I'm working hard to improve my Chinese so that I can serve Chinese speaking people as well.

20 years ago, there was a need for Chinese congregation in Kuala Lumpur. But none of the co-worker volunteer to take part. Since I'd been in Hong Kong for few years and had the privilege to learn some Chinese when I was there. Occasionally, I did speak some kind of Cantonese with my mum at home but it was very improper type of Cantonese. So, every time I listen to Hong Kong brothers speaking, I would grab the chance to learn by writing down the Pinyin and referred to my co-workers who stay together with me. And that's how I learned my Cantonese and be confident to preach in Cantonese, though my Cantonese still not very advanced.

Apart from that, I've learned to become all things to all men and to come down to people, even to preaching to the prisoners. Do you believe or not, I met our current Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim when he was in the Sungai Buluh prison. I still remember I sent one drug addict back to meet his parents, to reconcile with his parents. Another time, during my Bible study with the prisoners, one of them went crazy and said, "I want to infect you guys with my HIV!", then he took out his knife and tried to injure us. I know that without the grace from God to change and transform me, I wouldn't have done all these, I wouldn't felt compassion for these people. As a pastor, I'm not busybody to meddle with other people's business, but it is for the purpose of doing the God's will.

Seek God To Help You And He Is Always Willing To Help

Lastly, I hope by God's grace, we can all rise up and move together so that we will find the entrance into the eternal Kingdom is widely opening for us. Sometimes we find that we need a lot of faith just like the father of the possessed son who was asking the help from Jesus in Mark chapter 9. Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9: 23 – 24). It seems like the father was a double-minded person. In his heart, he wanted to believe but he was too weak and unable to do it. So, he was asking the help from Lord Jesus to strengthen him.

This case can completely apply on us where we are too weak and don't have enough faith to expand ourselves from doer person to become a thinker and feeler. We can sincerely plead to God, "God, I am not good enough and my faith is not strong enough. Please give me that faith so that I can become mature and complete. Give me that gift so that I can serve you better. Please help me to truly equip myself, so that not only if I can go into coming kingdom, but I can also serve You there."

Closing Prayer

Let's close in prayer.

Thank you, Abba Father, we want to thank you for Your words and ask that You continue to speak to us. Help us to take part in Your words and because we know that what we have now is just temporary. In a blink of an eye, we will be gone and we will be in a different existence. By God's grace, we pray that we will be found worthy of You, to be able to rule, to shepherd Your sheep, to shepherd Your people in the coming Kingdom. Father, help us to see this vision clearly so that we know what we are supposed to do and where we are heading for. We know that the things and problem of this world will not go away, and will keep on disturbing us, Father, please give us a greater vision so that these things will not bother us and the problems of this world will become insignificant to us. Thank you for Your words, thank you for Your reminder. Be with us, bless Your church,

may Your presence be with us throughout the day throughout the weeks. Please accept our thanksgiving. Amen.