

II. DO WE REALLY NEED TO WORK ON DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND CONDUCT?

Why has God given us His very great and precious promises? So that through them we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (verse 4). This speaks to us of our need to move forward in sanctification, to grow toward spiritual maturity.

How do we go about moving forward in sanctification? Peter says there are three things we need to do:

- (1) We need to lay hold of God's great promises with active faith
- (2) We need to add to our faith, godlike qualities of character, and we need to develop those qualities
- (3) We need to realize that failure to add godlike qualities in our character will result in spiritual nearsightedness, spiritual blindness, and loss of spiritual awareness

A. The first step in growing toward spiritual maturity is that we need to lay hold of God's great promises with active faith

Peter says that God's great promises have been given to us in order that we might become godly and be delivered from sin. But here we must ask: Do God's promises, great though they are, lead automatically to our growth?

Between God's promises and our growth toward spiritual maturity there is a necessary connecting link – active faith that leads to obedience. Active faith puts us in touch with divine power. We need to lay hold of God's promises, to respond to them with active, obedient faith, because no matter how true or how great these promises are, they remain powerless and fruitless as far as spiritual growth is concerned without active faith.

B. The second step in growth toward spiritual maturity is that we need to add to our faith godlike qualities in our character, and to develop those qualities.

In verse 5 Peter says: "For this very reason," (i.e., because God has given us everything we need for life and godliness; and because God has given us His great promises oriented toward spiritual growth) "make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."