

Chapter 15: Discipline

1. Introduction

- a. Text: 2 Peter 1:5–7⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (KJV)
- b. The problem: “people who had been discouraged, and discouraged to such a degree that they seem to have been doubting the Faith which they had believed and accepted.... if the condition persists and continues, it invariably leads to doubts and uncertainty, and to a proneness to look back to the old life from which we have been delivered” (205).
- c. In terms of 2 Pet 1:5–11, some readers were ineffective and unfruitful, blind and falling down (cf. 2 Pet 1:8, 9, 10). “It is the kind of man that you cannot deny is a Christian, though there is little in his life to show for it.... The whole life seems utterly ineffective, and he is downcast and unhappy and shaken by doubts” (206).

2. “The first thing we have to consider is the cause of the condition” (207).

- a. “There is only one ultimate cause for all the manifestations of this depression, and that is a lack of discipline” (207). Why? “They have a wrong view of faith... a kind of magical view of faith” whereby belief alone will conquer all, thus discouraging “any attempt to do anything else” (207–08).
- b. “The second general cause of this condition is... sheer laziness... a lack of diligence” (208; cf. 2 Pet 1:5, 10).
 - i. “Have we not all noticed that when it comes to things in the spiritual life, we do not seem to have the same zeal and enthusiasm, nor do we apply the same energy as we do with our secular calling or vocation, our profession or our business, our pleasure, or something we happen to be interested in” (208)?
 - ii. “Or take it as it assumes the form of procrastination... we do not feel like it at the moment” (209).
 - iii. “There are so many things that distract us.... your morning newspaper... the wireless, the television,” etc. (209).
 - iv. “If we have time to do these others things... take that time and insist that it is giving to this matter of the soul instead” (210).

3. “Let us turn to the treatment” (210)

- a. “First and foremost... the exercise of discipline and diligence” (210). Again, cf. 2 Pet 1:5, 10. “One of the chief dangers in Protestantism today... is that, in our fear of the error of justification by works, we have been saying that works do not matter at all” (211).
- b. “The second principle is that we have to supplement our faith” (212).
 - i. The idea of “supplement” is to “furnish the performance with this orchestra, this chorus, so that it may be complete” (212).
 - ii. The list:
 - 1. Virtue: “moral energy... power... vigour” (212)
 - 2. Knowledge: “insight... understanding... enlightenment” (213)
 - 3. Self-control: “you will have to control every aspect of your life” (214); this includes eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.
 - 4. Patience: “patient endurance, to keep on though everything discourages you” (214)
 - 5. Godliness: “concern about and carefulness in maintaining our relationship with God” (214)
 - 6. Brotherly kindness: “our relationship to our fellow Christians” (214)
 - 7. Charity: “love towards men even though they are outside of the faith” (214)
- c. Third, “The apostle... now gives us encouragement to do all that he has told us to do” (214).
 - i. We can do all of these things because we are partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4)
 - ii. As we do these things we find joy in our assurance of salvation (calling and election)
 - iii. In doing these things, we will not fall and be further discouraged (2 Pet 1:10b).
 - iv. In doing these things, you can hope in the kingdom to come (2 Pet 1:10–11). “Supplement” in 2 Pet 1:4 is “provided” in 2 Pet 1:11.

Chapter 16: Trials

1. Introduction

- a. Text: 1 Peter 1:6–7⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (KJV).
- b. The problem: “They ‘greatly rejoice’ in this blessed hope, and yet they are ‘in heaviness through manifold temptations’” (219). Cf. 2 Cor 4:8–12. The Christian will have joy and heaviness all at once, which is not the problem. “The problem lies here, that we fail to maintain the balance and that we tend to allow this heaviness, this grief to overwhelm us and really cast us down,” turning into “a prevailing mood which we can never get rid of” (220).
- c. Denying grief is to deny one’s humanity. “There is nothing which is more instructive and encouraging... than to observe that the saints of God are subject to human frailties.... They know grief and sorrow, they know what it is to feel lonely, they know what it is to be disappointed” (221).
- d. “Manifold” (KJV) or “various” (ESV) can mean “many-colored,” “like the various colours in the spectrum” (221). Persecution was especially the trial for these readers (2 Pet 1:11–12; 4:4; cf. 2 Tim 3:12). Think of Paul when Demas left or Spurgeon in the Downgrade Controversy.
- e. The trials: “anything in this life that tends to trouble you, something that touches you in the most sensitive and delicate part of your being, in your heart, in your mind, the things that tend to cast you down” (223).

2. “How does the apostle deal with the situation” (223)?

- a. “The first thing... we must understand why these things happen to us” (224).
 - i. “There is a definite purpose in all this... they are part of our discipline in this life and in this world... because God has appointed it” (224). Cf. Heb 12:5–11.
 - ii. “Sometimes God does this to us to prepare us for something” (225). E.g., Joseph, David, Paul.
 - iii. “God sometimes prepares a man for a great trial.... by giving him some lesser trials” (226).

- b. Second, realize that “our faith... needs to be perfected” (227), refined like gold. “He tests us by trials as if by fire in order that the things which do not belong to the essence of faith may fall off” (227). E.g., Abraham (Rom 4:18). “It is by means of these trials that that element of trust is developed.... the sheer capacity to go on and to keep on in spite of discouragement” (228).
 - c. Third, “These trials are essential... in order to show the genuineness of our faith” (229). God, the angels, and others will see us persevere.
- 3. “Let me add just a word on what Peter says for our encouragement” (229–30).**
- a. “They only happen ‘for a season’” (230). Cf. 1 Cor 10:13.
 - b. “Remind yourself also of the things ‘wherein ye greatly rejoice’” (230). Cf. 1 Pet 1:3–5 and then also 1:7b. Cf. Matt 25:21, 23; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 7:17.