

### Playing DressUP

Peter has identified himself....Simon...Peter...Slave and Apostle of Jesus. He has identified his audience. Mostly Gentiles who have received the same faith, the same promise and the same potential of glory that he has received.

He has told them of the lifeline of truth that we must hold on to if we want to be pulled from the corruption of our sins.

He has repeatedly stated that Jesus is God. He has taught about the foundational cornerstone of our faith...Jesus Christ...reminded us of the foundation of the church, the truth protected and guarded by the 12 Apostles and then each of us, living stones, connected to one another in Christ, making up the church that the Spirit builds for God the Father.

He has already begun to challenge any concept of new or special knowledge. One truth of God...written in Scriptures...delivered to the Apostles to teach, to guard and to protect. In past tense, delivered in its entirety..God's perfect revelation of Himself to His creation.

We have received Peter tells us the same gift...the gift of salvation...that Jesus offers to everyone who has faith...who believes in their head and heart that Jesus took their place on the cross...to receive the punishment meant for us..paid for our sins...died...resurrected and is coming back to judge the living and the dead.

Just as the church is built on the foundation of truth...the Scriptures...you and I are built spiritually on the foundation of our faith...our declaration that Jesus is who He says He is and did what He said He would do. We are saved by faith alone....no one can take that from you...but Peter will tell us...that is not the end of the gospel message it is the beginning of a new life in Christ.

2 Peter 1:4–7 (ESV) 4 Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Note Peter's words here very carefully. You have been pulled out of your sin...grasping the lifeline of Jesus and His Word...with everything you have. You have been rescued from the mess and punishment your sins caused. Now ask yourself...why? Why did God rescue me?

No really...we need to think about this. If all God wanted was for you to go to heaven forever..the easiest, quickest and most effective way that happens is to let you die in the canyon. You or I could just confess Jesus as Lord like the thief on the cross...in the last minutes of our lives...and we could die and see Jesus in eternity today.

Yet, God not only saves us from our sins...not only guarantees our eternal salvation...not only recreates us new spiritually...He does all of that...to leave us here on earth for maybe decades....why?

Why not just get a dead bed or death confession and acceptance of Jesus and then go straight home to be with Him?

Well the simple answer...is that if your heart is still beating...God has work for you to do here. God chose to reach the world with the message of Salvation through us. We exist to know Him and to share that truth with others. To really know Him....emotionally, spiritually, experientially....He is to be our everything...God for some reason...reveals Jesus to the lost...through us. That is why we are here. To Know Him and to Reveal Him to everyone.

What a horrible waste of potential it would be for God to rescue you from your mess just to let you hang out on earth serving yourself until its time to go home.

That is exactly what the Gnostics were teaching. You were never saved because there is no sin...Your spirit is not impacted by anything you do physically on earth. You are saved by obtaining special knowledge...no need for Jesus they say...because you don't need to be forgiven of anything.

So go very slowly here as Peter makes a very critical transition. You have perfect standing with God because of your faith in Jesus. Your foundation is rock...pun intended...solid.

For this reason....because God saved you....make every effort. Every effort...the Greek here is that of a striving athlete giving the last ounce of all that they have...Make every effort...Peter says...to do what?

2 Peter 1:4–7 (ESV) 4 Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Make every effort to supplement your faith...Please don't miss this...You are not to sit in comfort in your salvation and soak in the rays of God's love. Yes, that is part of our relationship...but when you came up out of the water...the gun went off...Your spiritual race began.

Like a focused trained athlete Peter says....or if you are more likely to obey it...Simon says you must make every effort to supplement your faith.

Do you realize what this means? Peter, like James, is trying to wake up the frozen chosen. Remember Peter is usually pretty direct. One thing Peter knows very well is how to take action based on his faith. His whole life has been about impulsive acts of faith.

Peter tells us that we were not pulled out of that canyon to serve ourselves, to live in comfort, or to make sanctuaries and temples to ourselves. So what are we to add to our faith?

Peter says that we are to make every effort to supplement our faith. That doesn't mean that we are supposed to change ourselves, earn our salvation, or dive into self help books to make ourselves better.

What Peter is about to outline is the process that the Holy Spirit takes us through in order to make us mature believers.

When Peter speaks of striving what he is saying is that you and I need to put ourselves in the best possible place to learn all that the Holy Spirit wants to teach us and then surrender so the Holy Spirit can transform us.

When are not making ourselves more mature. We are creating the environment of abiding and surrendering so that maturity can happen through us.

Peter is about to lay out the Spiritual Growth pattern in guess how many words? Yep 7. The Number of completion. Peter says, before you become truly mature in Christ...you have to go through checkpoints...each one building on the other...

You begin the transformation as you surrender to Jesus. Then as you grow in Christ...everyone moves through the same pattern to maturity.

Simon says...that the first change you will notice is virtue. Virtue is a term we don't use as much anymore, but here is what it means. Virtue is a human disposition towards that which is good and moral.

The first thing that happens in your new life in Christ is that you become virtuous. Not perfect, not moral, not really even good. In fact at this stage you are like a Pregnant woman who is not yet showing.

You gave your life to Christ....no one can tell a lick of difference in your life yet. You know that everything has changed on the inside....but no one sees you any differently or believes you when you say Jesus has changed you.

You are pregnant with potential...You know something has changed...and now you know the name for it...You have become virtuous. As God has recreated you spiritually and you have been spiritually reborn...you suddenly realize that your heart want to pursue good and moral things. You may be far from it in actuality and you may still fall back into those sins..but you can no longer stay there. You are not the same person.

The Holy Spirit has made you virtuous. Because God is in you...you must begin to pursue what He wants you to pursue. Not something you do through willpower...something that just happens on the inside...like being pregnant.

How does virtue manifest in our conversations? "You know once I gave my life to Christ, I just didn't enjoy doing those things anymore. I didn't have to stop doing them...just didn't want to anymore.?"

For those who remember the pattern of sin...Desire..Temptation...Choice...Sin. Virtue is the process of God supernaturally changing your desires. As the Holy Spirit moves into your heart and begins cleaning out junk..He begins to express in you....a desire for God, for His word, for doing good, for serving others, for being morally in line.

The Second transformative thing that the Holy Spirit does in us in our growth...is begin to fill us with knowledge.

Not calculus and nuclear physics...but the knowledge of God. And not just information...We talked about this earlier...we begin to know Him...the know about Him, to know His heart, to know His desires, to know His love, patience, forgiveness, mercy and grace.

The location in the list here is important to help us understand. If Peter were referring to the knowledge of Jesus and what He did on the cross for us, it would have been first on the list as the most important first step. In the middle of the list it most likely refers specifically to the ability to discern God's will and orient one's life in accordance with that will.

In other words, we begin to have a relationship with Him. We start out trying to gain information but in the process we fall in love. The Holy Spirit in us connects us to Him. Our relationship begins to grow...nurtured in the Word...soaked in prayer...and fertilized with experience. The more time we spend with Him the deeper the relationship and the faster the growth.

Our virtue continues to grow as we learn more about God's ways. Our desire to obey Him grows as our love for Him and relationship grows.

We continue to hold on to that lifeline that is His truth with everything we have. Those around us begin to notice something..."Hey you are showing, there is evidence of another life in you. I can see it in your eyes, I can hear it in your voice, something significant has changed in you. You are not just living for yourself anymore. ."

**The Third thing that begins to take shape as you grow in Christ...Peter says you will begin to see self control.**

Your virtue continues to grow...you want to do good and moral things....Your knowledge continues to grow...you are learning about the heart of God in relationship with Him...You love Him and want to show your love through surrender and obedience....and then the Holy Spirit gives you something else...something powerful.

The false teachers whose views Peter was exposing believed that knowledge freed people from the need to control their passions.

You have spent your whole life out of control. Unable to seemingly say no to things that you know are killing you. And now when tempted...something begins to rise up in you...something not of you...that says..."No." You are experiencing God's self control manifesting itself in you.

**The Fourth thing that the Holy Spirit begins to show through you is steadfastness.**

Steadfastness means unwavering resolve. A perseverance that transcends your circumstances. No matter what happens you are beginning to develop trust in God and remaining expectant in the face of passing time.

Not something that you decide or choose...it just begins to happen. Things that previously would have freaked you out...are less concerning...you just somehow deep down know that God has got this. Virtue, knowledge, self control have all been growing...and now the Holy Spirit begins to build in you this incredible confidence in God...somehow you just know its going to be ok. You are beginning to experience what more mature believers will call the supernatural peace of God.

**The Fifth thing that the Holy Spirit manifest in your life is godliness.**

Godliness does not mean that we are God...or that we have obtained perfection like God....Godliness..notice little g... means that we developed a respect for God that impacts the way we live.

**1 Timothy 4:6–9 (ESV) 6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.**

Paul compares godliness to running a race..training..knowing God, desiring moral things, growing in self control, with steadfast focus...and now knowing fully why you are doing these things..You are pursuing godly things because your respect and love for God has grown so much you want to live more and more like Him.

Here Peter uses the word to speak of the need for Christians to be continually aware of God's presence. Knowing that all of our life is in His hands should influence every aspect of our life. We should live for God and not for ourselves.

While God gives us the ability to become godly, it is our responsibility to use the power he has made available to us and actually work at becoming people who please God in every phase of life

**The Sixth thing that the Holy Spirit manifest in us as He grows us in Christ is brotherly affection.**

Interesting that the Greek word for love here is Philadelphia. Meaning...you guess it brotherly love.

In a moment Peter is going to use the word agape to talk about the love God eventually releases through all of us. Regardless as we grow in Christ we develop a desire to be with and care about other believers. It is not intentional it is supernatural.

We develop in us a desire to be with others who are like us. In the New Testament the term brotherly love always refers to the affection that grows between believers in Christ who share the common experience and unity that comes from being spiritual children of God.

Believers who grow in this phase experience an awareness of our need for and love for each other. We acknowledge that we are a quirky group of people who love Jesus but struggle every day to live more like Him. We still have faults...lots of them...but we are changing on the inside...God is delivering through us a new life...a new experience.

We learn that our bond for Jesus overcomes anything that might separate us. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to accept one another, love one another, care for one another, serve one another.

We are messed up people...who love Jesus with everything we have...and God is transforming us from the inside out. His truth, His Word, His presence in our lives, changes us day to day and moment to moment.

As we develop brotherly love, the Holy Spirit teaches us how to serve....how to forgive...how to challenge...how to comfort and how to care for those we know who love Jesus.

This is the incredible experience that occurs when we meet someone and our Spirits connect through Christ. People whom we have never met, but it feels like we have known each other a long time, because we have both met Jesus.

As we approach the final phase of our Spiritual Growth in Christ...we at this point have spent years perhaps...growing in virtue as we desire good and moral things, growing in knowledge as we engage not just our heads but our hearts with God, growing in self control, no longer chasing the things that enticed us before.

We likely have been surprised when we manifest a steadfastness in difficult times that we didn't even know we had....Then we grow in godliness as our desires change from not wanting to sin to not wanting to hurt the heart of God whom we love.

That godliness...that love for God..that the Spirit grows in us can't help but overflow...and it overflows as we continue to grow in our affection for those in our church family. It is our love for one another that help us begin to see how much we have changed in Christ. We are a bunch of odd people...but we sure are lovable. Without Christ I have no doubt we would probably all drive each other nuts. That is the beauty of the church that Jesus builds...the imperfect becoming perfect through Him.

But the final transformation in our spiritual growth is one that comes at us from nowhere. This final step comes straight from the throne of God. It could come from nowhere on earth because it is something we can't really imagine much less create. Peter tells us that as all of these 6 things are developing in us...one thing...and one thing only tells us when we are truly maturing in Christ. When we are to deliver to the world what God has grown in us.

**The Seventh thing that the Holy Spirit manifests in us**...in Himself. He is going to become so powerfully present in our lives that we can't contain Him. Like an alien that bursts out of the heart and chest of their human host...the Holy Spirit burst forth through us with something straight from the throne.....God's Love.

And brotherly affection with Love. The Greek word for love here is agape. It is the greatest expression of love in the Greek. It is the love of God being poured on humans. Supernatural love straight from Heaven not found on earth without the presence of God.

Agape is the term that defines God's immeasurable, incomparable love for humankind. It is his ongoing, outgoing, self-sacrificing concern for lost and fallen people. God gives this love without condition, unreservedly to those who are undeserving and inferior to himself.

Love is not only the last and greatest Christian virtue; it is also the "glue" that holds all the rest of them together, the quality without which all the others will be less than they should be.

**Colossians 3:14–15 (ESV) 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.**

Picture once again the living church that we have been talking about. Jesus is the cornerstone. **PHOTO 1** The 12 Apostles guarded and protected the truth which is the foundation. Each of us are living stones bound together in Brotherly Love being put together by the Holy Spirit building God's Church....His dwelling place. A place where we collectively reveal God's Agape love to the world. Welcoming every human being to take their place in the wall.

Love is the glue that keeps it together.

When you see God's love poured out on people who are non believers...you know you are seeing the expression of a believer who is mature in the faith.

It is unfortunately a rare thing to see someone who truly absolutely loves every person that they see. And love them unconditionally with the love of Jesus. But that is the goal for all of us.

So Peter tells us that there are **7 transformative changes**, each one leading to the next and each one continuing to grow in an of itself in us. This is the blueprint if you will of what happens in us as the Holy Spirit takes up residence and begins to live in our heart.

Did you notice that this growth process started with faith and ended with Love. Don't miss that. It is a very powerful thing to meditate on. The end goal of every believer is to love like Christ loved.

Everyone. Friends, Enemies, every person you lay eyes on. Love them...truly love them...unconditionally...fully...completely...can't do that? God can through you.

Peter's point is clear: Spiritual growth is not a matter that Christians can treat lightly; it is a goal to which we need to give ourselves body and soul, every day of our lives

Because we have held on to the lifeline that is Jesus and have been delivered from the death of our sins. For that reason Peter says, make every effort to allow the Holy Spirit to grow in you.

You don't do these things, you get out of the way and allow these things to happen through you. At any point or step along the way you can become stagnated. You can refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself fully in you.

That sin that you refuse to agree with God about, those Scriptures that you have rewritten in your mind, the control that you never really have but won't let go of, that person that you refuse to forgive, God's word that never seems to get in your heart, the time you waste chasing other gods...we have many ways of stagnating the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Lets review them again. We accept Christ in faith alone and then we are reborn in the Holy Spirit. We literally become spiritual beings having a human experience. Our home is in heaven and we are here on a mission from God.

Now remember that this is the normal expected everyone goes through it spiritual maturity process. Each step is a gift from God given to us after our salvation based on faith.

You can listen to a believer for a while and pretty much figure out where they are in their Spiritual walk with Christ. This list is interesting because it is universal...the same process happens in every believer. No one skips steps.

All of us at the time of our conversion have the seed and some growth in all of these areas. But the maturity process happens sequentially.

For example, you may have a bit more self control as soon as you surrender to Christ, but the supernatural self control that fully grows will do so after you have grown a great deal in virtue and knowledge

Think about where you are in these steps. Listen to these steps again but with a stronger focus on where you fit in in your growth right now. Do you really fit into the Spiritual Clothes that you are trying to wear? Remember there is no condemnation for anyone in Christ...but you will stagnate if you try to skip steps.

We have a desire to become something that we are not. Something better.. Someone more like God and less like....well...us. We may not change any of our actions yet...we are still deep in sin....but our hearts have changed.

All of us grow in a desire to know more about Jesus. We continue to grow in virtue but we are realizing a relationship with Jesus...it involves information, but there is also transformation.



Our virtue and knowledge continue to grow and the Holy Spirit then reveals a power to us...it is called self control. We could never control ourselves but He can. It is weird when it first happens. You find something..actually someone...in you speaking through you to say No. Then you wonder, where did that come from? Yet oddly you like it....you want more of it.

It is at this point that many begin to stagnate. I believe that every true believer will experience virtue...adding knowledge...and getting some sense of self control...but the next step requires persistence. In order to grow to experience godliness, brotherly affection, and God's love for others....you must allow the Holy Spirit to allow you to become steadfast...doggedly determined...to pursue God. To die to yourself and live for Him and In Him.

But those who develop steadfastness then begin to get to the deeper things of God. Not just a focus on what you are or are no longer doing...but an understanding of the deeper meaning of what is happening through you.

You grow in godliness...you want to obey and show God your love for Him. You can't imagine hurting His heart after all He has done for you. It is the "I am not obeying because I have to...I am now just loving you and finding myself obeying. What you want is what I want."

And God wants us to love one another. Once you allow the Holy Spirit to let God's love pour through you, that same love pours through you to others who love Jesus.

And you reach maturity when you feel a love for everyone that is not from you...and you know it. In fact, you have a love for everyone...including your enemies.

These stages of Spiritual growth are interesting I guess but why is Peter going over this in his The Gnostics are Coming Letter? Seems a bit late for Spiritual growth 101.

First, every believer needs to have a very clear understanding of where they are and where they are going. Too many people in church are spiritual clothes that don't fit them. **PHOTO 2** Now here is the bad part...no one tells them and they don't really see it because many around them who are in kindergarten are wearing the same clothes and acting like they are fully mature too.

Second, Peter knows the Gnostics are going to try to deceive believers. Those who are younger in the faith may think their salvation based on faith "didn't take" rather than realizing that they are just early on in a growth process. They look at mature believers who seem to supernaturally love the most unlovable and they think they must have missed the Holy Spirit. You must know where you are in God's curriculum for your growth.

But the main reason I believe is that Peter is about to teach his readers about recognizing false teachers. By knowing the steps of Spiritual growth you will be able to tell if the Holy Spirit is present or if the Spirit has been stagnated.

Remember many Gnostics skipped the very first step. They never placed their faith in Jesus. They don't have the Holy Spirit and by knowing what the Holy Spirit does in every believer every time....you will see wolves among the sheep. Other gnostics did receive the Holy Spirit and they have been deceived by false teaching. They are stagnated and need to be taught truth.



2 Peter 1:8 (ESV) 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.9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Don't miss the implication here. Peter implies here that every believer possesses these 7 virtues. If these qualities ARE YOURS...not if you over time develop all these qualities....

Peter implies that we already "possess" these virtues. Similarly, many are gifts of the Spirit that are present to some degree in all Christians. No, the issue is not one of having them or not having them; the issue is one of growing in the degree to which the Christian exhibits them.

The seeds are present in you for all of these things to happen. The issues is whether or not you are surrendering and striving to see them manifested in your life. All seven should be growing but they grow from left to right

Notice Peters mention here of true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

True "knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" should always spark the unquenchable desire to know him better and better and to seek to use that knowledge in the service of others. Indeed, as Peter will suggest in this letter, one cannot be a true Christian without showing the effects of one's relationship with Christ in a renewed lifestyle. In this way Peter is a lot like James. Show me your works and I will know your faith.

This is the self test...If these qualities are yours...AND...AND..AND...are increasing...they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you look over your life with Christ...you should see all of these things growing in you from left to right. You never stop growing in any one area...you just continue to grow in it as the Holy Spirit is growing you in other areas as well.

But Peter says...now is the time to know where you are. Do you have virtue and is it growing? Do you have knowledge of Christ experientially and is it growing? Do you have self control and is it growing? Are you growing in steadfastness? Do you have godliness and is it growing? Do you have brotherly love and is it growing? Do you have love for everyone and is it growing?

Honestly this is why it has been hard to grow Remnant. We are a church that is deeply focused on reaching those who are less fortunate. Doing so requires a very mature faith. It requires a group of believers who have grown significantly in the 7th stage. They have an unconditional love for everyone. The Holy Spirit has grown in them God's Love that is graduate level stuff.

But someone who is new in their faith or stuck in their faith growth isn't there yet. You can't make them develop that heart, only the Holy Spirit can do that. For new or young believers they don't understand because it is just not where they are Spiritually. Now if you have been a believer for years and you don't have a significant love for everyone then you have stagnated in some way your Spiritual Growth. That is why this is so powerful. It is a thermometer of your spiritual maturity. If you have been following Jesus for 20 years you should have His love bursting out of you all over everyone.

We will soon be making changes at Remnant to align better with this growth process. Details soon...Partner meeting after the service today.

The challenge of growing a healthy church is that you need to have everyone in all stages learning and growing at their pace. You have to meet everyone where they are spiritually and help them growing in all 7 areas as the Spirit leads.

Some here are in their spiritual nursery, others in elementary school, some in high school, some collegiate, and some in graduate school. No one every graduates until Jesus returns. We all have areas in which to grow and grow a lot.

Years ago I participated in a nationwide survey of believers that included both layperson and pastors. There were many questions, but when the questions related to where we are spiritually were analyzed...most pastors placed themselves two to three categories behind where their congregation placed their own growth. It was universal in the study.

The researchers noted that the pastors were far more confident in their salvation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, but the more they studied the word...the more they realized how much more they had to grow. The more you know and learn about Jesus the more your realize how far you have to go in all of these 7 areas.

Aside from seeing where we are, Peter is giving us a "See the Gnostic" Tool and we will use this progression as we go forward.

Now it is important to realize the progression here. Someone who claims to have godliness (wanting to please God above all else) but doesn't have self control...or steadfastness....is an imposter.

Whenever I am faced with a situation in church of someone who is a threat to the church, I go back to this list to allow God to show us who is a misguided believer who needs to be nurtured and who is a wolf that needs to be led out the back door.

Peter touches for the first time on why, in his reader's own situation, this growth in knowledge of Christ is so important: Spurious Christians, false teachers, were about. Surely Peter has these people—whom he will describe in great detail in chapter 2—in mind when he warns about the kind of person who "does not have these qualities"

Peter goes on to describe these people as "nearsighted and blind." That is odd...If a person is "blind," how can he or she be "nearsighted"?

In the Greek the latter word is a participle (myopazon) and could be translated "because of shutting one's eyes" They are "willfully blind". This translation matches very well the final description of this example of a spurious Christian: He has "forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

Peter will make even more clear the next chapter. These fake Christians are people who at least claim to have had their sins forgiven by Christ but who are not now living as if that makes any difference to them. Sound familiar?

**2 Peter 1:10 (ESV) 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.**

Next is the encouragement from Peter. Because of the times...my death...the coming of the Gnostics...you must not only make every effort to supplement your faith, you must be all the more diligent.

Notice what we are to be focused on. Confirming our calling and election...what does that mean?

Let me translate this for us. "The Gnostics are coming and you better know if you have the Holy Spirit or not. It is ok to be in an early step of faith....everyone goes through these steps...but make absolutely sure you are on the path. You must make sure you are being led by the Spirit and then stick to the path He takes you on. Confirm in your own mind....your election to the family of God. Know right now and forever that you belong to Him. Grab your lifeline because you are going to need it."

Though God is "sure" who His elect are and has given them an eternally secure salvation, the Christian might not always have assurance of his salvation

Security is the Holy Spirit revealed fact that salvation is forever. Assurance is one's confidence that he possesses that eternal salvation. In other words, the believer who pursues the spiritual qualities mentioned above guarantees to himself by spiritual fruit that he was called and chosen. As the Christian pursues the qualities listed by Peter and sees that his life is useful and fruitful, he will not stumble into doubt, despair, fear, or questioning, but enjoy assurance that he is saved.

Peter says to make sure you know that you are saved...and then he says if you practice these qualities...these 7 virtues...you will never fail....never fail? Does that mean that we will never sin? No too many other scriptures and every human minus Jesus so far has proven our repetitive ability to sin up until the last breath we take on earth.

What Peter is telling us is that if we see these seven virtues growing in us...throughout our lives...we will always be assured of our salvation, the presence of the Holy Spirit in us and we will never fail to know that we are called, chosen and sealed. We will not live lives wondering if we are truly saved or not. We can know...and Peter says...we cannot fail to know.

**2 Peter 1:11 (ESV) 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

Peter says....dude....ok probably not dude..but it is a Peter kind of word. Dude...spend you life focusing on growing these 7 virtues in Christ...and you will not just sneak into heaven...you can boldly go home with confidence. Not in yourself but what God has been doing through you.

So Peter tells them...The Gnostics are coming. You better know without a doubt....and you can know without a doubt...that you are saved and the Holy Spirit is in you. **PHOTO 3**

At the risk of being too transparent. Let me close by sharing with you where I am in this continuum.

The one area where I am currently struggling is brotherly love. Sounds pretty sad for a pastor right? It is. But that is where I am. Honestly...being raw here....I have been so deeply hurt by my brothers and sisters in Christ that I have a hard time trusting anyone again. **PHOTO 4** I find myself wanting to trust but out of fear I often guard my heart. The Holy Spirit is working me through it but it has been a 10 year process with a 4 years of intensive learning and it has been painstakingly slow...

I want to trust and love everyone the way God wants me to, but at times fear paralyzes me. The people closest to me deeply betrayed and wounded me. I have forgiven them. But I have not yet fully learned to love people the way I used to. I know it is crazy but I am being honest. It gets better with time and new experiences that replace the old ones, but I have a long way to go.

Now since I know where I am, I know that I cannot fully love all of God's people to my full potential until this learning lesson is complete. Agape Love for everyone is next level stuff and I am stagnated in further growth until this lesson is learned. In the meantime, I am growing in virtue, knowledge, self control, steadfastness, and godliness. But I will not grow in my love for everyone until I learn once again to love and trust my brothers and sisters in Christ.

So If I can get up here and spill my guts....your pastor who struggles with brotherly love...is begging you...in love...to not only know you are saved...but to know where you really are in the spiritual growth process.

Gnostics are coming...They are everywhere...Know where you are in this growth process, make sure your Spiritual clothes fit, and be on guard for those who claim maturity and don't live it. Let's Pray