

**Spiritual Growth – God’s Gracious Initiative, Our Earnest Response**  
**Part 7 – Our Earnest Response: The Grounding of Sound Theology, 2 Peter 1:12-21.**

**Review**

- 2 Peter 1:3-4 – “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”
- God shares himself generously so we may know him fully, the goal of spiritual formation.
- This work is initiated, sustained, and assured by God himself (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-4; Ephesians 2:8-10)
- God’s promises allow us to *participate in the divine nature* and *escape the corruption in the world that is caused by evil desire*.
- Spiritual formation is cooperating with God’s work in me, with disciplined energy, to become increasingly more godlike. Peter presents a dynamic model of formation that is:
  - Motivated by grace (v. 5a)
  - Characterized by disciplined effort (v. 5a)
  - Designed for transformation (vv. 5b–7)
- Spiritual growth involves a conditional relationship between a clear vision of God’s desire for our lives, and holy memory about one’s story with sin.

Positive Growth Outcome – v. 8	Negative Growth Outcome – v. 9
“For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”	“But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.”

**This Lesson**

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- 1 John 1:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- 2 Peter 1:12-21 – three movements

**Remind** – 2 Peter 1:12-15

**Recount** – 2 Peter 1:16-18

- Eyewitnesses – Acts 1:8, 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20, 4:33

**Reliable** – 2 Peter 1:19-21

- “Spoke from God...”
- “As they were moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit” feromenoi - ship sail carried by the wind, prophets hoist the sail and the Spirit carries the ship

Examples of bedrock truths

- Creation
- Humanity in God’s image, binary
- Pre-existence of Christ
- Virgin birth

- Incarnation
- Deity and humanity of Christ
- Death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation
- Imminent return

How do we keep these before us?

### 1. Worship

The secret to constantly conscious awareness of truth is worship. Theology fuels worship, which fuels transformation. Worship informed by rich theology lifts our hearts in awe, which in turn anchors truth deeper into our lives. When the church neglects sound teaching, it loses not only its salt and light but also its capacity to spiritually form people who will last.

We need worship. We need great worship. We need weeping worship. We need glorious worship. We need to sense God's greatness and to be moved by it — moved to tears and moved to laughter — moved by who God is and what He has done for you. And this needs to be happening all the time.

### 2. Desire for reality not impression

Sound theology grounds spiritual growth in reality, not impression. Peter writes as one who knows his death is near (1:13–15), and his chief concern is that believers be continually reminded of core truths even after his departure. This highlights a critical truth: spiritual vitality is not sustained by emotional highs or fleeting experiences but by anchoring one's life in the deep truths of the gospel—truths that must be recalled, rehearsed, and relied upon. Without such grounding, formation becomes untethered, vulnerable to distortion or drift.

Spiritual formation is “cooperating with God's work in me, with disciplined energy, to become increasingly more godlike.” That disciplined energy must be aimed at rightly understanding who God is, what He has done, and what He desires for us. This doctrinal knowledge that protects against becoming, as Peter warns in v. 9, “nearsighted and blind.”

### 3. Saturation with Scripture and the foundational elements of the faith

2 Peter 1:19-21 elevates the prophetic word of Scripture, describing it as “a lamp shining in a dark place,” entirely trustworthy, and not of human origin but from men who “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” This metaphor of light in darkness underscores that without Scripture, spiritual vision fails.

“If the church as a whole is losing its ability to be “salt and light” in the culture, it is not because its members have no opinion of the films of Bernardo Bertolucci, no appreciation for the poetry of Emily Dickinson, and no regular slot on The Charlie Rose Show. More likely, it is because they do not have a solid grasp of the basic elements of the faith, as taught in Scripture and affirmed by the confessions and catechisms of the church.” — Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind: Living with Purpose at Home and in the World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012).

“The collapse in evangelical doctrinal consensus is intimately related to the collapse in the understanding of, and role assigned to, Scripture as God's Word spoken within the church.”  
— Carl R. Trueman, *Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*<sup>2</sup>

“The stories the modern world tells us are powerful: the future-oriented promise of science, the technology that privileges the young, the materialistic paradise offered by consumerism, which is always just around the next corner, the dying of confidence in words, the fragmentation of human nature, the distrust of traditional structures and notions of authority, and the wicked results of saying that somebody else is wrong and does not belong. All of these in their different ways make the idea of doctrinal Christianity, expressed in creeds and confessions, both implausible and distasteful; and all of them are part of the cultural air we all breathe.” — Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*<sup>3</sup>

#### 4. Prayer

“The infallible test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray, healed people with prayers, denounced the corruption of the temple worship (which, he said, should be a ‘house of prayer’), and insisted that some demons could be cast out only through prayer. He prayed often and regularly with fervent cries and tears (Heb. 5:7), and sometimes all night. The Holy Spirit came upon him and anointed him as he was praying (Luke 3:21–22), and he was transfigured with the divine glory as he prayed (Luke 9:29). When he faced his greatest crisis, he did so with prayer. We hear him praying for his disciples and the church on the night before he died (John 17:1–26) and then petitioning God in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Finally, he died praying.” — Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy With God*<sup>4</sup>

#### 5. Prayerful CONVICTION

“We must be able to existentially *access* our doctrinal convictions. If doctrinal soundness is not accompanied by heart experience, it will eventually lead to nominal Christianity—that is, in name only—and eventually to nonbelief. The irony is that many conservative Christians, most concerned about conserving true and sound doctrine, neglect the importance of prayer and make no effort to experience God, and this can lead to the eventual loss of sound doctrine. . . . Christianity without real experience of God will eventually be no Christianity at all.” — Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*<sup>5</sup>

**Summation:** Spiritual formation without sound theology is like a sailboat without a keel—easily moved, easily capsized. 2 Peter 1:12–21 teaches that God initiates and sustains our transformation, but our response must be grounded in remembering the truth, recounting the gospel, and relying on the sure word of Scripture. A church serious about spiritual formation must therefore be serious about theology — not for theology’s sake, but for Christlikeness’ sake.

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<sup>2</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *Reformation: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Bridgend, Wales: Christian Focus, 2011), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (New York: Dutton, 2014), 23-27.

<sup>5</sup> Keller, 180.