

How the Process Works

Introduction

As we have discussed in previous lessons, all of the promises of God are conditional. There is a cost involved on our part to meet the conditions. God had given Canaan, the promised land, to the Children of Israel; however, they had to walk on it to possess it. There were giants occupying the land that considered themselves as the owners and they contended with Israel for possession. Israel had to believe God and defeat the giants in order to take ownership.

Back in the very early seventies, I heard a bible teacher tell of a dream that he had had that made a big impression on me. In the dream the teacher was in the Lord's Supermarket. The shelves were filled with gifts and ministries of every type. He had a large shopping basket and was rushing down the aisles and placing all sorts of items into the basket. Then he turned a corner and was in front of the check-out stand. He suddenly realized that there was a price on each item and he would have to pay the price at the check-out. He turned around and put almost everything back on the shelves. He proceeded to check-out with a gift of mercy and the ministry of helps. That is just the way that we are. We want it all but don't want to pay the price.

In the last lesson we began to look at God's preparation process to bring us to a place so that we can fulfill His purpose. To help us remember we called it “the 7 P's”. God's *purpose* for us involves a *process* of *preparation* by which He gives us a *promise* and then puts us into a *problem* where we are to learn the *principle* so that we can receive the *provision*.

2 Peter 1:3-4 NASB

- (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.
- (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

It is the promises that He has given to us that cause us to become a partaker of His divine nature—that causes us to be conformed to His image. Jesus was the Word made flesh¹ and it is His desire that the Word would be made flesh in us also. This is accomplished as the promises become real in our lives.

The primary transforming process involves the renewing of our minds.² We move from a “heathen” mind to a “carnal” mind to a “spiritual mind” and then, collectively, to the corporate mind of Christ. This lesson will look at the details of this process.

1 John 1:14

2 Romans 12:2

The Purpose of the Circumstances

We are to partake of God's divine nature. The Scriptures tell us that God is love³. That is the essence of God—His nature. Therefore, we would expect that the outcome of the process working in us would produce “love” in us and that this love would become our motivation for all that we would do.

True “agape”, the God kind of love, has to grow in us. When we are born again we receive a new spirit that has the nature, the DNA as it were, of God; however, it is through the promises that we “partake” of the divine nature. Nature is given but character is developed. Gifts are given but fruit grows. This is a time process; one which we can not bypass.

The things that hinder us are the things that are hidden in our hearts. We don't know our own heart because it deceives us.

Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV

(9) "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

Part of the purpose of the problem is to reveal our hearts so that we can know it. God put the children of Israel into the wilderness for the same reason.

Deuteronomy 8:2 NASB

(2) "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Don't you think that the Lord knew what was in their hearts? Of course He did, the ones that didn't know was themselves. The circumstances of the wilderness showed them their hearts. The Lord puts us into problem circumstances so that we can learn what is in our hearts. How we respond to the problem shows the heart.

God's intention with the problem circumstances is also revealed in His reasons for the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:16 NASB

(16) "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

God desires to do us good. His provision for us is boundless. However, until the things in our hearts are dealt with, He is restrained from doing all the good for us that He desires. The fullness of His goodness comes *at the end of the process*.

While many of the promises of God are for each of us individually, there are also many promises that are corporate in nature. A corporate promise will have a corporate problem and a corporate principle associated with it as well as a corporate provision.

³ I John 4:8, 16

The Corporate Issue

Corporate issues associated with corporate promises are complicated and frustrating to us individually. We have a good example with the children of Israel and the promised land of Canaan. Let's examine the components:

1. Promise = the land of Canaan
2. Problem = the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan
3. Principle = the Lord is with us, nothing is impossible
4. Provision = possession of the land of Canaan.

However, this promise was given to the entire people, which means that *as a people* they had to learn the principle in order to enter into the provision. It is clearly seen from the Scriptures that only Joshua and Caleb learned the principle.

Numbers 13:30-31 NASB

- (30) Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."
- (31) But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."

Numbers 14:6-9 NASB

- (6) Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;
- (7) and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land.
- (8) "If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us--a land which flows with milk and honey.
- (9) "Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."

Although Joshua and Caleb had learned the principle and were ready to enter, the people as a whole had not learned it. However, Joshua and Caleb could not enter in by themselves—a corporate promise requires a corporate provision. Can you imagine the frustration of Joshua and Caleb over the next forty years while they waited for the generation that would not enter to die in the wilderness?

Hebrews 4:1 NASB

- (1) Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

We, also, all have promises—both individually and corporately. However, like the children of Israel,

we may not enter the provision. It is possible for us to come short of it.

The Necessity of Faith

Hebrews 4:2 NKJV

- (2) For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

We have received the word just as they did; but, it didn't do them any good because it was not mixed with faith. The implication is that it won't do us any good either if we don't mix faith with the word of the promise. Faith is an integral part of the promise. The promise is worthless without it. The word, the promise, must be mixed with faith for it to be of benefit.

The Greek word that is translated as “mixed” in the scripture above is used as a biological term in modern Greek. It means the mixing of saliva with food as it is chewed. I think it is a clear picture of the Word becoming flesh in us—the word is chewed and mixed with the saliva of faith as it moves into the digestive process.

It is by and through faith that the process begins. However, we have to continue through the process with patience if we are to inherit the promises

Hebrews 6:12 NASB

- (12) so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Faith begins the process but patience and endurance come between us and the provision.

Details of the Process

Peter gives us the details of the character traits that are developed in us as the process begins to accomplish its purpose. As we saw earlier, the process begins with faith and ends with love.

2 Peter 1:5-7 NASB

- (5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,
(6) and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,
(7) and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

The Word and faith are the raw materials with which God begins to manufacture His kind of love in us. Faith is both a gift and a fruit. Love, however, is only a fruit never a gift in the scriptures. All fruit must be grown, which includes love.

God makes supply of all that is needed. We only provide our willingness to be processed—to change. God gives us a measure of faith as a gift⁴. This measure is enough to start the process. God then creates in us all that is necessary by working on our faith with the Word and the Holy Spirit. God bases everything on His provision not on us. He is no respecter of persons; we all have equal opportunity before Him in proportion to our willingness to yield to the Holy Spirit.

Details of this process is mentioned in several place in the Scriptures. It will be helpful for us to lay these out side by side so that we can see how they relate. The best way to do that is to put these into a table format.

Our first column will be the verses from Peter listed above. Notice that each character trait is added based on the previous like building blocks.

The next column will be from these verses in Romans

Romans 5:1 NASB

- (1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:3-5 NASB

- (3) And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;
- (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;
- (5) and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The third column will be taken from the first chapter of James.

James 1:2-4 NASB

- (2) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
- (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- (4) And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Now we will combine the key elements from all of these Scriptures into our table and try to draw some conclusions about various relationships between the columns.

Not all details are given in each set of Scriptures so I have merged cells that cover the same area of the previous column.

⁴ Romans 12:3

2 Peter 1:5-7 NASB	Romans 5:1; 3-5 NASB	James 1:2-4 NASB
Faith	Faith	Faith
Moral Excellence	Tribulation	Trials Testing
Knowledge		
Self-Control		
Perseverance [Patience-KJV]	Perseverance [Patience-KJV]	Endurance [Patience-KJV]
Godliness	Character	Result: perfect, complete Lacking nothing
Kindness		
	Hope	
Love	Love	

Notice that in all three sets of Scriptures the process begins with *faith*. Then, it is the trying or testing of our faith in the midst of tribulation that produces *perseverance* or *patience*. But, before we get there, the trials produce *moral excellence*, *knowledge* and *self control*.

As we patiently persevere, *character* is produced in us consisting of *Godliness* and *kindness* resulting in *hope* yielding the peaceable fruit of *love*, which is the goal or objective.

James tells us that we should let this process complete so that we would be perfect or mature lacking nothing. James then goes on to tell us that if we lack wisdom, that is, we don't understand what is happening to us, we should ask God and He will give us wisdom concerning the process.

James 1:5 NASB

- (5) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

The end results of this process is absolutely necessary for our growth in the Lord. We continue to increase in the things of the Lord as this process continues to work in us. It is the increase of His Kingdom in us.

It doesn't matter how much desire we have to be fruitful and useful. We are not useful to the Lord

without the development of character within us. It is part of being conformed to His image. It is through this process that we begin to become like Him.

2 Peter 1:8 NASB

- (8) For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter goes on to tell us that we need to be diligent about these things so that we can make our calling a reality.

2 Peter 1:10-11 NASB

- (10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;
(11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

If we are walking in these things, we will not stumble. We will have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God.

The Lord give us the *desire* to be useful but it is through this process that the *ability* is developed. This doesn't happen without tribulation—it is a necessary component.

James 1:12 NASB

- (12) Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Approval only comes after we have persevered under trial.