

1. **Introduction:** Today we consider more on Peter’s idea that, while all of salvation is given to believers instantly when they believe in Christ, not all is immediately manifest. Some elements are latent and must be gradually made manifest.
 - Salvation is being born again, given “new spiritual life” analogous to physical birth.
 - The process of physical birth begins with conception in which a single cell is formed that contains DNA that is a blueprint for the single cell to develop into a mature adult.
 - The development from a single cell to a mature adult requires adequate nourishment, exercise, learning, training, etc.
2. **Spiritual Rebirth and Development:** Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.*” (Jn 6:44)
 - Being born-again begins with the Father drawing an unbeliever to Jesus and giving them faith to believe in Jesus and what He has done on behalf of repentant sinners.
 - In direct analogy to physical DNA, I think this step, provides spiritual DNA that is a blueprint for that person to develop into a spiritually mature adult “in Christ.”
 - Spiritual DNA is a blueprint for developing the spiritual components necessary for a godly life. Most of the physical DNA blueprint is latent at conception and is made manifest at appropriate stages of development.
 - Similarly, most of spiritual DNA is latent at spiritual rebirth to be made manifest at appropriate stages of spiritual development.
 - The newly born-again believer’s gift of faith is manifest instantly. To that faith, at appropriate times, latent spiritual capabilities will be made manifest step-by-step.
 - Peter’s list indicates that to saving faith, you should step-by-step, make manifest the latent attributes of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, then make manifest the capstone quality – agape love.
 - Spiritual abilities overlap and interact so that, when they are made manifest, the sequence of development is important – e.g., goodness before knowledge, etc.
3. **Works of God in Which the Believer is a Passive Receiver:** Regeneration, the gift of faith, justification, payment of the penalty due sin, and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are all works of God in which the believer is passive. Then begins the sanctification process in which God is supreme, but the believer has an active role.
 - These qualities, like for example - “goodness,” cannot exist in a vacuum. If goodness is to have meaning, there must be context.
 - Necessary context for developing goodness includes knowledge of peoples’ needs and how to meet those needs, a desire to reach out in goodness, material resources adequate to the tasks, and an environment compatible with the acts of “goodness” to be carried out, etc.

- For one person, the concept of goodness may be easy and the desire to “do good” natural. But the person may be shy and inclined to avoid interaction with people.
 - In which case, acquiring the necessary knowledge about people and their needs to “do good” may be exceedingly difficult for the person to accomplish.
 - The qualities in Peter’s list are interactive and interlocking.
 - The purpose of Peter’s list is achieving moral perfection, being morally like Christ.
 - What about other kinds of perfection? What about people who don’t understand and can’t do math? When perfected and in heaven, will they be math wizzes? Or will the person who doesn’t know one note from another become a capable musician?
 - These kinds of perfection are likely not what is meant by becoming perfect.
 - But why not? God can enable a person to do anything compatible with the person’s being.
 - What does heavenly perfection mean? Is it perfection of abilities we possess in crude form in mortal life, or does it involve adding new capabilities?
 - From Jesus’ ministry on earth, we know that He made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, etc.
 - Were those truly new capacities or did He fix a problem with a capability that was already “built in” but had been degraded by disease or injury?
4. **“Agape Love” as the Capstone Quality:** We will never reach perfection in any of these qualities during mortal life. When we stand before Christ in heaven, seeing Him as He truly is, we will be like Him in moral character and agape love.
- To possess agape love, one must first possess all the other qualities in Peter’s list. It is interesting to note that Peter’s qualities are necessary but not sufficient.
 - Paul’s list in 1 Corinthians 13 is focused on the characteristics of agape love. He gives both qualities that must be present in agape and qualities that cannot be present in agape. Peter focuses on the ascending climb to agape love. Paul focuses on characteristics of agape love. Both lists recognize agape as the supreme quality.
5. **Peter’s List in 2 Peter 1:5-7:** *“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.”*
- Being inclined to “goodness (excellence), (2.) having “knowledge” of what goodness consists of (both in general and for the needs of the specific person being dealt with), (3.) “self-control” necessary to engage in the needs for goodness knowledge reveals, (4.) “perseverance (steadfastness of character)” to overcome barriers and conflicts that inevitably arise, (5.) the “godliness (reverence and piety) to be in a right relationship with other people and God as we seek to do good to them, and (6.) the “brotherly kindness” that enables a believer to bear the burdens of Christian brother and sisters

and to guard our Spirit-given unity from the destruction wrought by gossip, prejudice, and narrowness.

- All these things are necessary for a life that pleases God, but the capstone is agape love.
- In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul provides a list of qualities of agape love and qualities that are to be avoided in agape love.

6. **Paul's List in ^{NIV} 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:** *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

- Paul provides a descriptive list of characteristics of agape love as it impacts a believer's daily behavior. (1.) Agape causes a believer to be patient and kind, (2.) to not envy or boast or be proud (arrogant), (3.) to not dishonor others, (4.) to not be self-seeking, (5.) to not be easily angered, (6.) to not keep records of wrongs (to forgive), (7.) to never delight in evil, (8.) to always rejoice with the truth. (9.) Agape always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- Agape love brings all these behavioral characteristics to a believer. Possessing agape love is a capstone of godly qualities needed in a believer's life.
- Examining the lists of Peter and Paul, can anyone doubt the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work to achieve these qualities. Agape love is impossible without His aid.
- In Colossians 3:12-17 Paul gives another list of behavioral qualities related to agape.
- Examining the lists of Peter and Paul, can anyone doubt the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work to achieve these qualities. Agape love is impossible without His aid.

7. **^{NIV} Colossians 3:12-17:** *“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

- Here, once again, is the same pattern of a believer beginning with the gift of “new life” and using that new life to develop a series of behavioral qualities building up to agape love.

- Over all the virtues you have added to the faith that let you be born-again, ***“put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”***
 - ***“Binds them all together in perfect unity”*** seems to me to mean that agape love includes all the qualities listed. Agape is the integrated result of all the qualities cooperating.
8. ^{NIV} **Galatians 5:6:** ***“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”***
- In this verse Paul summarizes his position by stating (in the context of not requiring that which Christ does not require) that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matter. The only thing that matters is faith expressing itself through agape love.
 - To say that faith is to be expressed through love without having described what love consists of would be to give meaningless instruction. So, both Peter and Paul have carefully defined the qualities that working together produce agape love.
 - What does Jesus say about love? He tells us that to love God with all our being and to love our neighbor as ourselves is the essence of the Law.
 - Then He says we can know how to behave toward our neighbor in love by simply knowing and doing for them that which we would have them do for us.
 - Who is to be identified as our neighbor? Jesus says, everyone we encounter is a neighbor even if they are enemies.
 - Agape love means seeking and doing what is best for the person loved.
 - Apart from Christ, we are captive to the lies of Satan and those whom he controls, but “in Christ” the truth of God will set us free from Satan’s lies just as surely as the sacrificial atonement of Christ sets us free from the eternal punishment and separation from God that is the just due of our sin and rebellion.
9. **Next:** 2 Peter 1:12