

THE PROCESS OF PERFECTION, PART 4

For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25, NIV)

WHEN THE BAD SWINGS COME and every score you write on the card causes you to wince, you may be driven to utter those four words of greatest disillusionment: “Why am I here?”

Whether we are playing golf, tinkering around the house, toiling away at work, or talking with a friend, if we lack a sense of purpose, it is very hard to get motivated. We have no reason to care about achievement at any level, let alone perfection, if we are not driven by a bedrock catalyst.

Consider the disciples who followed Jesus most closely, those we call the Twelve. They included the inner circle of Peter, James, and John, those who were with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration and during other especially intimate moments. There was Andrew, so eager in discovering the Messiah, and Nathanael, who was “without guile.” But also there was Judas Iscariot, the one who would betray Jesus and then take his own life at the realization of having so widely missed the mark.

All of these men put their eggs in one basket, we might say. Even Judas. Some scholars suggest that Judas’ betrayal had a measure of zealotry in it. He turned Christ over in an attempt to force the Nazarene to go public as the Messiah and to lead a revolt against the Roman occupiers. Other commentators take the more text-specific view and say that Judas was in this case, as he was at other times, in it for the money. Either way, when Jesus had been turned over and sent to his death, Judas’ catalysts were gone. The silver coins lost their shine, and this beautiful man was going to the cross, not having taken up the mantle of a political leader. Judas was lost and, utterly despairing, he hanged himself. Success in a pointless purpose will always be revealed as failure.

Peter, conversely, had every loser’s reason to shrink into despondence. He had blustered out his big promises then utterly failed to deliver. But under all the rash failure, his foundation was firm: he still believed. This man, Jesus, was no ordinary man, and he was worth living for. Peter not only continued in life, but the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit was done in him till the day of his death.

What is your purpose? How firm is it? These questions, when rightly answered, set us up to receive a growing, Holy Spirit-fed perfection throughout our lives.

Opening questions What discourages you most on the golf course? How do you get past such discouragement? • What “bedrock catalysts” drive your decision making and your actions in life?

READING 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 Peter 2:2-3; Acts 2:14-41

Jesus’ purpose and ours
At the end of 1 Peter 2, Peter wrote of how Jesus was driven by his purpose, completing a perfect life. What did that entail? How does Jesus’ sense of purpose ignite those who follow him?

Maturity and completion
At the outset of 1 Peter 2, Peter charged the believers to grow. What was the catalyst he cited for this growth? How does the submission to growth fit with our discussion of being perfected?

The Spirit at work in Peter
In Acts 2, we see a new, bold Peter in action. What were his words? What came of them? How might we be emboldened by seeing God at work in him?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/xI3Bzrtidowc>