

## 2 Peter 1:5-8      IMPROVING our FAITH

PRELIMS. Those of us familiar with Puritan writings will know the term ‘Improving our Baptism’! In these verses we have Peter calling believers to **improve** their **faith**! Faith in Christ is not a ‘dead end’ to anything! It’s a **means** whereby we grow/develop in our relationship with God. Thus Peter prays “*May **grace and peace** be **multiplied** to you*”[2], may what you already have, **increase**!

### PETER’S OBSERVATION

Peter is **worried** here! He is seeing Xns ‘going off the rails’, just as we do!) [2:1,210,12]. He says “*it would have been **better** for them **never** to have **known** the way of righteousness than **after knowing** it to **turn back** from the holy commandment delivered to them*” [2:21]! How **solemn** – especially for those who have **professed** faith, for those **baptized**! For you are obliged to continue in, or **reject** that **relationship** with God! Thus Peter finishes this letter by **reminding** them of the awful **judgments** on those who despise God’s promises, “***take care** that **you** are **not carried away** with the error of lawless people and **lose** your own stability*”[3:17]

The **definition** of a Xn (according to our Confession) is “those who **profess** the true religion and their children” [Conf 25 para 2]. But many backslide – and some just never come back and are thus **apostates**! Paul knew of those in the Church who were apostates and preached to: “*For **many**, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with **tears**, walk as **enemies** of the **cross** of Christ*”[Phil 3:17] + Jude too, “*For **certain people** have **crept** in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, **ungodly** people, who **pervert** the **grace** of our God into **sensuality** and **deny** our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*”[Jude 4]

Word for ‘sensuality’ means ‘when a man does not care what people think of him’! Such men in the Church in Jude’s day!  
\*John= “*they went out from us but they did not really belong to us*” – Antichrists![1J2:18,19]. \*Jesus= “***many** of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him*”[J6:66]! So **unless we**

**improve** our faith we **may** turn out like one of them!! So Peter is observing their lives/conduct and is concerned.

### **PETER'S OBJECTIVE**

Now Peter has two particular objectives. One is to make them **effective Xns** and the second to make them **fruitful Xns!** *“If these qualities are yours, and are **increasing**, they **keep** you from being **ineffective** and **unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”*[8]! His readers were ineffective and unfruitful in their lives – and that is **unacceptable** for God’s people!

Xns are supposed to be **witnesses** to **X’s power within them**, A Xn is someone whom God has changed so that his **life** is a **testimony** to God – **and** a testimony to people! People cannot help being impressed by a consistent Xn life! *“let **steadfastness** (in the faith) **have its full effect**”* in your lives [Jam 1:4] Peter has already written *“Keep your **conduct** among the Gentiles **honorable, so that...they may see your good deeds and glorify God”***[1Pet2:12]

Jesus complained about believers **hiding** their **special gift** *“Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand...In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, so that they may **see your** good works and give glory to your Father”*[Mat 5:16]

Bearing fruit in our lives is also **vital!** Listen to Jesus *“By this my Father is glorified, that **you bear much fruit** and so **prove to be my disciples**”*[J15:8] + *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and **appointed** you that you should go and bear **fruit** and that your **fruit** should **abide**”*[J15:16]. Fruitfulness is more important than faithfulness, for you will not produce fruit if you are living by faith So Peter wants us to be more effective and more fruitful!

### **PETER'S SOLUTION for IMPROVING OUR FAITH**

Now Peter, Paul, Jude, John and Jesus all **agreed** on the **remedy**. We need to **please the Lord!** We need to live the kind of life that gladdens the heart of Jesus – we need to live like Jesus lived. **Control of Ourselves** – the word used here is: (εγκρατεία) *“self-*

*control*”! We must not allow events or feelings to dominate our behavior – or make us say wrong things. It is the ability to **watch** what we say and do **suddenly!** “*Set a **guard** over my mouth O Lord, keep **watch** over the door of my lips?*”[Psa 141:3] “*keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit*”[Psa 34:13]! We **can** change our attitude when **motivated!** Our problem is we are **not motivated** by the love of Christ! Housewife and kids dirtying floor! Phone rings! Motivated by impressing her pastor! How about impressing Jesus – who is **present all** the time! Hearing every word! **Supplement your faith** by **controlling** our passions “*Whoever is **slow** to **anger** is better than the mighty, and **he** who rules his spirit than **he** who **takes** a **city***”[Pro 16:32]

**Brotherly-affection** (ψιλαδελψια). Means ‘love of the brothers’! Here is where so many Xians fail – **domestically**. With the family! And **Xian** brothers!! It refers seemingly to **next** of **kin**. Those we **live with**. There is something wrong when personal relationships become a **strain!** Its time for prayer and confession! The Stoic philosopher Epictetus never married and had little time for children. He believed he did far more for the world by being an unfettered philosopher than if he had produced ‘two or three dirty-nosed children’! ‘How can he who has to teach mankind, run to get something in which to heat the water to give the baby his bath?’ **APP** Our attitude to our next of kin, is an **important index!**

**Goodness/virtue** (αρετη). I think it is Wm Barclay who says this word has 2 elements (a) **courage**, a measure of it at least. Our faith must lead us on to be courageous for Jesus! Unashamed of Him. **Tony Blair** avoided talking about his religious views while in office for fear of being labelled "a nutter". A lot of people give-in to this fear! We must daily **pray** for this! Do **you?** (b) **effective**, must have some influence/effect on people – a **good** effect! **APP** Are people the **better** of meeting you? Do people ‘enjoy’ your company and feel **benefitted** by it? **Improve** your faith by....

**Love** (αγαπη). Not eros which is lust (mistaken today thru Hollywood)! Not infatuation! Nothing to do with outward beauty-

in fact the **opposite**—it is loving the **unlovable** people the **undeserving!** **APP** Before you help someone, do you first ask ‘Will I benefit from this?’ Paul saw this in the church - he wanted to send someone to Philippi but “*everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ*”[Phi2:21]. Improve your faith!

**Knowledge** (γνωσις). “*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*”[Hos 4:6]! Peter ends this letter “*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*”[3:18]! To be a Xian and to be ignorant is a contradiction. Paul= “*I would not have you ignorant*” and Peter talks of those who are “*willingly ignorant*” [3:5AV]. **APP** Do you have a **plan** to **instruct** yourself in God’s Word? Personal Bible study? Attend conferences? Read Xn journals? Buy certain books? Knowledge is a great supplement

**Godliness** (ευσεβεια). It has an element of **looking in both directions** – towards **God** on one hand and toward **man** on the other. Godliness is having a Godlike attitude toward men – which is always merciful and gracious. Giving the **benefit** of the **doubt!** A godly man is a man whose view of God **affects** his relationships with man. First and second commandments – love to God and man

**Perseverance** (υπομονη). **More** than patience which is passive. It is **not** philosophically ‘waiting’ until the trial is over but **positively** looking to the ‘plus’ side of Xian faith! It is even **enjoying** the experience of trusting God! Its believing God means it for good! “*Consider it pure joy my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds*”[Jam 1:2] **APP Stickability!** People don’t stick at things long today! We **don’t** take our cue from Football Managers! Most things **take time!**

**Friends** – these are the things we **must** “*make every effort*” to achieve! We **must improve** our faith and supplement it with more and more graces! We have no option. We will have to **work** at them. If you ask God daily to help you, you will be **surprised** how **easy** it will be – and **enjoyable!** You will never be **happier** than when you are actively adding to your faith!!