

BEYOND BELIEF

2 Peter 1:5-8

INTRODUCTION

- To progress spiritually in the Christian life requires constant and careful effort
- There is no “standing still” – those who slacken and stop will find themselves drifting quickly backwards into coldness, worldliness and sin, driven by the winds and tide of the world and the flesh
- We are swimming against the tide, not with it; we are running into the wind, not with the wind
- To use another analogy, an athlete and runner who attains a certain level of fitness will not remain at that level if he ceases to train and maintain that fitness.
- In the opening four verses the apostle’s focus has been in what God has done for us and given to us in salvation, listing seven divine gifts that every believer has been blessed with: Faith, righteousness (v.1), grace, peace (v.2), life, godliness (v.3) and the divine nature (v.4)
- But when we come to verses 5-7, the focus shifts to the responsibility of the believer to actively apply himself with all his strength to the process of sanctification and there are seven graces or virtues listed that we are to add to our faith
- In v.3-4 the “giving” is by God, but in v.5,10 the “giving” is by the Christian
- “And beside this” can be understood as “because of this” – that is, “Because of what God has done for you and done in you (v.3-4), this is what you must do for him (v.5-7)”
- In v.5 we encounter the first imperative or command of the epistle: “add” (*epichoregeo*) – supply, provide
- One of the main purposes of 2 Peter is to warn believers of false teachers and apostates which are dealt with in the second chapter

- This first chapter lays the preparatory groundwork for the denouncements of false teachers in chapter two by showing what *true* salvation consists of (1-4), what *true* Christianity looks like (5-15), and where *true* doctrine is found (16-21)
- Faith in Jesus Christ is not the *conclusion* of our salvation, but the *beginning*, like a seed that has germinated which then grows into a mature tree that is strong, beautiful and fruitful

I. THERE IS AN ARDENCY THAT WE MUST PROMOTE IN OUR LIVES (5)

A. The believer's active role in sanctification

1. Justification is *monergistic* – that is, it is solely the work of God's grace alone, with no contribution from man
2. But sanctification is *synergistic* – it is the work of God's grace as I labour, making use of the means of grace he has provided
3. It is not in my power to make myself holy – it is by his power, yet by my activity I can either facilitate his working, or hinder it
4. We are commanded to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), but in the next verse we are reminded that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13)
5. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1) – God must build the house, yet the builders must do the work of building, empowered by God's grace

B. The need for diligence

1. “Diligence” (*spoude*) is literally “speed, hasten”, and hence “eagerness, earnestness, willingness, zeal”
2. To give “all diligence” is to not be lazy, casual or half-hearted, but to “give thyself wholly to them” (1 Timothy 4:15) without delay

3. The Christian should be no less diligent and zealous for the things of God than the ungodly are diligent and zealous for their idolatries, worldly vanities, fleshly lusts and carnal pleasures
4. *“For we cannot expect to go to heaven asleep. We are not taken there against our wills. It is not our will that accomplishes our salvation; but still, it is not accomplished without our will. ‘Giving diligence’, yes, but more than that, ‘giving all diligence.’ It is not man’s effort that saves him; but, on the other hand, grace saves no man to make him like a log of wood or a block of stone; grace makes man active. God has been diligently at work with you; now you must diligently work together with him.”* (Spurgeon)

II. THERE IS AN ADVANCEMENT THAT MUST PROGRESS IN OUR LIVES (5-7)

A. Faith must be added to

1. It is not simply “faith” generally, but “your faith” – we must all exercise a personal trust in Jesus Christ
2. The verb for “add” is *epichoregeo*, from which we get the word “choreography”
3. The noun form, *chorego*, referred to one who led a chorus, as well as one who supplied the funds and all things necessary to equip a chorus to perform their work
4. The idea is that the Christian is to fully and lavishly supply or add the following seven graces to his faith, that they would abound in his life
5. The epistle of James makes it clear that true saving faith will be evident in the life of those who possess it – there will be a practical out working
6. We are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone
7. “The soul of religion is the practical part” (Bunyan)
8. Note that true religion involves both a *removing* and an *adding*

- a. We are to lay aside all evil things, as well as anything that will hinder our walk with God (1 Peter 2:1; Romans 13:12; Colossians 3:5-8; Hebrews 12:1)
 - b. 8 of the 10 commandments negative prohibitions – “thou shalt not”
 - c. But a religion that consists *only* of removing bad things without introducing Christian graces and spiritual fruit is hypocritical and pharisaic
9. Peter uses a literary technique in his seven-fold list known as *sortes* which presents a set of statements in a step-by-step manner, with each new statement building on the preceding one (Romans 8:29-30; 10:14-15; James 1:15)
- a. However, this does not mean that these seven graces must be added sequentially, one after another in order, but rather they are to all grow and develop together as a whole
 - b. Peter is simply emphasising each one, the picture being of a healthy tree where all these graces grow together
10. We are not to pick and choose which ones we want and neglect others – like the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) these graces are all interrelated and if we are to have one, we must have all
11. Each of the seven are preceded by the article “the”, that is, “the virtue, the knowledge, etc” – they are specific traits that we are not free to substitute
12. The seven graces to be found in the Christian’s life have their opposites in the apostate’s life

TRUE FAITH (1:5-7)	FALSE FAITH (2:1-22)
Virtue	Lust, uncleanness (10), corruption (12)
Knowledge	Superficial knowledge of Christ (20)
Temperance	Wantonness (18)
Patience/endurance	Unstable (14), turn from righteousness (21)
Godliness	Ungodly (6)
Brotherly kindness	Pernicious (harmful) (2)
Charity	Making merchandise of others (3)

B. The seven graces we must add to our faith

1. Virtue (*arete*) – moral excellence

- a. The word is used in Greek literature for “the fulfilment of a thing” – when something fulfils the purpose for which it exists it is excellent and virtuous
- b. When we fulfil the purpose for which we are made – the glory of God – we display the excellence of virtue
- c. We are to *think* on virtuous things (Philippians 4:8)
- d. To have virtue is to live in a righteous and holy manner in obedience to God’s commands
- e. Virtue contains power and courage to stand for what is good and excellent in the face of opposition

2. Knowledge (*gnosin*)

- a. Not the proud knowledge of the flesh, the world or of Gnosticism that “puffeth up” (1 Corinthians 8:1)
- b. This is knowledge of spiritual things that can only be received through communion of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- c. This is not a mere knowledge of truths and facts about God and the Bible, but a personal experiential knowledge of God and Christ
- d. It is a *practical* knowledge which leads to wise decisions and godly behaviour (John 13:17)
- e. As we obey what we know, we increase in our knowledge (John 7:17)

3. Temperance (*egkrateia*) – self-control

- a. This denotes restraint over the passions and appetites
- b. It is bringing the body into subjection, crucifying the flesh and yielding to the Spirit (1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:16-25)

- c. Temperance is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)
 - d. Temperance was part of Paul’s evangelistic message to Felix who was living in an adulterous relationship (Acts 24:25)
 - e. Temperance must be striven for as an athlete strives to win the crown (1 Corinthians 9:25)
4. Patience (*hupomone*)
- a. The word is literally “to abide under”, hence, steadfastness, perseverance, endurance
 - b. This patience is much more than waiting for something without getting irritated, it is the ability to not give in, to not surrender or succumb, particularly when undergoing trials (Romans 12:12)
 - c. It is the “patience of hope” (1 Thessalonians 1:3)
 - d. God’s instrument for working patience is tribulation (Romans 5:3)
5. Godliness (*eusebeia*) – piety, reverence
- a. Godliness is first an attitude of the heart that acknowledges God for who he is and exercises a proper fear towards him
 - b. This then leads to a life that seeks to please him in all areas
 - c. The greatest aim and accomplishment that a man can aspire to is godliness, far greater than physical prowess or wealth (1 Timothy 4:7-8; 6:5-6)
6. Brotherly kindness (*philadelphia*) – love for God’s people
- a. This must be an “unfeigned”, genuine love (1 Peter 1:22)
 - b. We demonstrate we are born of God by loving the brethren (1 John 3:14)

- c. It is a love that is not merely in word, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:16-18)
7. Charity (*agape*) – love for all men generally
- a. This is the love of God that moved him to send his Son to die for rebellious sinners (John 3:16; Romans 5:8)
 - b. It is a sacrificial love (John 15:13)
 - c. Love is the preeminent grace and is described in detail in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

III. THERE IS AN ABUNDANCE WE MAY POSSESS IN OUR LIVES (8)

A. The condition for fruitfulness

- 1. These graces must be in us and in abundance
- 2. This does not take place in a singular event, but is a continual process of growth
- 3. Day by day as I give all diligence to deny the flesh and yield to the Spirit, these seven qualities will develop in my life until they are found in abundance

B. The blessedness of fruitfulness

- 1. Fruitfulness is founded upon the knowledge of Jesus Christ
- 2. He is the vine, we are the branches, and only by abiding in him may we bear fruit (John 15:1-8)
- 3. “Barren” (*argous*) is idle and slothful – such a Christian is useless to God, ineffective in the kingdom of God and wastes the precious gift of life God has given him
- 4. But the diligent Christian is as the blessed man of Psalm 1 – “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3)
- 5. This is the “abundant life” that Christ has redeemed us unto (John 10:10)

CONCLUSION

1. If you are saved, God has equipped you with everything necessary for your spiritual growth to maturity and your perfection as a believer – yet it is in your hands to make use of what he has provided
2. In the same way David equipped Solomon with everything necessary to build the temple, yet Solomon had to actually do the work of building
3. Are you building these seven graces into your life?
4. Can you say you are giving all diligence to it as the chief priority in life?
5. Or are you as the Laodiceans, neither cold or hot, but lukewarm, and sickening to Christ? (Revelation 3:15-16)
6. He counsels us: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” (Revelation 3:19)