

Add To Your Faith – Part 3

2 Peter 1:5-8

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

As we have been saying over and over again throughout our study of these beginning words of chapter 1, “knowledge of God” is at the heart of all the other qualities of our sanctification spoken about here. We see those words, “knowledge of God”, in verses 2, 3, 5 and 6, and then again here in verse 8. So then, may we conclude that God is strongly exhorting you and me to do all that we can do to really get to “know” Him, to gain understanding of who He is and all that He does as God and Lord over all the earth! And He has given us all the provision we need for that to take place, simply through our continual reading and diligent study of His precious word.

We can learn of God’s righteous and holy nature in most every verse we choose to read. But one that comes to my mind continually is in Psalm 119, where God assures us that “He is good and that He does good”. He never changes or varies. He is “always good” and He “always does good”. He never is “not good” in any of His ways of being or doing.

But dear friends, listen! The simple truth is, you and I will never come to really know and trust that His “goodness” is real and always available to us, unless we really do get to “know Him”. That is the reason why so many, many people cry out in their times of trouble, “where was God when I needed Him most”? They have not truly gotten to “know” Him and to know that He was and is always right there with them helping them and giving them aid and comfort. They can’t see Him because they have not come to “know” Him as they should.

And also, as we read here, God does not stop at just wanting us to get to “know” Him, He wants you and me to actually “be like Him”. In other words, His instructions here are not just points of information that are good for us to know. He wants you and me to actually make each of these qualities of His character and behavior a real and dynamic part of our own character and behavior.

And so, He says to us, that with all fervor and diligence, we must

⁵ . . . make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

And note carefully in verse 8, the purpose for which God impresses this great call upon our souls. It is so that we will be “effective” and “fruitful” in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us,

⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

These words remind me of the occasion in which Jesus cursed the fig tree because it was ineffective and unfruitful.

And then also, listen to His exhortations in John 15 about our “bearing fruit” in all the matters of our daily lives. Listen! Jesus said,

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:5-8 (ESV))

And then here in our text for today, in verse 8, we read,

⁸ For if you possess these qualities (these seven qualities of Godly sanctification, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love) ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

The word translated here in this version as “unproductive” also mean “unfruitful”. Dear friends, this cannot be any more clearly given. When we first become “saved”, we are engrafted as branches into the Vine of Christ. And it then becomes our purpose, from that moment forward, to “bear fruit”, “much fruit”.

And this also bespeaks what takes place in the words of verse 4 where we are told that we actually become “partakers of His Divine Nature”. As engrafted branches within the divine Vine of Christ, we become part of who He is, the nutrients of His Life-giving Spirit

flowing continuously from His Vine out through our heart, soul, mind and Spirit, producing His life in us, and us then producing fruits of righteousness, being ourselves blessed, and then us blessing all those around us with the “fruit” that comes forth from the “new person” we have become, “fruit” that nourishes our families, our friends, our coworkers.

Folks, this is the calling and the pathway that Christ has planned out for our souls, to “bear fruit”, “much fruit”, and we need to move on ahead and get about it.

And part of this process is that we must ask the Holy Spirit to examine our souls and reveal to us if we actually are bearing the fruit that Christ wants us to bear. Perhaps we are saved, but have become “ineffective and unproductive”, and don’t even know that we are. And if that be so, then we truly must begin right away to do as these scripture verses are exhorting us to do. We must immediately begin to add these steps of sanctification into our souls.

In my yard, I have two plum trees, one apple tree and a fig tree. And while, yes, they are in their early stages of life, I was still really hoping to have at least one of those trees begin to bear fruit this season. But none of them did. I have wondered what might be the problem. Perhaps they need to be “pruned”, as the words of John 15 suggest. But I believe that these trees have another problem. It seems that perhaps no pollination is taking place to bring about the growth of fruit.

And while I understand that this is only an analogy, it does seem to be in keeping with Jesus’ parable. And I have wondered if perhaps there is a similar problem taking place with each of us when we are unproductive and “unfruitful” in our knowledge of Christ and in our walk with Him.

And it certainly seems similar as I consider the analogy that God gives concerning our being part of the “Body of Christ”. As part of the “Body”, we are to rub shoulders with other believers, minister to each other, take an active part in the plans and purposes of God’s church, be actively involved in bible studies, witnessing to and discipling fellow believers. That is “fruit bearing”! And may I add that “fruit bearing” can take place even in just ordinary daily conversation and helpfulness.

Does such effort equate to the “cross-pollination” that must take place with our fruit trees, I don’t know, but maybe? And it surely cannot hurt. It can only help as we rub shoulders with and encourage and lift up others, “bearing fruit” in the Body of Christ.

Here in verse 8 of our text, we are also given a sense of “urgency”, encouragement to always be moving forward in “increasing measures” . . .

⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

The warning that is implied here is that there is a danger that once we are “saved” we might then slack off, becoming static in our knowledge and understanding of God, just inside the door of salvation, but going no further. And dear friends, I do fear that that really is the most common failure that takes place among God’s children, “saved”, but not “sanctified”.

That is why God very intentionally urges us on with these words. We are to diligently pursue after getting to “know God”. Once we “know” Him, then we will immediately see that He is never “static” in who He is and what He does. He is ever and always “dynamic”, reaching forward, doing things ahead of time so that blessings continually flow throughout His kingdom. And so should we be also, ever and always moving forward.

As one song words it, His “grace” flows like a mighty river of life. And His intent is that we would simply dip our finger into the flowing waters of His grace. And when we do, we will be immediately grabbed by its current and be carried along into wonders of grace where we have never been before, grace that brings “joy unspeakable”.

Along with God’s powerful and captivating grace, the impetus within these words is that you and I must also step forward and be diligent to do our part, to pursue after God. A favorite writer of mine, A. W. Tozer, wrote a book that has blessed me so much and I highly recommend it to you, “The Pursuit of God”. In the book, the central verse from scripture that guides his words is from Psalm 42, verse 1,

¹ As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.
(Psalm 42:1 (NASB))

And in the “Be-attitudes” in Matthew 5, Jesus said,

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6 (NKJV))

Can we not see the urgency, the strong impetus propelling us forward to reach for and to grab hold of a newer and deeper knowledge of God and relationship with Christ, in “increasing measures”, ever-desiring, ever-reaching forward to know our God and to love the Lord our God more and more, more today than yesterday.

⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

But what are the major stumbling blocks that can often get in the way of our growth in “increasing measure?” The “Parable of the Sower” comes quickly to mind. Turn with me to Matthew 13 and follow along from verse 3.

³ Then He (Jesus) spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸ But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:3-9 (NKJV))

The disciples did not immediately understand the meaning of this parable, and they told Jesus so. And beginning in verse 18, Jesus explained it to them.

¹⁸ "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* (the devil) comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. ²⁰ But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23 (NKJV))

Here again, we find that Jesus is using the expression of “bearing fruit” or “being fruitful”.

These four kinds of soils are so very evident within the churches today. Some people hear the precious words of the gospel but never respond. But some do respond and walk down the aisle and make earnest professions of faith. But according to the words of this parable, at least half of them never have an effectual evidence of salvation. It is

only in the third soil that some possibility of real salvation and relationship with Christ begins to surface. Those words in verse 22,

²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22 (NKJV))

But notice again God's use of the word "unfruitful".

²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. (Matthew 13:22 (NKJV))

Even when we earnestly want to do business with the Lord, the "thorns" of this "world, the flesh and the devil" are ever and always doing their part to "choke out" God's work in us. And it can take place whether we are successful or failures in our daily pursuits of family and business and entertainment. The devil is so very crafty. He can misuse our success as easily as he can take advantage of our failures. He can cause both success and failure to "choke out" our relationship with Christ.

The soil that we most hope for is the fourth soil. Verse 23,

²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:23 (NKJV))

This is the highest and best knowledge and relationship with the Lord Jesus that we can hope for. And please do not fail to understand the pathway to this highest and best knowledge and relationship. It is through "hearing and understanding" these words of God.

²³ But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:23 (NKJV))

These are clear and plain instructions from God for us to "hear and understand" His words in these scriptures. And this is again the clear unction from God to diligently pursue after more and more "knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord"! It is then and only then that we will "bear fruit and produce thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold more fruit"! This is God's plan for us. And it can only take place if we pursue after Him with everything we have within us, and as we add to our faith in "increasing measure" these sanctifying words of righteousness.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance;

and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

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