

A PLEA FOR DISCIPLINED LIVING - 2 Peter 1:5-8 - "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. [8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1) So what causes this "unfruitfulness"(7) - this *depletion* of spiritual strength? Peter deals with two causes in these verses:

a) ***A misunderstanding of the nature of Christian faith***

Notice verse 5 - "For this very reason, ***make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge....***"

Even here confusion must be cleared away. When Peter says we must "*supplement*" our faith he doesn't mean we are ever justified by anything *other* than faith alone. He doesn't mean adding *works* to our faith in order to be saved. What he *does* mean is this world in which we all live as Christians aggressively wars against our trust in Christ Jesus alone as our ultimate treasure and joy and security. It takes constant *effort* to put faith in Christ alone. There is nothing easy about this faith in this world.

Everything needed is provided (2 Peter 1:3-4). I don't achieve my standing by my works. ***But that doesn't mean I don't work!*** My trust *is* in Jesus. I do *rest* in His love and finished work on the cross. But there's a view of faith that the whole New Testament argues against. And it has become a very common view of faith in much of the church today. It's what might be called the ***automatic view of faith***. It's the idea that faith is a ***one-time placing of trust***. It's the idea that from that point on the power of Jesus works ***automatically*** in my life. But it doesn't!

b) ***A lack of diligence and discipline***

2 Peter 1:5 - "For this very reason, ***make every effort*** to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...."

2 Peter 1:10 - "Therefore, brothers, ***be all the more diligent*** to make your calling and election sure, for ***if you practice*** these qualities you will never fall."

Hebrews 11:6 - "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that ***he rewards those who seek him***."

Paul warned Timothy that in the last times "*perilous times*" would come upon the church. Somehow there has come a real shift in my understanding as I read those verses. I used to think of them as somehow meant in the future tense. But more and more, I think those times are here right now.

I think the context of Paul's words indicates the peril has nothing to do with ***antichrist, Armageddon, or the mark of the beast***. The times are perilous because people, in mass, will love what pleases them ("pleasure") more than they love what's right and what's true and what God really says. The church will become ***selective*** in what it takes from the hand of God. Spiritual discipline will be replaced by the ***buffet approach*** to spiritual nourishment. People will pick and choose what they like. And if this church, or this TV program doesn't serve it just my way, I'll go somewhere else where I can get it just the way I like it. It takes more diligence to live the Christian life now than ever before! It takes more discipline.

2) **WE ARE TO ADD CERTAIN DISCIPLINES TO OUR FAITH - 2 Peter 1:5-7** - "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love."

a) ***Virtue*** - Virtue defines an inward purity of heart. Peter takes great pains to underscore a truth that needs constant refreshing in our lives. To ***believe*** right and to ***do*** right are not the same thing. There is no ***moral power*** in mere orthodoxy. The true power of the Spirit and the Word are ***on the inside***. Without this, you will soon be barren and unfruitful. Divine help comes to those who "***supplement their faith***." True, you can't ***attain*** standing with God based on your own works. But you still must ***aim*** for virtue or grace remains inactive on your behalf.

b) ***Knowledge*** - The mind must ***yield*** to divine revelation. Discipline yourself to ***expose your mind*** regularly and frequently to God's Word. To have ***knowledge*** you must ***know***.

Here is a precious promise - Psalm 119:130 - "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." Note that verb "***unfolding***." This is the careful process of handling the Word with care and precision. It's the opposite of throwing divine truth around. It's placing God's ideas in their proper place.

c) ***Self-control*** - Earlier in this chapter Peter tells us, very simply, why this world is in such a mess. But watch in this American

election campaign - none of the politicians will even bring it up: **2 Peter 1:4** - "....by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."

What Peter is teaching is so basic to fruitfulness and joy in following Jesus. If you think you will find spiritual life just because you signed a decision card - or were raised in a Christian home - or are a member in a church - it will escape you. You're not walking in the truth and so you can't be set free. Peter says there's another part to the story.

In another era this could be left unsaid. It was assumed as basic understanding in the Christian life. There was a big subject in the Godly life called **mortification**. It was a course in **killing and denying sinful desires**. It was commonly understood that craving **self-fulfillment** was a sure path for spiritual ruin. That part of our beings that craved happiness and security on our own terms accosted with the only viciousness that would bring new life in Christ. But this doesn't play well in our era of inner light and self-esteem.

- d) **Steadfastness** - Any commitment you make in faith is going to be tried and tested. This isn't a game. Don't view all the opposition to spiritual progress in your life as a big fluke or accident. And don't assume **you're** being assaulted more than everyone else. Satan loves to get us playing **that** game.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 - "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

I am struck with the way Paul calls these Christians to be "**steadfast**" and "**immovable**" (which seems to be the very same thing just repeated for emphasis) - he calls them to this right on the heels of assuring them of an absolute victory that is freely **given** to them - "**But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**"(57).

And the only conceivable reason is Paul knows that there will be times - whole seasons - where it won't **look** like they've been given the victory, and it won't **feel** like they've received the victory. So, he says, when you run out of fantastic, persevere.

- e) **Godliness** - A big part of supplementing your faith is learning to see all of life related to God himself. Life is **visible** and God is **invisible**. So this is not as natural to us as it should be. But without care in this area I will tend to just see what I'm doing as either **good** or **bad**, but only in the sense of **morality** rather than pleasing or displeasing a **Heavenly Father** who has redeemed me in Jesus Christ. Peter calls us to keep God at the center of every pursuit - every thought - every deed. My actions are always considered **relationally to Him**. He's the one first grieved in every failure. He's the one to whom ultimate accountability must one day be given. He's the one who urges me on in faithfulness.

- f) **Brotherly affection and love** - One of the greatest enemies to the life of faith is relationships with others that go sour. Bad theology doesn't wound as many Christians as bitterness, ill-will, resentment, anger etc. You will go a long way to supplementing your faith if you **regulate your attitudes and actions toward others** - **Ephesians 4:30-32** - "**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**"

- 3) **WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS WHOLE PROCESS OF DILIGENCE MAKE?** - **2 Peter 1:8-9** - "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins."

Remember, you will not **automatically** give due consideration to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the reality of eternal destinies, the wonderful delight of present grace and mercy, or even the emptiness of present desires and temptations - you won't **interact** meaningfully with these realities coasting on your conversion.