

2 Peter 1:5-7 'The Adorning Of Our Faith!'

In v2-4 of 2 Peter last week, we looked firstly at the phrase (v2) "a full knowledge of God." (V2 "Grace to you and peace be multiplied by a full knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.")

The grace given to us from God through the cross for forgiveness for sin can't be multiplied, v3: "Through his divine power he has given us all things pertaining to life and piety." However His Favour certainly can be. This Favour is as an extension of His Grace to us, throughout our lives as we seek to live each day with and for Him.

After many years of hardship, Paul was able to write Philippians 4:12: "I have learned the secret of being content in every situation." Yes, he "had *learned* the secret." No, he hadn't *found* the secret, he had "learned the secret." He'd experienced it in his life! And what was that secret? "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Yes, Gods Favour abounds! I also explained that, though we can never have "a full knowledge of God" in a literal sense, what we can have is a firm understanding, a firm grasp, of that "Grace and Peace" that He has poured out upon us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This Peter refers to in 2-3 and 8. Again v3. "Through his divine power God has given us all things pertaining to life and piety through the full knowledge of God, [a firm grasp] of the One having called us by his own glory and virtue." We have all that we need to live a life of "virtue" and reverence before God, and also all that we need through God's Grace in Jesus to carry us into glory! (V4.) "Through these things we have God's precious promises." Yes we become sharers of "the divine nature" and "we escape the corruption of the world which comes through lust." And through all of these things: "God's Grace." His "Peace," His favour "being multiplied to us," Our "full knowledge (or our full grasp) of God's "grace and peace." Him pouring Christ's "glory and virtue" into us by the Holy Spirit as we have become heirs, even owners of all of the promises of the Bible! And finally, in Christ "we escape the corruption" that was within us, and also that continues to exist in the world "through lust" or evil desires! And so we pick up Peter's second letter in chapter 1 verses 5 to 7.

The Adorning Of Our Faith. v5. "For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith." We then have a list of Christian characteristics (even fruit of the Spirit we may say. One of the old commentators, when giving us his explanation of v5 and following, does so in a powerful and yet colourful way. He explains that we must beware of our faith, meaning the evidence of that faith in Jesus as it is expressed in our daily lives.) Yes we need to beware that our faith is not naked! Calvin puts forward that that is what Peter is doing here. He is explaining how our faith, (again the evidence of our genuine faith) should be clothed, yes should be adorned! - One of the old hymns calls them garments of praise.

The NIV says "for this very reason, [that reason which by God's Grace] we have escaped the corruption of the world having been given all that we need for life and piety," yes "for this reason make every effort to add to your faith." The NASB has "applying all diligence, in your faith supply." The commentator Dick Lucas explains that the verb used here by Peter for "add, or supply," is in the imperative voice. It leaves no room for a decision to be made. There is but one response. To carry out the command or instruction, so to speak.

The word that is used here is *epichorgew*. Lucas explains that it has a very specific meaning. Originally, applied to some rich benefactor of the theatre who provided much needed funds without which the production could not go ahead. So, through the tremendous benevolence of the provider, alongside the effects of the cast and production crew, the show could proceed. Yes, they worked

hand in hand so to speak. And that is what Peter is exhorting his children in the faith, as it were, (and of course you and I also) to do here. Work hand in hand with God! But of course not contributing to our salvation in any way, we've already seen in v3 that "God has given us all things pertaining to life and piety." No, we are not contributing to our salvation in any way, but responding to that grace and mercy. Yes responding to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; responding to the giving of the Holy Spirit, as He gives us that firm understanding through the scriptures! And because by God's grace, "we have escaped the corruption of the world!" Yes, because of our most blessed, benevolent Provider, "Jehovah Jirah," we seek to work hand in hand with Him, as we seek to "make every effort to add to our faith." Yes "applying all diligence," making sure that our faith is not naked or empty of any real evidence of Christ in our lives! So Peter exhorts us, working hand in hand with God, "to make every effort" to adorn ourselves with these following precious and pious characteristics, regardless of what it may cost us, because seeking to live such a life does come at a cost.

Though there is indeed a blessed eternal reward, without the cross there will be no crown! And also, these following characteristics are evidences of the growth of our faith and our relationship with God through Jesus! So, v5-6. "For this very reason apply all diligence to add to your faith, (working hand in hand with God) goodness and to goodness, knowledge and to knowledge, self-control and to self-control, perseverance and to perseverance, godliness and to godliness, brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness, love." Now friends, though he begins from "faith," perhaps the bare bones so to speak, and ends with "love" the very foundation and end of them all; apparently the order in which Peter places these attributes has no particular significance. Lucas explains: what they describe is a well-rounded Christian. One whose maturity and walk with God, (though not perfect by any means) is clearly evident. And he begins with "goodness" perhaps better put as in the NASB "moral excellence," and in the original, "virtue." Brothers and sisters, isn't it interesting, that the word "virtue" and the idea of being virtuous, in our modern world really is a thing of the past. And in many ways is even looked down upon with contempt!

The word is actually defined as in the NASB, moral excellence. Chastity. Duty. And interestingly, also power or strength, according to the old commentator. Friends, let's keep in mind what Peter is warning his readers against, and also preparing them to hear. He's warning them against falsehood and false teachers. So these things that he now holds up to us, are the opposites of those ones of whom he will soon speak. Duty to God. Chastity of mind body and soul. Moral purity. And in the power of God, (our benevolent provider) the strength to do it all. Of course, these speak of Jesus! As I said some weeks ago, heresy and heretics will often come by stealth as angels of light. Yes they "slip in among you" by stealth, Jude v3. They have no moral code or character, because they are of the devil, having a deceitful heart and soul. They have a hidden agenda; to swallow up all, even, if it be possible, the true sheep of Jesus. We know that this is not possible.

Jesus said. "All the Father has given me I will by no means lose any." So working hand in hand with God, the true believer desires and actually works toward leading a "virtuous" life. And notice that we must "add to this, knowledge." Again, notice that Peter keeps saying add to." Epichoregew. That imperative. It is not as though we can be excelling in one of these traits and the rest not matter. And I raise this point now, because "knowledge" can be that one which many aspire to, forgetting all the rest! I'm even ashamed to confess that I have been that person in the past. Until one day, God spoke to me through my beloved brother Peter Snape. He said to me in all gentleness and sincerity, 'Roy, you love to preach the word, but do you love the people?' Yes some 30 years ago, that was a spear in my heart from God. But a blessed spear. So this one about "knowledge" really hits home to me. The word is "gnosis." And it can simply mean a knowing, or, knowledge of, as such. But in the scriptures, it is an intimate understanding of Jesus. His life. His word. His way of living. His mission of

mercy. These things can only be known by the believer. Because they are made known, revealed by the illuminating of the Holy Spirit! Beloved, I want you also to notice that in v8 Peter says. "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure." Clearly, these qualities, that we are to work hand in hand with God toward, are a life long journey. Yes every minute, of every hour, of every day, of every week, of every month, of every year. Growing in our "knowledge of Jesus." Growing in our knowing of His moral excellence. Of His purity. Of His love for the brethren. Of his self-control, of His perseverance. Of His brotherly kindness. Yes, of His love!

Again, to "make every effort" in our lifelong pursuing of these things, we must work hand in hand with God. As we pursue them through the scriptures, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this is our hungering and thirsting for righteousness. And of course such truths, such knowledge, are the firm foundation upon which we stand against falsehood and false teachers! Matthew4:8-10. "Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'All this I will give you' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.' Jesus said to him 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written, 'worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Yes Beloved, we are to be growing, in our special God revealed, intimate knowledge of Jesus, and of God's grace and mercy to us through Him. And again, we work hand in hand with God in all of this! We open up our hearts in prayer asking Him to guide us through His Word. And then we open up the Bible. Because our study of the scriptures is not simply an intellectual exercise. We are seeking God's guidance and governance over our lives. So this "gnosis," (this intimate growing of our knowledge of God through Jesus and His Word) is not optional, it's imperative; and is how our faith is to be adorned! Yes this "gnosis," this "knowledge" is crucial, and, particularly in light of the aim of the letter, to warn against false teachers, false knowledge!

Peter goes on to say in chapter2:2. "Many will follow their shameful ways and bring the way of truth into disrepute." Yes the truth about Jesus is all important, because without His truth we have nothing. And the way we wear that truth is also important - it is how our faith is adorned! V6 "add to knowledge, self-control." In his wonderful passage on living a life governed by the Holy Spirit (and those attributes which are, "the fruit" of such a life) Paul writes in Galatians5:22-23, beginning with "love," and ending with "self-control." It is as though as we all know that clearly "love" is the root from which all the fruit grows, but "self-control," while being a part of the fruit, is also almost like the gardener that keeps the tree pruned - making sure that the tree is growing aright! The Greek word is *egcraterce*. And it literally means to be a master of self. Possessed of mastery. And since we are talking of the fruit of the Spirit, it is that mastery from God that keeps us from going beyond that which we as Christians have licenced to go. It keeps the tree pruned!

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, when speaking about self-constraint, Paul uses the same word. "Everything is permissible for me but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me but I will not be "mastered" by anything." Brothers and sisters, I do believe that this is a problem for all of us just to different degrees. For some it might be gambling. Anger. Laziness. Pornography. Alcohol. Resentment. The list probably runs the full gamut of human emotion and temptation. A gossiping tongue or a slanderous mouth. But whatever it is, in Christ, and within the power of the Holy Spirit, we can hold back that tide! I know that for some, different temptations and struggles God has just taken away in an instant. What do we say to such claims? Well we say Praise the Lord. But for others, me included, it is an ongoing struggle in different areas of our life. Do we throw our arms up in despair? No. Do we let go and let God? Well I don't believe so. And particularly in light of this passage, that we work hand in hand with God! But again, not working toward our salvation only responding to that grace in seeking to adorn our faith, with these blessed attributes in the power of the Holy Spirit! So with God`s help, we are to work towards "self-control." Part of that will be that

we don't place ourselves in those situations and places where our weakness is lay. "Lead me not into temptation we pray." "And if your right hand causes you to sin cut it off." "Cut off" those places and those people and those things from which you need deliverance and "self-control." And if you find yourself in such a place or such a situation Pray! Yes "lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from the Evil One." Lord give me mastery, give me "self-control" over this moment. Help me bridle my tongue. Help me avert my eyes. Help me cover my ears. Help me soften my heart, help me love as Jesus. Help me stand against falsehood O Lord, help me put on "self-control" with your help. "All things are permissible." You have given us good gifts for life O Lord, thank you for them, praise you O God! "But not all things are beneficial, and I will not be mastered by anything." Yes Lord, help me put on "self-control"! Peter continues "add to self-control, perseverance." Brothers and sisters, for the Christian, it is the long term goal that is all important. We are the tortoise in the race. It has been said, that our walk with Jesus is not a sprint, it's a marathon, and we need always to keep the finish line and the goal insight.

As I said some weeks ago, a great way of pressing on and not giving up when trials and difficulties face us, is by remembering God's past mercies to us as in v3. "Through his divine power he has given us all things pertaining to life and piety." He has given us everything we need. He has sustained us thus far. He has brought us from death to life. God has given us His Son and He has given His Spirit. Not only would it be gross ingratitude to turn our back on Him and walk away now, it would be the pinnacle of insanity! Jesus said in Matthew 16. "For what would it profit a man where he could gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul." Beloved, tragically I'm sure that we all know many people who have done this. They have, in effect, tasted of the goodness, of the mercy and blessing of God, and then for whatever reason, even after many decades, they have simply walked away! It is the Greek word "hupomoness," it means patient endurance. The same root word has the meaning of staying behind, after others have left. Yes, the garment of patient endurance dear friends. The unsaved world laughs at such an idea. 'You Christians don't know how to live', they say. 'Stop worrying about that God stuff and have some fun they say.' The irony, of course, is that in the sight of God, these words are being spoken by dead men walking! Yes friends we are the ultramarathon runner. Journeying through the wilderness of this world. Though some fall off, though some walk away, hand in hand with God the Holy Spirit, we "hupomoness" we remain, we stay the course! As with the apostles, when all His followers were leaving Jesus and He asked them the question; 'What about you guys? Are you going to desert me too?' When, on behalf of them all, Peter says; "Where else are we to go? For you alone have words of eternal life."

Peter continues, v7 "add to perseverance, godliness." Now he has already used this word in v3, and it simply means devout or reverential living to God and for God. It really is a response of the heart and is reflected in everything that we do and say. It is the opposite of pride and vainglory. It is the opposite of self-centeredness. And it is the opposite of the false teachers in their ungodliness as we will see in future messages. Yes reverential living, and a sober view of one's self. And "to godliness, brotherly kindness." Or as in the original, Philadelphia! Friends, it's interesting, because Lucas explains, that outside of the family unit, this idea was unheard of and completely foreign to the ancient mind. You had your family and you had your friends. Those relationships were not the same. Family was all important. Friends were fine, but you knew where your loyalties lay. So when Peter referred to them as "brothers," this was a whole new language. This was turning on its head as it were, the whole idea of family! They are not only those who share the same blood, that is indeed important, but what's infinitely more important, is if we share the same Saviour. So those people for whom Jesus died, are our family, our brethren. And we will spend eternity with them. So given God's Providence we must show them affection. We must show them respect, and we must show them

“brotherly kindness,” because they are our family, Christ’s family, for whom He died! And again this is the opposite, of what those false teachers were doing.

And finally Peter says add to “And to brotherly kindness, love.” In 1Corinthians 13, after speaking about spiritual gifts, (with the desire of the so-called greater gifts being the problem) Paul writes in v13. “And now these three remain, faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” The word which is used both here and 2Peter1:7, is agape. And it is generally thought of as God's love toward His people, which is of course true, but the commentator explains that this is not always the case. Here it is actually that love which God gives to His people, which we are to reflect as the evidence of our faith, to all people!

Brothers and sisters, as God's love is the very essence of everything that He does, the pinnacle of which is the giving of His Own Son that we might live, well so too is this love the foundation garment, through which the whole world perceives who we are! Do we reflect our heavenly Father? Do we reflect our Saviour? Do we mirror His Spirit within us? Or are we indistinguishable from the lost world, to which He has commissioned us to go! “For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith, goodness to goodness, knowledge to knowledge, self-control to self-control, perseverance to perseverance, godliness to godliness, brotherly kindness and love.” Again dear friends, not that we are contributing to our salvation, but responding to that blessed grace by “making every effort that the faith that we profess is not naked!” Yes that our faith, by God's Grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we work hand in hand with Him is adorned, with these blessed qualities that reflect Jesus, and point others to him! Let's pray.