

2 Peter 1:8-11 'Fruitful, Clear Sighted And Sure!'

Last time in 2Peter we looked at 1:5-7: 'The Adorning Of Our Faith'. (V5) "For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith." Not add to your salvation, but add to your personal walk with God (through Jesus and the Holy Spirit,) these divine attributes. Our faith in God needs to be clothed – dressed - and not naked, as John Calvin explains. Remember, Peter is explaining that, like those ancient benefactors of the theatre, working in conjunction with the actors, the stagehands etc, we are to be working hand in hand with God, toward that which, in Christ we already are, holy! We have the "full knowledge of God," meaning, that firm grasp of our salvation through Christ's "grace and peace." "Through His divine nature" of the Holy Spirit through the scriptures, we have all that we need for "life and piety," meaning life eternal, and reverential living. By that Grace "we have escaped corruption," from within ourselves, and also from the perishing world of sin!

So, because of all of "these things" we have to (Epichoegeo, working hand in hand with God) "make every effort to add to our faith, virtue" or moral excellence, in an ever increasing immoral and depraved world. We are called even to the purity of Jesus! Next is "knowledge" or gnosis. Our personal intimate knowing of Jesus - how He spoke, how He lived, how He loved - and seek to mirror those things! Then "self- control" Egcratais. To be master over our words and actions. Because "all things are permissible but not all things are beneficial." We have one master and that is Jesus. We must not be "mastered" by anything else! We are to add "Perseverance." Hupomoness. To stay the course. To be steadfast. To remain, though others leave. Yes, we are in an Ultramarathon race, through the wilderness of this world and this life! Also "Godliness." As in verse 3, reverential living. Then "brotherly kindness." Philadelphia. The reality that we are family though we be not so by blood. And finally, "love." The foundation of them all. Yes we have the picture of a well-rounded Christian. All of these things are a command, not an option. We must respond by walking, hand in hand with God, toward that which we already are in Christ. Holy!

And so we pick up the letter, as Peter continues his instruction for us within this symbiotic, or coexistent, relationship with God, working hand in hand with Him to adorn our faith! Or as John Calvin put it, making sure, and working toward the danger of our faith being found out to be naked; having no evidence of God's grace, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit in our lives!

2Peter1:8-11 and I've given it the heading; Fruitful, Clear Sighted And Sure! V8 (from the NIV). "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, that will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." And from the original. "For these things being in you and abounding, makes you not barren or unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The word for "possess" or "being in you" here is "huparxonta" and it carries with it the idea of owning a piece of real estate or property. Since, in the original, it says, "these things being in you," it puts forth the notion that "these things," these Christlike qualities, are to be part of our very being! Remember, we are to be working toward that which we already are in Christ. Yes, in effect, working toward the giving of the evidence, to one another and the perishing world around us, of the confirmation of God's invincible grace within us. Even growing into that saved person of Christ's Kingdom, which we already are, in heaven! Though again, not contributing towards our salvation in any way, but working with God the Holy Spirit in *response* to that salvation! "For these things being in you and abounding, (or in increasing measure) makes you not barren," (meaning hollow or empty or unprofitable) yes not barren "or unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." So Peter is explaining that these attributes of the King, and the people of His Kingdom, "being in us and in increasing measure, abounding," makes us useful to the King and the proclamation of His Kingdom!

Having the evidential hallmarks of a life that is being transformed by the Holy Spirit “through the renewing of our mind” Romans12:2, makes us useful to the King. To Jesus. Because, can you see? We are not clanging gongs, or crashing cymbals, making a whole lot of noise that amounts to nothing; even saying one thing and doing another, no. We are actually living as citizens of the King. Oh yes, failing miserably at times, but our hearts intention is to live for and proclaim the King; even labouring for our Lord, as we are journeying from this life to the next. We know that all of these things of this life and this world will soon pass away. If we possess these qualities of Jesus we know that we are “not barren or unfruitful,” we are useful and productive subjects of Jesus. No we are not lazy freeloaders, but willing workers! Brothers and sisters, we really need to be on guard against being churchgoing sponges, or even bits of bread, that soak up every last bit of goodness after the meal has been cooked and eaten, while having contributed nothing at all to the feast. Now these labours for Jesus may take on many forms; some greet people at the door in church with handouts, others put out chairs; some prepare meals and morning teas, while others visit folks in retirement homes; some encourage, others lead; some preach or teach, while still others are prayer warriors. The point is, as the Bible tells us, we are all part of the Body of Christ. As with any body, if parts are not contributing to the health and well-being of the body, the rest of the body suffers.

Brothers and sisters, and I say this with all sincerity, please understand that I’m not directing these comments to anyone in particular. If you feel that in some way these comments *do* apply to you, that is between you and God the Holy Spirit. I'm simply speaking in general of the well-being of Christ's Church!

Yes, each part of Jesus` Body, His church, is important; take one part away and the rest suffers. When one of us is in pain we ache together; when one of us rejoices, we share in that joy. So yes, we are to be willing workers; “Here am I LORD, send me” we say. Therefore, we are not unfruitful; we are not barren or unproductive. Those whose faith is clothed by these qualities are like trees hanging heavy with fruit; ready to be harvested because our branches are hanging down low, laden with fruit. Yes, we are ready to be used and utilised for the nourishment and nurturing of the flock; that Body of the Lord, His Church. Yes, ready for service and willing to be used! Beloved, to state the obvious, fruit is only harvested from the tree when the tree is alive, healthy and growing. The fruit is the evidence of the growth and the vibrancy, (or the lack there of) of the tree. Matthew7:16. “You will know them by their fruit.” And the kind of fruit, of course, which anyone bears, (be they Christian or non-Christian) all depends upon the kind of rootstock from which they spring, or have been ingrafted to; and, of course, for the Christian, from that vine out of whom we draw our very life!

John15:1-9 we read. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers, such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” Yes these attributes, these Christlike qualities (or fruits), that we are commanded by Peter to “possess in increasing measure” are the evidences in our lives of Jesus, but only if we are “abiding” or

“remaining” in Him. And all such things flow from “our knowledge” from our knowing of God's Grace and mercy.

As the Holy Spirit stirs us up from within to acknowledge God, within the whole of our lives; yes in Word, and action! And yet on the other hand, (v9) “But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed of his past sins.” And from the Greek, “For he in whom these things are not present is blind, being short sighted, being forgetful of the cleansing of his sins of the past.” Matthew Henry says that, what Peter is getting at here, is the condition of those false teachers of whom he is warning the brethren. And although the NIV has changed the order of the two words, “blind and short-sighted,” to being “near sighted and blind,” the NASB has held the line with the original and with good reason. Dick Lucas explains that, while it is indeed a natural progression thinking of someone becoming nearsighted and then blind, this is not Peter's intention here. He's explaining that these false teaches “ARE blind.” That is why they are “short-sighted.” You see they “are blind” to the truth about Jesus, therefore they “are short sighted” to that which is of any real importance. It is not simply the here and now! Yes, because they “are blind” to Christ's truth, the truth *about* Him and His mission of redemption for His sheep, there is no truth in them. Indeed, they know nothing of truth; particularly about Jesus!

Beloved, today there are false teachers and liars about God, (for that is what they are, liars, “deceiving and being deceived” 2 Timothy3:13 tells us,) there are stadiums full all around the world, and in increasing measure. They will rob you of your peace. They will rob you of your finances. They will rob you of your truth, and were it possible, (in Satan's hands, whose tools they are) they would rob you of your eternal soul with their promises of heaven on earth now! Salvation yes. Reconciliation with God through Jesus yes. A heavenly inheritance yes. But there's more. Or as someone put it to me many years ago; ‘Roy, don't just read about the miracles, come and see them!’ But of course there is only one problem with such thinking. Didn't Jesus Himself say, “Blessed is he who believes without seeing.” O that is right, He called it Faith! Yes, they “are blind” to the truth about Jesus and since they “are blind” to Christ's truth, there is no truth in them; “blind guides” Jesus calls such men, “whitewashed tombs.” Giving the appearance of containing life by their fine manicured, well-built and maintained structures, and yet in reality containing only death and dead men's bones!

“Hypocrites;” “Snakes;” “A brood of Vipers” the Lord called them. Those who don't have the evidences of these qualities of Jesus in their lives are actually “blind” themselves, and therefore they can possess no light for the brethren. Yes, they are “blind” to begin with and as a consequence, they are “short sighted.” They see only this world. What they can get out of it. What they can possess of it, because they know not God. Yes, they see only this world and not beyond. They see only the here and now. Who they can win over. Who they can beguile with their slick speeches. What they can get out of their infiltration, even their infecting, of the churches in their bid to lead them down the path of apostasy! Friends again, unlike these things, which Peter says are evidences of Christ likeness and of His Holy Spirit dwelling within the saved soul of the believer, such people have no inner moral code. They have no relationship with God through Jesus; therefore they have no “knowledge of God.” The building up, the betterment and the encouraging of His people means nothing to them. If what they teach leads God's people from “the narrow road” and “the small gate” down the path to hell, what do they care? They have achieved their goals, to profit for themselves and their master the devil! And friends, even if they be sincere, (which I doubt that any are,) even if they be *sincere* in their delusion, the outcome for the flock is the same. In this way they “are blind” to Christ and eternal life, and they are “short sighted” because they are governed only by their appetites for the here and now!

Brothers and sisters, notice also that Peter says such a person “has forgotten” or, as in the original, is “forgetful of the former purification by Christ’s Blood.” So, unlike the genuine believer, who is to be working hand in hand with God, to be seeking to “possess these Christlike qualities in increasing measure,” the false teacher, the false professor, the “wolf in sheep’s clothing” not only knows nothing, but they remember nothing of the blood and cross of Jesus! Peter is not saying that they are saved, or indeed were saved, by any means. But just how completely and utterly empty they are, of anything to do with Jesus!

Beloved, as I have said now more than once throughout this series, one way of persevering through hardship and trial in Christ, is by remembering God's past mercies to us. And, although in Philippians 3:13b-14 Paul writes “But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus,” he is not saying that he is forgetting God's past mercies, no. The context is of him speaking of his former confidence in his Judaistic heritage. He's a Jew of Jews. And “a Pharisee of a Pharisee.” All that is forgotten, Paul says ‘That life of self-sufficiency and relying upon my ancestry is behind me. I now press forward to the prize in Christ.’

Beloved, it is not only good to remember God's past mercy, it is biblical. 1Chronicles16:12. “Remember the wonders he has done.” Job36:24. “Remember to extol his work.” Psalm63:6. “On my bed I remember you O Lord.” Psalm77:11. “I will remember the deeds of the Lord.” Ecclesiastes12:1 “Remember your Creator.” Isaiah46:8-10. “Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago. I am God, and there is no other, I am God and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come. My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.” Yes, Remember, Remember, Remember. Remember His former glory reflected in His Judgments. Remember His mighty deliverances when He split the sea, and filled the world with a flood. Remember the awesomeness of Mount Sinai. And above all things, Remember the Cross and the purifying of the shed blood of His Son Jesus. Yes remember! Beloved, it is good to remember the goodness of God, because it is biblically advantageous and spiritually strengthening! Well, these false teaches know nothing and remembered nothing of Jesus. (V10) “Therefore my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you will never fall.” In the original we read “Therefore rather brothers, be diligent to make firm the calling and choice of you, by doing these things, by no means will you fall ever.” Peter has already said in v5 “For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith.” Well here he reiterates the imperative by saying, “be all the more eager,” or “be diligent to make firm.” So unlike those “wolves in sheep’s clothing” in v9 we are not forgetful. We continually remember the mercy and grace of God through Jesus to us, because he is the sure foundation of our hope! Peter is saying that we are to sure up our faith and hope, by “being all the more eager,” to “make every effort.”

During these terrible floods we've all seen the houses inundated by the waters. Some houses up to the roof, and others unbelievably floating away. We've seen the sandbagging of the levees to sure them up in a last ditch effort to keep the danger at bay. Well, that's what Peter is telling them to do. Sure up, even sandbag your faith against falsehood. Recognise these people for who they are, “you will know them by their fruit” Jesus said. They do not bear those attributes, those hallmarks of Christ. They are not for the sheep, they're after the sheep. Yes, sure up our faith against falsehood. That's what he means by saying “make your calling and election sure,” to make firm God's choice of us. We sure up our faith against falsehood by remembering God's grace to us; by reflecting those Christlike qualities and by being on guard against falsehood through being rooted in the truth!

“By doing these things you will never fall” Peter says. But he's not saying that we can “fall” from God's grace, he means falling into error! He continues in v11, “for so richly will be supplied to you the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It speaks of King David's words in Psalm 23:5-6. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou annointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.” It speaks of the great victory feast at the return of the war hero. As the son returns home from the battlefield, the father has placed Watchmen at 5, 2, and 1 kilometre. And as he draws closer to the house the runners run calling out; ‘He's coming, he's coming!’ And as the son gets to the door, he is met by his father, welcomed by all of his family, and the surrounding neighbours. A cup is placed in his hand (the Father's own cup) and the most choice wine is poured into the cup until it fills and overflows onto the ground. And the message is, that all that the Father has, belongs to the son, and it is here in abundance! Well, so too it is that the believer will be welcomed richly into the presence of Jesus and His Kingdom of Heaven! Yes, that's the picture which Peter paints for us here. The richness of the reward of heaven through Jesus, having persevered to the end. We will receive a rich reward and a rich welcome, and the eternal life that awaits!

So as I close this morning dear friends, “let us be all the more eager,” to be fruitful in our knowledge of Jesus. And, through this, to be clear sighted against falsehood. And as we seek to do this, we will sure up our faith, and reflect those qualities of the king in preparation for Him taking us into glory, where the riches of His presence and His Kingdom await us! Let's pray!