

**WHAT YOU GET BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH
II PETER 1:8-11**

NEED: TO MAXIMIZE OUR GROWTH AS CHRISTIANS.

PROPOSITION: GROWTH IN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE WILL BENEFIT YOU GREATLY IN TIME AND ETERNITY.

OBJECTIVE: TO INVOLVE CHRISTIANS IN THE THINGS THAT WILL PRODUCE GROWTH IN THEIR WALK WITH GOD.

INTRODUCTION:

Roger Merrill in First Things First tells of a business consultant who decided to landscape his grounds. He hired a woman with a doctorate in horticulture who was extremely knowledgeable.

Because the business consultant was very busy and traveled a lot, he kept emphasizing to her the need to create his garden in a way that would require little or no maintenance on his part. He insisted on automatic sprinklers and other labor saving devices.

Finally she stopped and said, “There’s one thing you need to deal with before we go any further. If there’s no gardener, there’s no garden!”

There are no labor saving devices for growing a garden of spiritual virtue. Becoming a person of spiritual fruitfulness requires time, attention, and care. We must keep this in mind as we hear the admonitions of this little letter of Second Peter to grow in our walk with God. We must also keep in mind that there is no growth without pain. There’s always pain involved because growth involves change in our lives. You may have read the little essay that a boy wrote about a mule.

He wrote, “the mule is hardier bird than the goose or turkey and different. He wears two wings on the sides of his head. He has two feet to walk with, and two more to kick with, and is awful backward about going forward!” Many of us could find some similarity to the mule in our own disposition. We know our own hearts and know that there is a stronger inclination to going backward than to going forward. Many of us are adverse to really doing the things that will bring spiritual growth to our lives.

But the pain is worth it! In our paragraph under consideration this morning the apostle Peter makes it clear that the pain that brings about growth is profitable. There are some very positive things that happen in time and eternity when you add to your faith. I want us to consider these so that we will be motivated to do whatever is necessary to bring about spiritual growth in our Christian lives.

I. BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH YOU BECOME FRUITFUL.

This is the statement from the apostle: “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.” “These qualities” refers to those things that we are to add to our faith. If we add to our faith the goodness and knowledge and self-control and persevere and godliness and brotherly kindness and love in a full measure, then our Christian life and service will be fruitful.

In setting forth this anticipation the apostle uses two helpful words. The first word is translated “ineffective.” The older version translates the word “barren.” The same word is translated in other contexts as “idle.” If you put the word in a personal context it suggests a painful

experience. There are women present in this congregation who have known the pain of being “barren.” They have felt a deep longing and desire to be a mother, but they have been incapable of conceiving a child. They bear that burden of barrenness. They feel unfilled as a woman because they are not able to bear a son or a daughter into the family.

There is a parallel to that in the Christian life. Just as a woman senses that it is a part of her destiny to be a mother, so a Christian senses that there is some purpose for my Christian life. There is something that God wants to accomplish through me. If you continue to add to your faith, you will save yourself from ineffectiveness and barrenness.

The second word that the apostle uses is translated “unproductive.” The older version translates this word “unfruitful.” I prefer the older version in this context. This is precisely what the Greek word used by Peter means. It means to be without fruit.

Surely Peter must have had in mind the words that Jesus spoke that last evening when He used the parable of the vine and the branches. When God brought us into the Christian life, it was His purpose that we bear fruit. There are two sides to the fruit that is born through the Christian. On one side the fruit brings satisfaction to the heart of the God that saves us. On the other side the fruit bears witness to the unsaved world of God’s activity in our lives. It becomes compelling evidence to the world that we are indeed joined to the Lord Jesus like a branch is joined to a vine. The only way you can avoid unfruitfulness is by continuing to add to your faith these qualities. As you grow in your Christian life, you will prevent ineffectiveness and

unproductiveness and will assure fruitfulness in every area of your life. Surely this is reason enough to continue to add to your faith regardless of the pain and the cost that is involved.

II. BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH YOU GAIN INSIGHT.

The apostle states as the second benefit adding to your faith these words: “but if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind.” I have chosen to state this positively. The apostle states it negatively – what happens if you do not add to your faith. But actually if you will add to your faith, then just the opposite will take place in your life.

Again he uses two terms that helps us understand what happens when we add to our faith. The first term “nearsighted” is the word that comes into English in the transliteration myopic. It means literally to have the physical problem of nearsightedness. If a person does not grow spiritually, then they have in the spiritual realm the same problems that a myopic person has in the physical realm. They are not able to see afar off. The practical side of this is the things of earth will be very real to them, but the things of eternity will be out of sight. They will have no perception of or sense of the things of the eternal realm. So if you want the things of God, heaven, the hope of the coming of Jesus Christ our Lord, the provisions that are our in Christ Jesus, to be close and real in your life, you must continue to add to your faith.

The other word that Peter uses is the word “blind.” This means that the person lives as though the whole spiritual realm did not exist. They are a child of God but they have no awareness of the glory of that sonship.

Now when you turn this around and translate it into a positive, it becomes obvious what adding to your faith produces. Adding to your faith brings the ability to see the things of God and to see afar off. It brings into the life spiritual perception and receptivity. If in your life the things of God have become distant and dull, it may well be that you need is to become serious about spiritual growth. Adding to your faith brings spiritual insight.

III. BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH YOU FIND ASSURANCE.

Peter touches on this part of the benefit when he writes, “and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more to eager to make your calling and election sure.”

It must be a terrible state to be in when you have “forgotten that you have been cleansed from your past sins.” But this is the state into which a person who does not continue to add to their faith finds themselves. It is not that they have lost their salvation, but they have lost the joy of their salvation. It is not that they are out of the family of God, but the freshness of being in the family of God has been lost.

When you turn this around into the positive, it obviously means that as you add to your faith you continue to experience the joy of being a Christian. You grow in your awareness of what it means to be forgiven. You grow in your confidence in your relationship with the Lord. Your part in God’s special purpose is nailed down in our mind and in your thinking.

We must never forget that Christian assurance is not automatic in the Christian life. Christian assurance is the byproduct of a close and continuous walk with God. If you are being battered by doubts, the doubts may be a warning that you have stopped growing in your Christian life. If you want assurance to well up within you then make sure that you are continuing to your faith.

IV. YOU BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH DEVELOP SPIRITUAL STABILITY.

Another expression that point to a spiritual benefit from your growth in the Lord is found in these words, “you will never fall.” The idea in this word is that you will never “stumble.”

One commentary suggests that the metaphor is that of a race. If you continue to add to your faith, you will never stumble in the race of the Christian life, and consequently not fall. You will be sure footed as you pursue the race of life. All of us can remember some tragic scenes from the Olympics; a well-known and capable runner stumbled in the most important race of her life and fell. It was a humiliating and tremendously disappointing moment in their lives. If you want to prevent that spiritual humiliation and deep disappointment, then you continue to add to your faith the things that are needed for spiritual growth.

The issue here is not losing your salvation. It is not a matter of “falling from grace.” The issue is rather an issue of finishing what you’ve set out to do to the glory of God.

All of us know tragic stories of persons who set out on the Christian life with great joy and enthusiasm. But after a while, we’ve seen them stumble. We’ve seen them seemingly fall out of the race. And we miss the contribution that they might have made to the cause of Christ if they

had been steadfast and sure-footed in the race of life. If you are running well then you inspire me to do better. But if you are to run well, you must continue to add to your faith.

IV. BY ADDING TO YOUR FAITH YOU PREPARE FOR HEAVEN.

The apostle saved the best to last. “And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” This is the ultimate result of adding to your faith.

By having faith in Jesus Christ, you have assured yourself of a place in heaven. By adding to the faith that secured for you a place in heaven, you can make sure of a glad welcome into heaven.

The imagery used in this tremendous statement concerning heaven is very rich. It speaks of heaven as being an “eternal kingdom.” It is eternal in contrast to everything around us that is so temporal. Whatever honors you receive in the eternal kingdom are as eternal as the kingdom itself. Peter also emphasizes that it is the eternal kingdom “of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The idea would be that when you enter into this eternal kingdom, you will be welcomed by the Lord Jesus Himself. It is not a matter of just having a welcome but rather of having a “rich” welcome. The older version translates it, “abundantly.” Will you enter into the presence of the Lord and into his eternal kingdom without receiving any notice or will the risen Lord Himself take special note of your entrance into His kingdom. If there is growth and development in your Christian life, then when you come to the end of life you will enter the presence of the Lord to a rich welcome.

So the benefits that come from adding to your faith come both in this life and in the life to come. In this life there is increased effectiveness and fruitfulness. In this life there is increased sensitivity. In this life there is increased assurance and joy. In this life there is increased stability and steadfastness. In the life to come there is a greater welcome into the presence of the Lord.

Not long before his death at age 75, someone asked Henry Wadsworth Longfellow how he had continued to be so effective and vigorous in his writings to that point in life. The famous poet pointed to an apple tree that was full of colorful blooms, “that is a very old apple tree, but the blossoms this year seem more beautiful than ever before. That old tree grows a little new wood each year, and I suppose it is out of the new wood that these blossoms come. Like the apple tree, I try to grow a little new wood each year.”

What is true in the creative realm for a poet is also true in this spiritual realm for a child of God. The secret of continued growth and development is adding a little new wood each year. Are you doing that? How can you make sure that you continue to grow?

Let me just make three or four suggestions to you as we come to the close of this great section on spiritual growth. First, acknowledge that growth is normal. Being saved is only five percent of the Christian life; growth is 95 percent of it – so wrote M.E. Dodd many years ago. And he must be on target. Second, if you are to continue to grow, you must develop a sensitivity to sin. Any unacknowledged sin in your life becomes a detriment to growth. You can’t add love if you’re cultivating malice. You can’t add self-control, if you’re cultivating indulgence. You can’t add

patience if you cultivating anger. You must be sensitive to sin and deal with anything that will prevent you from adding these qualities to your faith.

Third, you must continue a life of discipline and devotion. This includes daily times of prayer and Bible study. There will be no adding to your faith without time spent with the Lord daily.

Fourth, it is expedient that you be faithful in the utilization of the means of grace. By this I mean faithful in your participation in the worship of the Lord week by week. You can not be spasmodic in your church attendance and be a growing Christian.

Fifth, you must find a place that you can give yourself in Christian service. Only the Christian who is utilizing his spiritual gift can expect to be a growing Christian.

Peter closes this little letter with an admonition to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When you consider the benefits that come to those that grow, the imperative by the apostle seems to be very much in order. Let's go and grow!