

“ADD TO YOUR FAITH” (PART 1)

Jon Macon

Luke 2:52 states the fact that Jesus Christ grew not only physically, but also spiritually when he was upon the earth: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” We have been commanded to follow in Christ’s steps (1 Pet 2:21), to have his mind (Php 2:5), and to be conformed to his image (Rom 8:29). Therefore, we have been *commanded* to grow spiritually as Jesus did: “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen*” (2 Pet 3:18). The same book begins with some detailed instructions on how to do this, in chapter one, verses 3-9: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” We can obey the command to grow spiritually as Christ did when we apply all diligence to add to our faith the items described in this passage.

The foundation of faith

All the things we must grow in spiritually are to be added to our faith (2 Pet 1:5). Faith is our foundation. “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb 11:6). We are justified by faith in Christ (Rom 5:1; 3:22; 9:30; Gal 2:16; 3:8; Php 3:9). We have the propitiation for our sins by faith (Rom 3:25). We are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18). We are children of God by faith (Gal 3:26). We are saved by faith (Eph 2:8; Rom 5:2; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 1:5). We walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and live by faith (Rom 1:17; Gal 2:20; 3:11; Heb 10:38). Our hearts are purified by faith (Acts 15:9), and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). We can quench all of Satan’s fiery darts with the shield of faith (Eph 6:16). And faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4-5). This faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom 10:17). Faith is the basis of our obedience to God, otherwise our faith is dead (Jas 2:14-26). “Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong” (Deut 11:8). Faith is the foundation upon which all of these other things are built, up to the love of God (2 Pet 1:5-7). As the foundation for everything, faith is how we stand (2 Cor 1:24).

Virtue

We must first “add to your faith virtue” (2 Pet 1:5). “Virtue” (“arete” in Greek), literally means “manliness” or “valor.” This word describes a spiritual strength and courage. The same virtues that are in God, we must also show forth (1 Pet 2:9). Once

“ADD TO YOUR FAITH” (PART 1)

(continued)

we believe, we must have the strength and courage to obey God’s commandments to endure the persecutions that will immediately come to try our new faith. When Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of Israel, the Lord instructed him, “*Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest*” (Josh 1:7). This is exactly what David also instructed his son Solomon to do as he began his reign as King of Israel: “I go the way of all the earth: *be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man*; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself” (2 Kgs 2:2-3). Once we hear God’s word, and believe it, we must put that faith into action and obey the teachings of God’s word. This will require us to “be strong and show ourselves a man” in a spiritual sense. This is the precise meaning of the word “virtue.” This is to be immediately added to our faith, because Satan will not delay in trying to discourage a new Christian by bringing trials on their faith (Acts 14:22; 1 Thes 3:1-6; 2 Tim 3:12). Therefore, virtue is something God tells us to think on (Php 4:8), and also to add to our faith.

Knowledge

Next, we must add “to virtue knowledge” (2 Pet 1:5). God has made manifest the savor of His knowledge in every place through the preaching of His word (2 Cor 2:14-17; 4:5-6). Through this knowledge, God has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Everything that we need to know about how we should live in this life and how to be godly is revealed in God’s word (John 1:4; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Tim 4:6-8; 6:3; Titus 1:1; 2:11-12). That is how all the treasures of knowledge are hidden in Christ (Col 2:3). Therefore, as we grow in faith, and add virtue to that faith, we then need to know what God’s will is. Our zeal for God must be according to knowledge (Rom 10:2). That is why knowledge must be added next. We escape the pollution of the world through knowledge (2 Pet 2:20). Our warfare is to cast down “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor 10:5). We must first have knowledge in order to be able to recognize and cast down what is against that knowledge. In fact, to cast down *every* thing that exalts itself against God’s knowledge, it is imperative that we add knowledge until we have *all* knowledge (Col 1:9-10). Our goal is to have God’s love perfected in us (Matt 5:43-48; John 17:22-26; 1 Cor 13; Eph 4:11-16; 1 John 2:5; 4:12,17-18). Therefore, it is essential for us to first “know the love of Christ” (Eph 3:19; 4:13). The “new man” is “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10). To attain that knowledge, we need to be willing to “count all things but loss” (Php 3:8). But, as our knowledge grows, we must be careful not to be lifted up in pride, and we must not neglect to add the subsequent qualities too, especially love, because “knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (1 Cor 8:1-2).