



Shortly before he died, a young reporter threw Pablo Casals a question: "Mr. Casals, you are 95 and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?" Mr. Casals answered, "Because I think I'm making progress." The attitude Casals had toward his development as a musician ought to be the same attitude we have in our spiritual walk with Christ. Having been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, we must continue with this new life by growing in faith.

In the first century, the Apostle Peter had great concern for the believers that had been scattered all over the world because of persecution. Furthermore, he was aware that false teachers were intent on exploiting this situation by penetrating struggling churches and inflicting Christians with a gospel of their own. It was important, therefore, for each individual believer to be fully committed to developing strong spiritual roots and grow in the knowledge of Christ and His teachings. He therefore wrote these words of encouragement:

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. 5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. 8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. 10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. 11 Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:3-11)

In this passage, Peter offers four principles that motivate us to continue growing in our faith. First, he says that we have everything we need to grow (1:3-4). Each day, it is easy to succumb to the temptation to focus only on what is missing in our lives. This attitude keeps us from understanding that God is more willing to provide for our needs than we are eager to be provided for. In fact, not only does God want to provide, He actually does provide! The providence of God is grounded on His promises. Even if we cannot see all our provisions ahead of time, we know God to be a trustworthy Father and His promise to provide is all we need to keep on keeping on.

Second, Peter encourages us to respond to God's promises by developing our faith (1:5-7). He offers us a specific list of spiritual qualities that ought to supplement a believer's faith — this includes moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love for others. It is a reminder that faith is not merely a statement of belief, rather, it is a lived-out belief. The developmental stages of faith, from right living to right loving, are the products of putting faith into action.

Third, Peter reminds us that active faith leads to spiritual fruitfulness (1:8-9). Maturing faith results in producing spiritual fruit and growing deeper in our knowledge of Christ. These two results are intricately bound together in that the more we know who Christ is, the more we are enabled to live as Christ lived. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul defined maturity as “measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ” (4:13). We who believe should always uphold Christlikeness as the golden standard of biblical discipleship.

Finally, the Apostle Peter encourages us by offering the promise of a glorious eternity (1:10-11). We should never underestimate the motivating power of a desirable future. Without this perspective, the daily challenges of life would be difficult to endure. Conversely, if we recognize that our present pain leads us to the path of future bliss, we are able to persevere through such trials because we know they will last only for a moment in light of God’s promised future for us all.

Albert Einstein was once asked what he did for a living. Surprisingly, rather than referring to himself as a physicist, he replied, “I am a student of physics.” Remarkable, isn’t it. Because of his posture as a lifelong learner, Einstein has left an indelible mark in his field of study. As disciples of Christ, we too are students of faith. I am confident that as you embark on a journey of perpetual learning, you will continue to grow each day in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.