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New Dimensions in Your Life by Faith

You can have the
glorious sense of growth...
expansion...



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By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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When I was young, my father used to say to me, "My boy, I have to provide food, shelter, education, and loving care for you. That's part of my job. But, he went on, "that isn't all. We have to build a life—your life— you and I. And there's something you have to work at too, my boy!"

We all know there are some things you get "for free," and others you have to work for.

Every one of us who is God's child begins with certain clearly defined dimensions in his life. This is precisely the point that the Apostle Peter makes in II Peter 1: 1-8. He says God has given to us His grace, all things "that pertain unto life and godliness," along with "great and precious promises" which are the key to Christian character and a holy life.

Notice that Peter goes on to say, "And beside this, ADD to your faith ..." Add what? Virtue ... knowledge ... temperance ... patience ... godliness ... brotherly ... kindness ... love. Peter is saying, "Give some thought to the extension of the boundaries of your Christian life." But remember that these new dimensions come not by your trying, but by your applying *faith* to the particular areas of your life.

What Do We Begin With?

We receive some things from God by faith, without our working for them.

... His grace is free: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." God gives us saving grace, keeping grace, enabling grace, sufficient grace, grace to live and grace to die.

... God's peace is free, too—"peace that passes all understanding. You can't define it, weigh it, or nail it down, because it is altogether divine. But you can experience the wonderful supporting strength of it! Peace is the quality of God, entering into your very nature.

... God's joy is free. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "Full" means running over. Your cup may be small, but it can overflow a lot! "My cup;" said the psalmist, "runneth over."

... God's power is free. In answer to the question, "What kind of power?" we go to the Apostle Paul who says that the power that works in the believer is the same power that "God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Resurrection power is ours—even now.

... God's equipment for the Christian life is free. "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him," Peter says.

There isn't anything that you will ever need to enable you to live the Christian life that has not already been given to you. It's yours!

Are you aware of how rich you really are? You remember the story of the couple who were taking their first ocean voyage. They had scrimped and saved to get enough for their steamship tickets. Then, they thought, "We must plan for food for the journey." Carefully they measured out cheese and bread and some dried meats-all they could afford-enough, they hoped, to last until their destination was reached. Day after day they doled out the daily ration and ate it solemnly in their cabin.

Just before the trip ended, someone discovered that these people had been eating alone in their cabin and inquired why they did this. When this old couple explained that they were trying to make the food last until the voyage was completed they were told, "Why, all your meals were included in your steamship tickets! You could have been eating as much as you wished, every day:'

You get the point. All you need for a blessed, fruitful, satisfying Christian life is already yours. Claim it! Make it your own!

Stimulant for Awareness

How does one appropriate the "all things" of which Peter spoke? We do it through getting better acquainted with the Lord, and through the application of His Word to our life.

"All things that pertain unto life and godliness" become real to us, first, "through the knowledge of Him." This means personal, intimate knowledge, as one has of a close friend. Spend time with your Lord, and your character will be modified heavenward.

Second, appropriate the promises in God's Word. Let your soul feast on the thought that God forgives your sin, He makes you His child, He opens up heaven to you, He gives you over 30,000 promises in the Bible as your very own, and then if that weren't enough, He takes His very nature and gives that to you, and then undertakes to live His life through you!

I know from personal experience that God's Word in the mind and heart make a difference in one's attitudes and decisions.

While I was a pastor, on one occasion, shortly after I had embarked on a vigorous program of Bible memorization and meditation, one of my deacons remarked, "Hey, preacher, your preaching is different what happened to you? Whatever it is," he went on, "keep it up-I like it."

You can try this practice for yourself and you'll find it works. Take some 3 x 5 index cards. Cut them in half and write a Scripture verse with its reference on each of these handy 2 1/2 x 3 cards. Then place the cards in a location where you will look at them several times a day ... over the sink ... on a mirror ... in your wallet. When you glance at the Scripture verse, say it aloud, with the reference. In between times, think about what the verse said. By so doing you will be giving God's Word a chance to penetrate beyond your conscious mind and memory, into the "computer" portion of your mind from which the Holy Spirit can recall it when needed.

So there you are-all these things given to you ... free. But don't just stand there, looking. Appreciate! Appropriate! By faith-you and God working together-extend the borders of your Christian life. Peter goes on to tell how this is to be done. He says, "Besides this (that is, all that you already have from God) giving all diligence, ADD to your faith "Diligence is a great word, not used much in our day.

What Does It Mean to be Diligent?

Briefly stated, to be diligent means "Get on the job ... work hard at it ... stay with it until the task is done."

Diligence means thoroughness. Thorough, that is, as in house-cleaning. Few married men can ever understand why the ladies have to dig into corners, tear everything up and pull everything down, but diligence demands it.

Diligence also means completeness. Don't quit until the job is done. Many a person, in the pressure of some trial, or under the conviction of some great spiritual experience, has started a life of dedication to the Lord's will. But somewhere along the line, he or she has quit. It is time for us to renew our consecration, to consider finishing the job.

Small thought here: Learn the value of spending an extra few minutes in prayer. When your mind says, "Time to say 'Amen,' Let's get out of here to the work of the day," quietly wait before the Lord a little longer. In those *extra* moments, you give God a chance to break through in your life and to do a precious work of His grace. This is diligence in prayer-keeping at it.

Some Things You Can Add to Your Life by Faith

Faith as an additive is a valid scriptural principle. The Apostle Paul says (Col. 2:6): "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him."

How did your Christian experience begin? It began by faith, of course-simple, uncomplicated faith. How do you proceed to grow in your relationship with God? Again, by faith. And it is faith applied in all the varied situations that you face every day. You don't live a whole day at a time, do you? Life breaks up into little segments, like pieces broken off a loaf of bread. For each of those pieces of life, so to speak, you and I must form the habit of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ with the same abandonment of ourselves to Him that we had when we came to him for salvation.

Peter lists some of the items to be "added."

...Add to your faith-knowledge.

There is some knowledge for which you have to dig. I tell our students at the college that a prayer meeting is no substitute for doing your homework. God will never, in answer to prayer, help you to remember something you did not first learn. Nor will He, in answer to prayer, bypass His Word and reveal directly to you the truths that you could find by reading your Bible.

There is another kind of knowledge that comes by faith, as God blesses His Word, and the Holy Spirit applies it to your life. That knowledge is an intimate acquaintanceship with the Lord Jesus Christ. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace," we read in the book of Job.

Here is a mysterious and yet a wonderfully thrilling truth. When next you go to your knees to speak with your Lord, say to Him, "Lord Jesus, just as I trusted You as my Saviour,. so now I want to trust You to reveal Yourself to me while I read your Word and wait before You." I can promise you that such prayers are never unanswered.

Years ago, while I was a guest in a lovely home, I was also the victim of an agonizingly busy schedule. I soon found that if I were to survive the pressures, I had to meet the Lord early in the morning, before the family awoke, and get something fresh from the Lord to feed my own soul-something which I could share in the three to seven meetings I had each day.

Early one morning, while I was seeking the Lord, I was nearly panic-stricken to find that the time was going by, my hosts would soon be awaking, the day would begin, and I still had nothing fresh from God's Word.

I remember praying earnestly, "O Lord, hurry up! There's not much time left!"

Precisely at that moment of my urgency, the Lord graciously opened up the Scripture passage I had been studying and gave me a whole heartful of truths which I shared joyously throughout the rest of the day.

See the glorious combination: Truth—propositional knowledge—is yours if you will dig for it in the Word. Triumph—dynamic, personal knowledge—is yours by faith, if you will pray and believe for it.

...Add to your faith-virtue.

Virtue is the quality of being spontaneously good. This is goodness that goes beyond the hope of reward. How do you achieve it? Simple: When the Lord Jesus Christ becomes Lord of your life, then His desires become your desires. The psalmist exclaims, "I delight to do thy will, O my God. Yea, thy law is within my heart." There is a dynamic principle at work within the believer's life. Paul states it in Philippians 2: 13:

"For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." To will—that supplies the want-to. To do—that supplies the power. God does both for you when *His will* is your highest priority.

Once when my daughters were very young, we went as a family to enjoy a special celebration meal at a restaurant; I think it was a birthday. We looked over the menu. Almost at once I knew what I wanted, and so did Mother and our older daughter. But the younger one, about three and a half or four years old at the time, was uncertain. To tease her, I took the big menu and put it under her face and said, "Okay, dearie, what would you like?"

Her eyes filled with tears and she looked up at me and said, "Papa, I just want what you want!"

Well, at that point she could have had the whole world with a pink ribbon around it! You know that. What God is waiting for from you and me is just the glad declaration, "I want what You want." That is "virtue." We obtain it by faith.

...Add to your faith-temperance.

"Temperance" means, literally, inner strength. This is the strength of God working in our lives through faith. Paul prayed for his friends at Ephesus that they might be "strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man." Let's get away from the idea that temperance is some kind of restrictive self-control that we impose upon ourselves.

Scriptural temperance is not self-control, but rather God-control. It involves our bringing to Him the areas of our life that need changing.

Here is a practical suggestion:

Make a list of the things in your life that you have never been able to handle—the ones that always defeat you. Bring this list to God in prayer. Verbalize honestly to Him about those areas where you have been victimized. Then start *trusting* Him to change each defeat into victory. I can promise you that He will.

God may not always change your circumstances in answer to prayer, but He will change you—in the circumstances—and make you a victor instead of a victim.

Consider the other areas of life listed for us in II Peter 1 :5-7. At first glance, I agree that they present an almost impossible challenge.

Patience: The art of staying under, and not blowing up or giving up.

Godliness: The quality of God in the everyday experiences of life.

Brotherly kindness: The ability to go beyond the concept of “fellow man” and to look upon others as our true brothers and sisters ... to treat them as members of the family of God, with us.

Love: Calvary love, “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” This is the “love” of John 3: 16.

A formidable list, is it not? The answer to our achieving victory in all these realms is found in our getting at the task, and submitting, by faith, every part of our life to the almightiness of God.

It took the greatest of all miracles to save you, did it not? Can you not trust God for the additional miracle of building your life into that which is Christlike and God-glorifying?

Add to your faith! Then, as my deacon said to me, so your friends will be saying to you, “Hey, you’re different! What happened to you? It’s *good!*”

