

2 Peter 1:8,9
Hope in the fight

In Increasing Measure!



One of the ways that God expressed His approval in the Old Testament times was to increase a person's wealth. Wealth was mainly measured by the number of sheep, goats, cattle, or camels you owned. If you had large flocks and herds, it could be safely assumed that you also had plenty of silver and gold buried somewhere around your tent for safe-keeping. When God called Abram, he was already a wealthy man in flocks and herds, gold and silver. But when Abram believed God and answered the call of God to "*go to a land I will show you*", God blessed Abram and blessed his descendants with "*ever-increasing*" numbers in flocks and herds. He made their mature animals incredibly fertile and productive – thus increasing their wealth without spending a sheckle. As the herds and flocks increased in size, so did the the numbers of servants needed to care for and protect them, until numbers of their armed and defensively trained shepherds and herdsman were equal to or exceeded that of minor kings in the area. They could protect themselves from virtually anyone if they had to!



When Job got caught in a feud between God and Satan, he hit rock bottom when all his flock and herds and even his offspring were destroyed. He also was afflicted with terrible sores, painful, scaring boils all over his body. But after all that, when he refused to renounce God, all his former wealth in flocks, herds, and offspring were restored to him, and then increased greatly, because God was showing His approval of Job's durable faith!

My point is that God is never static. There is always forward movement in His plan for His people. We are either increasing, or decreasing. **[2 Tim. 4:7 - Life compared to a race]** There is no place of stasis for us. If we have plateaued in our lives then we are on the decline, and that is just a fact! Unless we are moving on to the next thing that God has for us, we are falling back – losing ground! Not “increasing” means we have stopped listening, and stopped following. *You have seen the “footprints in the sand” at any retailer from a Christian bookstore to Sam's Club. It is literally a picture of footprints on a beach – most are a picture of one set of prints, assumedly those of Jesus on the beach of the Sea of Galilee. But some depictions have two sets of prints, where the smaller prints are together with the larger – a picture of someone walking with Jesus. If you would be a follower of Jesus, you have to move forward when He moves forward. When He moves, you move, or you get left behind. If you get lost, like the Good Shepherd He is, He will come back and find you, but you have to stay with Him then!

Peter says something here that should really capture our focus. “If you possess these qualities (faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, Godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, not to mention other fruit of the Spirit *not* mentioned in Peter’s list – joy, peace, patience, faithfulness, and gentleness).... ***IN INCREASING MEASURE! He doesn’t just leave it at “if you possess these qualities”. He includes “If you possess these qualities in increasing measure”!*** These words move the bar. We don’t just get these wonderful qualities of God, and boom, we’re done – we’ve arrived – we’ve made it! No! We have NEVER arrived until we arrive at our final destination, before the throne of God! On our way to the throne, we are moving forward – growing, deepening, and God is increasing us in all the things that matter – not in sheep, goats, and cattle, but in the qualities of the character of the Lord Jesus! These are the things that matter – that truly enrich our lives! A person can be successful - can own their own company, having made something of themselves, and acquired great wealth. But along the path to success have left their family and friends, their church and their Lord in their absence and neglect! They wake up lost/destroyed! **But** these riches of Jesus make us ever more effective in convincing the world that Jesus is real and that He is a wonderful Savior, and that He can be trusted in the capacity of ruler over our lives! Why? Because He is alive in me, and living His life through me, and carrying out His purposes in this world through me! We become a vibrant portrait of the real Jesus, simply because He has healed our hearts and changed them to be like His own! AND,.. He never stops increasing our riches but is asking us to *learn* – especially from our mistakes – so we can make fewer mistakes – so we don’t ***have to*** keep apologizing! Being in Christ, by faith, we are in an incredibly hopeful situation! It doesn’t matter our background, our track record! That might be all messed up, but since putting our faith in Jesus, He is now making us into someone different – our path has diverged from that path of selfish futility, and in following Jesus, He has led us on a life-path of consequence! He is slowly making us into someone of substance, someone who is wise and whose character is attractive! Christ-followers who live changed lives, re-created lives, are the type of people that God uses to bring glory to Himself – to spread His Name and good reputation throughout the world!



Vs. 8 - "If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ"

I really have a hard time with the idea that I might fall under these two categories – ineffective and/or unproductive! But I have a ***much harder*** time with the idea of me leaving the false impression that the Living Jesus, or the Spirit of God might be seen as ineffective and/or unproductive ***because of me*** – because of my poor **choices**, and my bad **attitudes**, and my selfish **values** and my misarranged **priorities**, and my unwise **judgments**, and my **ongoing undealt-with baggage/personal issues**, and my obvious **self-preoccupation**, and my depressing **spiritual malaise/apathy**, and,.. well,.. you get the picture! When we identify as



biblical Christ-followers, people immediately expect something different from the norm. They expect someone who is mentally balanced and stable – who has their life in order – who is upbeat, honest, kind and generous to a fault! But so many have been disappointed so many times by professing Christians that had bad attitudes, and uncontrolled tongues, and who were obvious hypocrites! So they have come to expect just the opposite of what they ***should*** expect! Far too many people outside of Christ have come to expect that they will be disappointed by those who say they are in Christ – that they will be let down again by yet another “Christian”! That kills me!

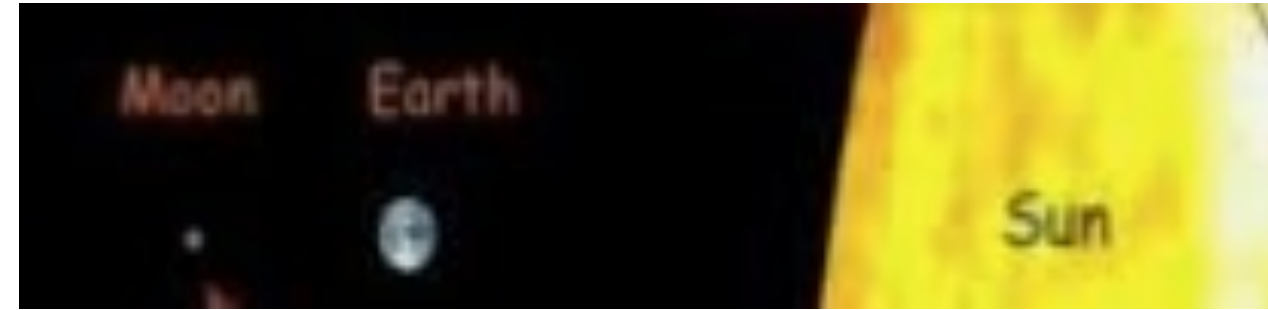
We serve a Savior that did not let us down! Never did He disappoint us, even though the apostles taught the Jesus was tempted in every way, just like a normal person! But yet He was ***not*** “normal” because He never fell for it! His character held up! He didn’t get sidetracked! He was never fooled! He never compromised His perfect nature, even though He also had human nature. But His human nature did not rule over Him! He ruled over ***it*** all the way *to, through, and beyond* the suffering of the cross! He fulfilled His mission entirely without losing His focus once! And He did it for us! He did it out of a bottomless love! He did it so that we could be reconciled to God and serve Him joyfully forever! He is our pattern, our prototype, our prime meridian and true North from which we find our bearings! His job was to connect us to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which He accomplished flawlessly. What a Savior! What a God! 4

~ Israelmore Ayivor, Ghana, Africa. - “We are like the moon. The moon shines, but it does not produce its own light. It reflects the light illuminated onto its surface by the Sun and is never proud to say “*I am the source of light*”. God shines through us, hence He deserves the glory, not us.”

That is a beautiful analogy illustrating a beautiful truth! He certainly deserves the glory! But what I would like to add is that what He certainly does *not* deserve is the dishonor and mockery that He so often receives because those who claim to be His people do

not *speak* or *act* like His people! When we are “*ineffective and unproductive*” because we give place to sinful attitudes and actions in our lives, we become the very thing that keeps people from God! When we are angry people, mouthy, and unkind, we have given place to the Devil, God’s adversary. He uses us to stiffen opposition against God! How sad is that?! But it doesn’t have to be like that. Because, on the other hand, when we are right with Him and cooperating with the Spirit of God, God uses us to soften people’s hearts toward Jesus. But we choose whose side we are on!

The very sad thing is that far too many of us mistakenly think we are doing the Lord’s work when we are actually aiding the opposition! We end up doing the wrong things, saying the wrong things, and thinking they are the right things! I have seen the phenomenon of people feeling self-satisfied and justified even looking back at the chaos that is strewn across their backtrail! It is so sad to see Christians that I love becoming “*nearsighted and blind*” – blind to themselves and what has taken over their life - giving place to anger, frustration, impatience, and unkindness! Being far too self-assured to sense that they are way off base and are actually being used *against* the purposes of God! Jesus our Lord said “By their fruit you will know them”. Now, sometimes doing the right thing will cause distress in someone who wants you to do the wrong thing. I’m not talking here about that. I’m talking about taking any chaos and hurt we have caused, seriously! We look back, are brought up short, and then we have to look inside. Sometimes we are wrong and we need to admit it and make it right with God and humanity! This is God’s course correction, and I have to say that there is true joy in letting go and admitting that we were wrong when we finally know we **WERE** wrong!



God of Creation, there at the start, before the beginning of time.
With no point of reference, you spoke to the dark
and fleshed out the wonder of light!



And as you speak, a hundred billion galaxies are born.
In the vapor of your breath the planets form.

If the stars were made to worship, so will I.

I can see your heart in everything you've made. Every
burning star, a signal fire of grace. **If creation sings your praises, so will I**

God of your promise, you don't speak in vain, no syllable empty or void.
For once you have spoken, all nature and science follow the sound of your
voice

And as you speak, a hundred billion creatures catch your breath. Evolving in
pursuit of what you said.

If it all reveals your nature so will I. I can see your heart in everything you
say – every painted sky a canvas of your grace.

If creation still obeys you so will I

If the stars were made to worship so will I. If the mountains bow in reverence, so will I. If oceans roar your greatness, so will I. For if everything exists to lift you high, so will I. If the rocks cry out in worship so will I. If the sum of all our praises still fall shy. Then we'll sing again a hundred billion times!

God of salvation, you chased down my heart through all of my failure and pride. On a hill you created, the light of the world, abandoned in darkness to die.

And as you speak, a hundred billion failures disappear.

you lost your life so I could find it here. **If you left the grave behind you, so will I.**

I can see your heart in everything you've done. Every part designed in a work of art called "love". **If you gladly chose surrender, so will I.** I can see your heart eight billion different ways. Every precious one, a child you died to save!

If you gave your life to love them so will I. Like you would again a hundred billion times. But what measure could amount to your desire. You're the One who never leaves the one behind.

