

IS YOUR FAITH STUNTED OR FLOURISHING?

Today's Text: 2 Peter 1

Extracts:

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.... giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ [2 Pet. 1:1-11]

Corporal Solomon Dauda joined the Nigeria Police Force in 2003.¹ After his training, he was posted as a traffic warden to the Federal Capital of Abuja. Soon, he started to attract attention for his acrobatic agility in controlling traffic. In October 2014, he was one of 313 Nigerians on whom were conferred National Honours by the then Head of State, President Goodluck Jonathan. The President singled out Cpl Dauda for eulogy. He said, "For many of you in Abuja or visit our Nation's capital, you must have seen a hardworking traffic warden who does his job with great dexterity, glee and happiness... CPL Solomon Dauda carries on his job with evident pride and dignity." In addition to the national honour of Member of the Order of Niger (MON), Dauda was given a house in the Federal Capital Territory.

Commenting on his award, Dauda said, "It is the will of God. I have been doing this work for only nine years. But if you are happy doing what you are doing and people appreciate what you are doing, you will be motivated to do more." Dauda's motivation is flourishing and he is bound to get more. Is your faith like that?

For many believers, their faith is stunted. For some others, their faith is flourishing. In the words of Apostle Peter, unless our faith is fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are stifled. In today's study, let us find out where our faith stands.

¹ Story is based on Ben Agande, Abuja, "My colleagues now think I am a big man-National honours awardee on October 04, 2014/ in [Just Human](#) 1:54 am / [Comments](#) <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/10/colleagues-now-think-big-man-national-honours-awardee/>

1. **Background: Fruitful growth in the faith**

I recently came across one of my classmates in primary school. He was then in the top echelon of the class. Unfortunately, he did not go beyond primary school. Some of us who were not as good as he was went on to the university and are today holding key positions in government and industry. In like manner, there are some of us who gave their lives to Christ so many years ago but you cannot see the fruits of their faith today. Is it too late to do something about it? Is there anything that can be done about it?

Apostle Peter has drawn our attention to this critical matter of fruitful growth in the faith. Let us pay attention to the following:

1) *Plant your Faith*

Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [**Heb. 11: 6**]. No matter how well you prepare the soil, it is useless unless you plant a good seed. Therefore, the starting point is to plant your faith. Water baptism is a mark of this, as it also confirms receipt of the Holy Spirit [**Acts 2: 41; Acts 9: 18**].

2) *Add virtue*

Peter says, “Add to your faith virtue” [**2 Pet. 1: 5**]. That is, a change of attitude- from sinning to fear of God. It is a deliberate choice to give up a life of sin and convenience. It involves a deliberate effort to give up bad company who may not give you up without a fight. The “good” people you want to join may not yet trust you. For example, Saul tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem but they were afraid of him and did not believe that he had become one of them. It took Barnabas to help him through [**Acts 9:26**].

3) *Add knowledge*

Peter states, “To virtue, add knowledge” [**2 Pet. 1: 5**]. Knowledge comes from learning, from hearing the word of God [**Rom. 10:17**]. After his conversion, Paul did not immediately confer “with flesh and blood” but he went to Arabia. He went to Jerusalem to see Peter after three years [**Gal. 1: 18-24**]. The ministry of Apollos, “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures” knew only the baptism of John. It took Aquilla and Priscilla to take him aside and explain to him the way of God more accurately. Thereafter, “he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ” [**Acts 18: 24-28**].

4) *Add self-control*

Peter states to add self-control to knowledge [**2 Pet. 1: 6**]. Self-control implies that you know what is right to do and that is what you choose to do. For example, Joseph could have fallen to the temptation of Potiphar's wife. He was alone with her. But he exercised self-control and refused to fall to her temptation [**Gen. 39: 6-9**].

5) *Add perseverance*

To self-control, we are to add perseverance [**2 Pet. 1: 6**]. To persevere is not to give up in the face of trials and tribulations. For example, Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi for no just cause. They were put into the inner prison with their feet fastened in the stocks. At midnight, they were praying and singing hymns to God as other prisoners listened. Their perseverance paid off: there was a great earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken. It became another opportunity for the word of God to be spread in a big way [**Acts 16: 16-34**].

6) *Add godliness*

We are to add godliness [**2 Pet. 1: 6**], that is, be God-led in all that we do and think. "What is God's position on this matter?" becomes your driving force. For example, during the trial of Jesus, Peter denied Him three times [**Lk 22: 54-62**]. But after His resurrection, when Peter and other apostles were brought before the Jewish council, Peter answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" [**Acts 5: 22-29**]. He was now God-led and no longer afraid of man!

7) *Add brotherly kindness and brotherly love*

Brotherly kindness and brotherly love complete the building blocks to the faith structure [**2 Pet. 1: 7**]. Your neighbour is no longer just the person who lives next door to you but every child of God that you can reach and help.

From the foregoing, we see that it takes more than religion to have a flourishing faith. By their fruits, we shall know them.

2. Lessons for us

Apostle Peter also drew our attention to the following lessons:

1) *You are neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*

When we have fruitful faith, we are neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ [**2 Pet. 1:8**]. At every stage in our walk, we are nourishing our faith. We are making it possible for our faith to cope with the challenges that we come across or face.

Take the case of Peter when he was arrested by Herod, to be killed a few days hence. This is the same Peter who had denied Jesus thrice during His trial. This time, Peter's faith was strong and flourishing; he was no longer afraid. He could fall asleep soundly! It took the angel sent by God to set him free to wake him up [**Acts 12: 1-7**]!

2) *Your call and election is sure*

A flourishing faith makes our call and election sure [**2 Pet. 1: 10**]. It guarantees us that we will not stumble as we wade through life on earth. Take the case of Paul when he was brought before the Sanhedrin for trial on his return to Jerusalem. There was such a loud outcry against him that the commander, fearing that Paul might be pulled to pieces commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force and bring him into the barracks. The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" [**Acts 23: 1-11**]. Three months later, when Paul was brought to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him. The Jewish leaders there said, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. But we desired to hear from you... concerning this sect." Paul dwelt for two whole years in his own rented house [**Acts 28: 11-22**]! His call and election was sure.

3) *An entrance is supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*

An entrance is supplied to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [**2 Pet. 1: 11**]. That is fail-safe faith. When we have completed our journey here on earth, we are assured of our place in heaven. In the words of Jesus Himself, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" [**Jn 14: 3**].

From the forgoing, it is clear that we need faith that is flourishing, not futile. It should be alive at all times. Like Paul, we should be able to say [**2 Tim. 4:7-8**]:

I have fought a good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

3. **Conclusion: Time to put on Christ!**

The end-times are here. Therefore, the day is at hand to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly in that light; not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. Instead, we should put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts [**Rom. 13: 11-14**].

Make your faith flourish, not stunted.