So we have seen that this virtue of faith is very important in the Christian life. In fact, it is the gift of faith from God that has allowed us to lay hold of Christ and comprehend who He is, as well as understand the spiritual world of God’s reality and embrace all that the Bible teaches. We are taught spiritual words by the Holy Spirit which cause the Bible to come alive in all its spiritual reality. This has happened by the gift of faith that God had given in regeneration. This faith then, has become that fundamental life principle by which we live in constant communion with God and Christ, by the Spirit. So fundamental to our new life in Christ is it that we call the Christian life, “the faith.” Therefore we must always and ever be seeking to cultivate this faith and cause it to flourish and grow strong that we might maximize the glory that we render to God as stewards of all that He has given us, and maximize our own joy and enjoyment of God.

2 Peter 1:5-11 - Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble, 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Cultivating the faith by the means of grace that God has given cause it to flourish and grow strong in virtue and also good works. This living by faith causes our degree of obedience to the imperatives to increase so that our life is largely lived serving God and others. This is the pattern of Christian life given us by Jesus, and also the faithful saints who have followed Him. We are to become imitators of them by much diligence to cultivate faith and carry out the work of service and love, both to God and others.

Hebrews 6:9-12 - But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The New Testament is full of encouragements to strengthen faith, and we would do well to notice them and focus on carrying them out. Remember the life of faith has both elements of living in the restraint of godliness from certain types of sin, and also the active pursuit of virtue accompanied by certain acts of godliness or good deeds. Consider the passage in Ephesians chapter 6 concerning the armor of God.

Ephesians 6:10-12 - Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Or consider the passage in Romans chapter 12 where the whole chapter is devoted to telling us how to cultivate faith and cause it to flourish and grow.

Romans 12:1-2 - I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul calls Christians first to recognize that our bodies are for serving the Lord, and this is how we worship. But this is done by first realizing that we must not be “conformed to the world” and its system, but rather “transformed by the renewing of the mind,” and to think and then
act on the new reality of following Jesus, being crucified with Him, and allowing Him to live His life through us.

Romans 12:3-8 - 3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith; 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. NASB

Paul points out that every Christian has some measure of faith given to them by the grace of God. Therefore, we should use our treasures, time and talents to “exercise” our gifts from God as a stewardship of them to serve Him and His people, the members of the body of Christ. He then moves us through many imperative instructions about how to cultivate faith and make it strong. In these he calls us to many virtues, and then also to deeds of love and service to God, and to other Christians.

Romans 12:3-12 - 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. NASB

But these virtues and deeds are also to be lived out to our neighbors and to the world around us as well. God is greatly concerned with how we treat other people, even when we are the object of their scorn and derision.

Romans 12:3-14 - 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. NASB

Let us see in these exhortations to cultivate faith an ongoing important element in the Christian life. We must continue to stay focused on pursuing Jesus by pursuing the life of faith. That is, that we cultivate faith and cause it to grow strong by the pursuit of virtue in our own character and good deeds in our actions. See then that the virtue of faith is an all-encompassing and important element in Christian life, that must be nourished. Faith is this fundamental principle of Christian life which is that clinging to God and drawing from Him all that is necessary for life and godliness which produces that life in virtue and in good deeds. We have died to our old, natural and earthly way of life to follow Christ and live our life for Him. This is what it means to live by faith.

Galatians 2:20 - 20 "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. NASB

Therefore we seek to cultivate our faith and cause it to grow and flourish. Let us employ the means of grace that God has given to see our faith flourish and grow. This cultivating of faith causes the Sanctification process to hasten and flourish causing us to bear the image of God in greater degree over time. As faith grows strong, the glory that we render to God is maximized and so is our joy and enjoyment of God.

Hope