

Add To Your Faith – Part 2

2 Peter 1:5-8

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Though it seems in my mind that I am repeating myself too often, I know of no other way to get this particular truth imbedded within our souls, but to just keep saying it. These scriptures, these words of truth that I have just read to us are God's perfect plan for us, His perfect plan that will, without fail, change our souls and make us to be the sons and daughters of God that He intends us to be.

And so, I'll continue to say these words over and over again, beginning with the reminder that these precious instructions are not for the purpose of bringing unsaved people to Christ, as some teach, but rather are for people like you and me who are already saved, saved and ready to move on forward in our relationship with Christ. And this is the path that is clearly laid out for us to follow. This is "sanctification"!

And note immediately that these steps are very different from the steps we took when we first got saved. Our salvation required very little of us. Salvation was all of Christ, His suffering and His shed blood on the cross. But this now is very different. From these words we quickly come to understand that now something will be required of us, "effort", strong and "diligent effort".

And no, our diligent effort cannot in and of itself "sanctify" us, the power to do that still remains within the Hands of God, especially the Holy Spirit. But still yet, these words are clear and plain. You and I are to diligently and fervently invest ourselves in taking these steps of sanctification.

May I pause and again give us the scriptures that tell us of this holy journey, the one that takes us from our wretchedly sinful unsaved beginnings into eternal life with Christ. And please do make a note of these words so that you can refresh your memory from time to time, beginning first from Romans 8, verse 29,

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰

And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

And then in Romans 6, verse 22

²² . . . now that you have been set free from sin and have become servants to God, the benefit you reap leads to sanctification, and the result is eternal life. (Romans 6:22)

This is the whole journey, from our earliest days of being lost and unsaved right on up to the moment that we enter into heaven and are glorified with Christ.

And here in today's text we see the plan and the power that is behind all of the steps in-between, the fulfilling of the precious promises spoken about here in verse 4, the promises that even as we remain in this life, you and I will surely be changed and will become very different people from whom we once were, escaping the corruption that once plagued and controlled our fleshly souls.

And here we are being told that it is our turn now to join in with all that God is doing, that we are to join with the Holy Spirit and begin a joyous upward spiral of being "set apart" for the holy and righteous purposes of God.

And here we see the steps, clearly and plainly given to us so that we do not have to wonder. Immediately after we are saved, we are to begin adding to our faith each of these divine character traits of God. Listen!

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

In our message last week, we spoke first about adding to our faith, "virtue", that very special kind of dynamic "goodness" and "moral excellence" that constrains our souls to "be" and to "do" good and Godly things, our behavior always remaining above question or reproach.

And then to our faith and virtue, we are to immediately begin adding "knowledge", that special kind of pure and holy knowledge of God that we gain from repeated reading and diligent study of these precious truths of scriptures, writing the words indelibly upon the pages of our hearts and minds so that we will have them there and know them well for

all those times when the matters of the day assail us, Godly wisdom and knowledge to know what to do.

And then to our faith and virtue and knowledge, we are to add self-control, that delicate interaction between our own “self-will” and the “Will” of the indwelling Holy Spirit, that yielding of our own natural responses of personal opinions and behaviors, the giving up of our desires and preferences for the usual provisions of the world, the flesh and the devil, and instead intentionally choosing the provision that the Holy Spirit makes for our souls, the “peaceable fruits of righteousness”.

And then next, to our faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control, we are then to add “perseverance”. As with all of these steps of sanctification, “perseverance” is something gained as well as something reached for. In other words, as we continually seek to be more and more patient in times of difficulty and stress, we find that such efforts will over time become easier and more common to our personality.

A line in a song that keeps coming back to my memory is one that says simply that “things can look different on a different day”. And they so often really do. That which seemed ever so stressful, anxiety-ridden and demanding yesterday may not be so intense today. Those “dramas” that often play out in our children's lives may not be so dramatic the next day.

And yes, there are many matters that do not work themselves out and we must eventually put our hand into those. But patience is the first requirement. God has a plan and we must be patient to allow His hand to begin to do His part before we insert our own hand into the fray. Once we see His hand and His direction taking charge, then we can know what we are to do.

And all of that requires patience. And as we exercise this Holy Spirit-filled kind of patience over a long period, we will find that our patience will be very different from that which we have experienced before. It will become “perseverance”. That is because within this kind of patience is a special element of “hope”. It is what Jesus asked of His disciples there in the Garden of Gethsemane when He asked them to “tarry with Him” for a while, a kind of “hopeful waiting” that confidently anticipates God’s plans and purposes being carried out. That is the essential difference between simple patience and this word “perseverance”. “Perseverance” has a patient confidence within it that trusts that God is at work and will bring about a good and righteous result. And so He tells us, “add to your faith, “perseverance”.

And then next, to our faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control and perseverance, we must add "godliness".

But may we pause here for a moment and again consider a question that I often wonder about, that of, are each of these attributes of sanctification necessarily to be in a specific order, one step required before the next. And I confess that I don't know. It seems so, but then not. The order might also need be "all of them at the same time", or even that God will bring one before another depending upon the necessity of our circumstances. But because we have this order that is given to us here, we will assume it to be a purposeful order and follow it as it is. And so, we will "add to our perseverance, "godliness".

What does God mean and what is to be our understanding of this word "godliness"? The simplest definition of the word is that we would be just "like Him", "like God", but not just an "imitation" of Him. "Imitation" can be helpful at times, but simple "imitation" is not enough.

The answer to finding how we can actually be "Godly" is found in these words, the same words that we studied just a few weeks ago when we studied about the "knowledge of God". Verse 3,

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue. (2 Peter 1:3)

The word "godliness" has as part of its meaning, a devout and diligent effort and commitment towards having the very same kind of holiness that God Himself has. And yes, that is a very tall order, but listen . . . it is "commanded" of us. God tells us in 1 Peter 1 to "Be Holy as I am holy". And the only means of us knowing what God's holiness is to "look like" in us is through our truly getting to "know" Him personally and intimately, to know His "mind".

Recall in that earlier study that this word for "knowledge" is one that not only includes a "learned understanding" of who God is, but is one that is also "experienced" and "felt" and "comprehended" through a deep, intimate, abiding and loving relationship with Him, similar to the kind you would experience in a long and intimate loving relationship with your wife or husband.

So, in order for you and me to have "godliness", we will need to have and to experience an ever-increasing knowledge of who God really is, His nature, His character, His will . . . and to allow His nature and His character to freely flow through us.

And again, the proof, the evidence of “godliness” within our character is that we will be very different people from that which we once were. We will see it taking place in ourselves and others around us will also be able to see it in us. “Godliness”!

And then, to our faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control and perseverance, and godliness, we must add “brotherly kindness”. And this is one of the most frequent points of failure in each of our lives, and that is so for even the most devout of Christian believers. If you don’t see that failure in yourself, just pause and consider your thoughts over the last few hours. Folks, too often our thoughts are judgmental in nature and condemning. We hold a high and lofty opinion of ourselves and a low opinion of others. And God does not want us to do that.

Recall the words of Jesus when He was asked what was the first and “greatest commandment”. He responded saying,

³⁷ . . . “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV))

And then, in John 13, as He instructed His disciples about loving each other, He said,

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: . . . just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:34-35 (ESV))

God places a high standard and requirement on the need for us to love one another, and not just those who are easy to love. We are to love everyone, even the most unlovable.

And please, don’t be guilty of lying to yourself as you say, yes I love her or him, I just don’t “like” them. That is not at all in keeping with this command from God. You and I are to actually “love” those most unlovable people and our behavior must be able to be easily visible to them and to us. We will be kinder and gentler and more patient and all those other similar kinds of good and loving behaviors. “Brotherly Kindness”!

And then lastly, to our faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control and perseverance, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, we are to add “love”. “Love”! And please, do know that this is very different from the “brotherly kindness” that we just spoke about. “Brotherly Kindness” is a form of love, but it does not reach to the heights of this kind of love.

We have studied the difference between these two forms of love in previous messages, but let me give us a reminder about them. The Greek word for “brotherly kindness” is “Philadelphia”, or “Phileo”, and the Greek word for “love” is “Agape”.

“Philadelphia” or “Phileo” or “brotherly kindness” is more generally associated with the kind of love that we show towards our Christian brethren. But “agape love” is far more wide ranging and is always expressed in the context of a provision given by the Holy Spirit, one of the “gifts” and one of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit, a powerful unction that enables you and me love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and then to also love even the worst of the unsaved people of the world, just as God spoke about in the words of John 3:16.

This is “love” at its highest and best, at its pinnacle of expression, filled with the power and the presence of God’s own Holy Spirit.

And may I say that as you and I are able to add this kind of Godly “love” to our character, all of the other godly attributes spoken about here will become far, far easier and more effectual for us. “Love”!

We will pause here until next week when, the Lord willing, we will talk about adding all of these precious attributes to our character in “increasing measure”.

Listen as we close . . .

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