

Some Assembly Required – Part 2, Knowledge

A mile upstream from Niagara Falls, the Welland River joins the Niagara River. Right where they meet, a passenger bridge arches across the Welland. Boaters can navigate beneath it and enter the wide flow of the Niagara. But before they do, they pass under a large sign posted on the bridge's pylon. It asks them two questions (do you remember them from last week?): **Do you have an anchor? Do you know how to use it?**

So many Christians commend to others a life they don't seem to live themselves, posing as tour guides to territory on which they've never set foot. The life they actually live seems to be only a cruel parody of the dreams they've dreamed. They've told themselves a thousand times that it won't happen again. They've repented so many times that it's beyond counting. They struggle often ... regularly ... constantly ... and they ask themselves "why isn't my faith in God enough?"

Last week, we dived headfirst into the Apostle Peter's simple yet irritating claim that he knew the answer to this dilemma: "You already have everything you need for life and godliness!" You already have the anchor, you just need to know how to use it. You already have faith, now here's the secret – **"GIVING ALL DILIGENCE, ADD TO YOUR FAITH."** Some assembly is required. You have all the pieces you need, and all the necessary instructions – now, just put them together right!

2 Peter 1:1-11 ¹ Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³ **According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,** through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵ **And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.** ⁸ For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹ For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Last week, we talked about adding GOODNESS ("virtue"), not the actions of DOING good, but the reality of BEING good. This kind of goodness is something we ARE long before it is anything we DO – it is what we are in the dark even when no one else is looking. This kind of goodness is literally the CHARACTER OF GOD actively living within us. Our most accurate modern word for "goodness" would be the word **"INTEGRITY."** Integrity comes from the same root as the word "integrate" and that's what it means – **the heart and the actions are integrated.**

BUT WE ARE NOT FINISHED YET – THERE IS STILL "SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED" – ADD TO GOODNESS KNOWLEDGE.

Illustration: The book that tells Job's story is mostly soliloquies, those of Job and the three companions who show up to "comfort" him. The only problem is that his friends quote dogmatic theology, which comes across as empty at the best of times, but absolutely cruel in a situation like this. Author Mark Buchanan says they adopt a "pulpit tone, halfway between scolding and pitying" – they PREACH to him because they KNOW. They know what this is all about, why catastrophe has befallen Job, what God intends by it, and how Job should respond to it. One more friend and even Job's wife have cameo appearances, and they KNOW too. But the only thing Job knows is that he DOESN'T KNOW.

At the end of the book, God has had enough theology (!) from these friends, and He makes an appearance of His own to set things straight:

Job 38:2 (KJV) Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

(NLT) Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?

(MES) Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about?

(TLB) Why are you using your ignorance to deny my providence?

(CEV) Why do you talk so much when you know so little?

(NAB) Who is this that obscures divine plans with words of ignorance?

And then, God begins to question Job (actually, "question" is a little weak – it's like a graduate level exam in natural history!). On and on it goes over the next two chapters ... basically, God asks "What do you know?" And the answer turns out to be "not much."

Job 40:1-5 (NLT) Then the LORD said to Job, "Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?" Then Job replied to the LORD, "I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will put my hand over my mouth in silence. I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say."

Peter comes along hundreds of years later and says, “Add to goodness KNOWLEDGE.” I don’t think he’s talking about all the FACTS we think we know, even facts about God. Because the real question in life is not “**What do I know?**” – it’s “**What do I NEED to know?**” We need to know what we need to know before we can know it! If we read the Bible even casually, we know that WHAT we need to know is actually a WHO!

We do need to know TRUTH – that’s knowing ABOUT God. Don’t ever belittle that, any more than you would belittle someone for knowing their spouse’s birthdate, upbringing, preferences, etc. But knowing ABOUT someone is never a substitute for knowing them. You can know all kinds of truth but if you never get to know God it is wasted knowledge. It’s like the servant who buried his talent – he never really knew his Master ...

Matthew 25:24-25 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

Knowing about God is just a gateway, because the goal of KNOWING God is LOVING God.

1 Corinthians 8:1b-2 Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

It is no accident that Peter tells us to add GOODNESS to our faith before we add KNOWLEDGE. Otherwise we become like Job’s friends, full of advice but not full of compassion – because knowledge contains the toxin PRIDE, and the only antitoxin is GOODNESS. Apart from goodness, knowledge is often wielded to humiliate, intimidate or alienate others – instead of being used as a tool to bless and build up others. Unless knowledge is placed on the foundation of goodness, we become nothing more than spiritual snobs!

People who get knowledge in front of goodness are often quite generous with their opinions. ☺ They seem to know everything about God. But they are like the medieval cartographers who inscribed uncharted areas with the words “Terra Incognita” (unknown earth) and later the warning “Hic Sunt Dracones” (here be dragons). They attempted to cover up their ignorance with speculation, opinions and dark warnings.

Sometimes we don’t know WHAT, but we can still know WHO ...

Job 19:25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: