

Some Assembly Required – Part 5, Godliness

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?"

Over the last four weeks, we have examined 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!

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.

We have already discussed adding GOODNESS (not DOING good, but BEING good), adding KNOWLEDGE (not WHAT do I know, but WHO do I need to know), adding SELF-CONTROL (disciplined ALERTNESS, or paying attention to God and acting in light of His wisdom), and adding PERSEVERANCE (maintaining your position regardless of what is happening on the battlefield!).

Last week, we talked about PERSEVERANCE (hupomone) which is the refusal to turn tail and run just because things get difficult. You remain at your post, not out of stubbornness, but because you're on the only road that leads home. There is nowhere else to go! And perseverance comes where it does (in the middle of Peter's list) because the virtue following it – GODLINESS – will take all the time and endurance you've got!

James 1:3-4 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Perseverance has a goal, and that goal is GODLINESS. The Greek word for GODLINESS is EUSEBEIA, which is sometimes translated "holiness." It describes a heart that is set on God and His purposes. EUSEBEIA is literally "GOD-CENTEREDNESS."

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

FIRST, godliness begins with the resolve to "set apart (sanctify) the Lord in your heart." Before Jesus shows up in your actions, He has to be in your thoughts. What Jesus desires must always take precedence over what we desire – everything must step aside if it stands in the way of Jesus and His kingdom!

SECOND, godliness requires a change of behavior – "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks." Godly people live in such a way that they arouse curiosity and provoke questions – people start to wonder about them. They're different, peculiar even. And that difference can be summed up in one word – HOPE. While others are complaining or panicking or protesting or just giving up in resignation, the godly embrace HOPE. And the godly are prepared to tell anyone who asks them about their hope – they don't conceal or compromise it. But they don't answer in arrogance, but with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

The Apostle Paul also helps us understand this concept of GODLINESS:

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This passage follows Paul's instructions about the qualifications for elders and deacons in the church, and that is not a coincidence. Godliness is not optional for any Christian, but for church leaders it is foundational. Before we look for anything else in a leader, we are to look for godliness – it doesn't matter how gifted, wise, eloquent or capable that person is if they are not godly!

Paul says that godliness is a MYSTERY – there is no earthly explanation for it, because the power for this kind of living is only available from God. And in telling us six things about Jesus' godliness, he implies that it is necessary for us to imitate the same six things in our own lives.

JESUS APPEARED IN A BODY (“God was manifest in the flesh”).

The godly make God personal, they bring God close and make God's presence tangible, When you stand among them, you sense that God is near. They literally incarnate a bit of Heaven.

JESUS WAS VINDICATED BY THE SPIRIT (“justified in the Spirit”).

One of the primary enemies of godliness is our lust to be vindicated when we feel misused, underappreciated, misunderstood, or wrongfully accused. But the godly know that in our fallen world, being slandered is inevitable, so they don't exhaust themselves trying to manage what everyone thinks or says – they trust God, in His time, to vindicate them.

JESUS WAS SEEN BY ANGELS (“seen of angels”).

The godly live with an awareness that the real drama, and their real audience, lies beyond this physical realm. They know that they are engaged in something much greater than themselves. Their lives may make little sense to their neighbors, but there is a throng of heavenly hosts watching their every move with riveted attention. Godly people make angels cheer and demons tremble.

JESUS WAS PREACHED AMONG THE NATIONS (“preached unto the Gentiles”). The godly have global influence, because they exert a powerful spiritual force far beyond the confines of their time and place.

JESUS WAS BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD (“believed on in the world”). The godly have impact beyond the church walls – in fact, they literally transform the world they live in, bit by bit.

JESUS WAS TAKEN UP TO GLORY (“received up into glory”). The godly know that their life has ultimate purpose and reward. They live in the here and now, but they keep their eyes fixed firmly on forever! They live in light of eternity because their treasure is in Heaven, not on earth.