

Some Assembly Required – Part 6, Brotherly Kindness

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), adding **PERSEVERANCE** (maintaining your position regardless of what is happening on the battlefield), and adding **GODLINESS** (living a God-centered life, giving precedence to Jesus' preferences in everything).

Next on Peter's list is **BROTHERLY KINDNESS**. It's his second-to-last virtue that we need to add to our faith. For this, Peter uses the word PHILADELPHIA. It is more than mere kindness that can be done at a distance with a degree of detachment (i.e. writing a cheque to meet a need). PHILADELPHIA has to be personal, up close, face-to-face, hands on. Unless we are willing to put up with the inconveniences created by each other's differences and preferences ("everyone's normal till you get to know them!"), then all we have is kindness. But that is a sad substitute for BROTHERLY kindness, which gets very personal and practical.

Notice that from the beginning, God is always asking questions:

Genesis 3:9 – "Where art thou?"

Genesis 3:11 – "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"

Genesis 3:13 – "What is this that thou hast done?"

Genesis 4:6 – "Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?"

Genesis 4:7 – "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"

Genesis 4:9 – "Where is Abel thy brother?"

It is obvious that when God asks a question, He already knows the answer – so He is plainly asking for OUR benefit, not His. But then in Genesis 4:9, something happens that has never happened before – for the very first time, a human being dares to ask a question of the Almighty (up until now, only the devil/serpent has been so impudent) ...

Genesis 4:9 – "Am I my brother's keeper?"

PHILADELPHIA always goes against the grain of our fierce independence and rugged individuality. It would answer Cain's question with a resounding "YES, I AM MY BROTHER'S KEEPER!"

James 2:15-16 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

PHILADELPHIA is to love what God loves ... **your brother!**

In the secular world of Peter's day, the Greeks used the term PHILADELPHIA to describe the exclusive relationship that existed between brothers. It was a way to say "blood is thicker than water." But the New Testament church took this term that was meant to be EXCLUSIVE and literally turned it inside out to make it INCLUSIVE. A brother or sister no longer means a blood relative, but those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ!

WHO IS MY BROTHER? IT'S YOU! Now not all of God's children are lovable, humanly speaking. Some of their behaviors grate on my nerves, some of them I want to avoid altogether, and some I would really like to put in their place. BUT TO LOVE GOD IS TO LOVE WHAT GOD LOVES – SO I CAN LOVE YOU BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU.

1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

If we truly have **BROTHERLY KINDNESS** toward each other, we will express it in practical ways ...

EQUALITY – there are no "favorites" in the family of God

James 2:1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

UNITY – what we have in common is greater than everything we don't

John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

FELLOWSHIP – a strong desire to be together with other believers

Philippians 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

SERVANTHOOD – putting each other first in practical ways

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Luke 12:13-14 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Jesus is in the reconciling business, not the dividing business! He wants to join things together, not break them apart. That's why BROTHERLY KINDNESS is on Peter's list as an indicator of mature faith.