

2Peter 1:5a Time to Burn Your Boat

As we come to our text this morning we're going to discover that this very word from God has been used to encourage the saints to live lives that are sold out for Him, and yet it has also been used to twist what the Christian life is really all about.

2PE 1:5-7 "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."

There have been those in the Church who have taken the attitude that if I just add these elements to my experience with Christ I will be seen as one who is holy and on the right track with my God. And we certainly would agree that the very passage before us would not discourage us from having the fruit of a life motivated by the Spirit given by our Savior.

And yet it should be pointed out that there must be balance to our Christian lives even when it comes to things we would consider to be godly and right. Because the motivation of our hearts is just as important as the obedience which our Lord desires from us.

In fact, Paul begins with the proper motivation right here in the beginning of our text in verse 5. "For this very reason,...". This phrase is the equivalent of the word therefore. Remember, whenever we see the word therefore we want to know what it's there for.

Well, it's there to draw attention to what has been previously said and the Holy Spirit is now going to make a very important application to what has been said. "For this very reason,...".

What is this reason? Why should we "make every effort to add to [our] faith goodness; and to goodness, 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."

Why? Well, for those things which have been previously stated. In the first four verses we are told that we have received a precious faith in which the righteousness of Christ has been placed to our

account. We have His righteousness so that we might be found right with the Father.

But we're not left to our own devices to live in this new life which was obtained through the righteousness of Christ. We have grace and peace with our God in abundance and in the process God is actively at work in our lives to the extent that that grace provides the strength so that we have everything we need for life and godliness. In other words, God has given us everything we need to please Him and glorify Him.

In the process of doing this He shows us in His word His very great and precious promises, so that through them we may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. In other words, not only do we have the promise of eternal life through the forgiveness of our sins, we also have the promise that sin has been vanquished to the degree that it no longer is our Master.

Our salvation is complete and is designed by God to affect our lives here on planet earth as well as make us acceptable in the sight of God when we come into His presence. And the only reason we will be found acceptable is through the shed blood of a perfect innocent sacrifice on our behalf, the blameless Lamb of God.

Peter says, 'look at all that God has given you. Look at how much our Lord and Savior loves us and is actively involved in every aspect of our lives so that we might show forth the goodness of God and point others to the One who has made it all possible.

2PE 1:5-7 "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."

And so the point Peter is making here is that out of gratitude for so great a gift from God we actively pursue a life that would demonstrate that we have a true faith which is shown in goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

But here's the danger. There are those who take the grace of God and turn it into something which is no longer grace. Remember, grace is a gift, which means every aspect of our salvation is a gift;

nothing we could earn. And yet, this is exactly what some who profess faith in Christ have done with a passage like this.

It would be very easy for someone to turn our relationship with Christ into a formula using a passage like 2Peter 1:5-7. If you've got a faith in Christ then the only thing you need to do to make sure you're in this life is to add something to it to prove your faith is genuine.

What do we add to it? Well, you need to add goodness. Goodness? Yeah. Well, how much goodness? How good do we have to be? Have you ever stopped to wonder how good someone would have to be if they were to earn a spot in God's kingdom? The answer is perfect.

Evidently, the cults haven't thought through that because they all tell us that we need to be good so that we might be found acceptable before God. If you're a Jehovah's witness your goodness is best expressed as you go out into the neighborhoods to warn everyone that they will miss the boat unless they get on board with them.

If you're a Buddhist your goodness will show in the way you treat other people. Good Karma. Is there anything wrong with treating people well? Of course not. But that kind of goodness will never earn you a spot in the Kingdom of God.

If you're a Mormon your pursuit of goodness is to secure a place on your own planet to become a god of that planet. Is that why we as Christians add goodness to our faith? Absolutely not. And that's the very reason we don't add any of the things mentioned in verses 5 through 7 with the purpose of adding anything to our salvation.

So then, what does all of this mean? Well, we need to go to the beginning. The first thing that Peter mentions is faith. It's implied that the life we receive is through faith in Christ. We use this term faith in this way all the time. "Keep the faith." How do you keep the faith? Is it something you can lose? No, it simply means to continue to live in the faith you've placed in Christ. And this is what Peter is saying.

But his starting point assumes you have a faith. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones makes the comment that "before God calls a man to put anything into practice, He has made it possible for man to put into practice."

In other words, God would never ask you to walk in this life unless He first gave you this life. Can you imagine walking up to a corpse and saying to it, take a message, and then dictate a letter?

What if I gave you the task of constructing an 80 story building. You don't know how to build a birdhouse. What kind of ludicrous request would that be? And yet there are those who would suggest that you can build for yourself an eternal city simply by doing this good thing or that good thing.

Peter says, no you cannot build on anything unless you first have a foundation upon which to build. And that foundation is found in Christ by faith alone. Once you have been given life however, you now have the ability to walk in that faith in such a way that could certainly appear as if you've added a new element which wasn't there before.

What's there now which wasn't there before is the life which only Christ can supply. You are a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold all things become new, even the ability to add God's goodness, knowledge, self-control, etc.

So, we don't want to fall into the trap of thinking that we can add something to our faith to make us acceptable in the sight of God. Only the righteousness of Christ can accomplish that. But we don't want to go in the opposite direction by suggesting that we don't need to do anything with this new life we have in Him.

'Well, I've been forgiven, His blood covers all my transgressions, and where sin abounds grace abounds all the more. So, let's eat drink and be merry because we'll be forgiven anyway.'

It seems people have a tendency to be creatures of extremes. And I guess what our Lord is teaching His people is that they are to be balanced in their approach to walking with Him as they take the whole counsel of His word and apply it to their lives.

And so I guess the question we might ask ourselves is, does the truth of our salvation, found exclusively in Christ, find its expression in lives that are changed by Him through the power of the Holy Spirit? Are we living what we have been declared to be? We have been declared right and holy through the righteousness of Christ. Do our lives now conform to that righteousness?

When I played sports, the teaching I received on the practice field was always intended to be translated to the game. Why in the world would anyone receive all of that instruction and go through

all of the effort if they didn't plan on playing in real the game?
That was the point Paul was making when he wrote to the church
in Corinth.

1CO 9:24 "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but
only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."

In other words, get in the game. And know for certain that you
have the ability along with the gifts given you by the Holy Spirit to
be a participant, not just an observer. And as a participant you also
will show yourself to have all that God has given you as you rely
on Him by faith.

And so we understand that none of the things mentioned in our text
are able to add anything to our salvation. And yet it does add
credibility to the fact that we actually possess this new life in
Christ. And this is why Peter exhorts his readers the way he does.
Notice the first part of verse 5.

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith ..."
The phrase "make every effort" is translated "applying all
diligence" in the NASB. The KJV puts it, "giving all diligence."

The idea here is that there is a concerted effort on the part of the
believer to seek and apply these things in our lives. It seems today
that many want their Christianity to flourish as long as it's
convenient. But Peter is saying that this fruit of a life in Christ is to
be sought whole-heartedly as we apply the kind of discipline to
move in that direction.

And there's that "D" word. When is discipline ever convenient?
When is it convenient to go on a diet? When is it convenient to try
and quit smoking? When is it convenient to pray or study our
bibles? When is it convenient to share our faith? When is it
convenient to practice goodness, self-control, moral excellence,
perseverance, brotherly kindness and so on?

Just about never. Apply all diligence, make every effort, knowing
that God has provided everything we need for life and godliness.

Now in making every effort, add. The word add here in the Greek
is an interesting one. The word "comes from the Greek world of
stage and drama. The director of a play not only coached the cast.
Together with the state, he also paid the expenses the members
incurred for giving a performance." (Kistemaker)

"The word came to be used of any generous city benefactor, and by the time Peter was writing it simply meant an extremely generous giver. We are to cooperate with God, working with Him without thinking of the price." (John Stott)

To put it into today's arena, it would be like the coach of an NFL football team also putting up the money to run that team. He would literally have to put his money where his mouth was. He would invest himself into the success of that team, or in the case in ancient Greece he invested himself into the success of that performance.

The idea here in our text is that each individual Christian diligently invest in the future of the success of his life with Christ to the degree that he or she is "sold out" for the One they are walking with.

Again, the idea is to take all of our assets and place them on the horse we know is coming in first. And trusting that the decision we've made is one we will not turn back on. Jesus put it this way.

LUK 9:62 "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

We can't be actively pursuing both worlds. We are not of this world. And yet unfortunately we sometimes leave just the one bridge up so that we can cross back over periodically to check out the other side. Spiritually speaking we need to burn that bridge so there is no temptation to cross back over.

In 1519, the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortes set out to conquer Mexico. You know what he did when he got there? After he sailed thousands of miles from Spain to reach Mexico, when he reached the shores of Mexico he burned and sank all of his ships except one. That one ship was not used as a backup in case things went wrong. It was sent back to Spain to report to the King that he had every intention of conquering Mexico for Spain.

Imagine how his troops felt when they were on the shore of a land none of them knew, as they watched their only way of escape going down as fire and smoke engulfed their ships. Do you know why Cortes did that? Sure you do. He was sending a message to his troops that they had better concentrate on the task at hand and not worry about the old world, because for all practical intents that world no longer existed for them.

God says to you and me, that world of the flesh no longer exists for us. And yet unlike Cortes we have to make daily choices to burn the ships back to that world, because it seems that for every ship we burn the enemy is over in the boat yard cranking out new ones for us. And sometimes we find ourselves in that yard looking for scraps of wood.

If we're going to make all diligence to supply goodness or moral excellence and so on, then we need to know that we must consider the cost and go for it, not looking back, but rather looking forward to the promise of a life with Christ. This is what one man of faith did.

HEB 11:9-10 "By faith he [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

When talking about God's sure judgment at the very end Peter makes this point in this very same letter.

2PE 3:11-14 "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

The day Cortes and his men stepped on that shore in Mexico they only looked forward to their task. This is what God has called us to do as well. If we spend our time dwelling on the past or what could have been we will always be second-guessing ourselves and the decisions we've made.

Or worse if we are living in the past, in the sense that we haven't come out of the past life and its practices, then we need to consider the bridge to the past. In Peter's first letter he addresses this.

1PE 4:3-5 "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do -living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

This is why it's essential we look forward even as we live in the present. It doesn't mean the past doesn't count or that the past hasn't played a part in our new life with Christ, it simply means that the past is not the place we want to dwell in, either emotionally or morally.

Okay, so we agree that if we are to move forward by faith in this life with Christ we need to seriously apply all diligence or as the NIV puts it, make every effort to pursue the things of God. Along with that we need to take the attitude that we will be sold out and invest our lives to our new Master who loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son into this world to die for the penalty of our sin.

Does this diligence and sold-out attitude mean we will never be able to enjoy the life we have with Christ in the present world? Not at all. We're not talking about a reclusive life from the world in which we live. We have not been called to be hermits, we have not been called to detach ourselves from sinners in this world who need salvation in Christ and we have not been called to create some sort of false humility by giving up all of our possessions to appear godly.

I suppose the one word or phrase which best describes what our attitude toward this world and the life we have in Christ, and how they are to be balanced is, where is your treasure? What are you willing to burn your boat for?

Do you see yourself as one who has been given an eternal task by our Almighty God and that to effectively pursue that we must apply the kind of diligence which says, where you lead Lord I will follow? Whatever you ask of me I will obey.

Peter is talking about obedience here. An obedience which springs from love. And so he says, "make every effort to add to your faith goodness;..." The word goodness is better translated moral excellence or virtue. The idea of excellence here carries the thought of the proper fulfillment of anything.

And so the word excellence as applied to a knife for example would be the excellence of a knife to cut, or of a horse to run. And so the implication in our text begs the question, what is the excellence of a man? And the answer can only be found in the man Christ Jesus. He is what a true human being is to be as he is in a right relationship with God.

But together with the true expression of a man comes the expression of that man who has been redeemed and given the life and spiritual energy to go forward in honoring God. And the Greek word for excellence or goodness actually gives the idea of a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action.

And so, virtue or moral excellence carries with it the idea of "moral power or moral energy." It's the idea of a vigour of the soul which has been touched by God through faith in Christ. And so Peter is saying that our faith needs to be "a living faith, an active faith, an energetic faith." (DMLloyd Jones)

However, it should be noted that this energetic faith is not meant to be nervous energy where we have to be doing something just because. At that point we can find ourselves just being busy in the Kingdom of God without necessarily doing the will of God.

It's very easy to fall into the trap of creating programs and agendas that we come up with and trying to plug people into slots. In these cases there can be a lot of activity and there can be a lot of apparently good being done.

But it can also turn out to be like a tornado which is busy plowing through trailer parks. A lot of activity but nothing really constructive as far as God is concerned. This doesn't mean we never step out in faith and seek to do the will of God in areas which may not have previously been pursued. It just means that we take the attitude that in our zeal we don't run in front of God. Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says, the Lord.

If we are in the faith and we are directing our zeal and energy to seeking the Lord He will never disappoint us in showing us how He wants us to serve and walk in a way that shows forth His power and life.

But this faith, which then in turn is to add or supply goodness, is a faith which emulates the goodness of our God. When we think of goodness we usually contrast it with that which is bad. And of course there is nothing bad about our God. His goodness includes not only who He is but what He does. It's something which in a sense can be seen by others.

In fact, Moses was given the opportunity to actually see the goodness of God on one occasion and the Lord told him that His goodness was related to the way in which He dealt with man according to His grace.

EXO 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Goodness will always show itself in compassion and mercy toward others, but it is motivated in the truth that God first loved us and showed mercy and compassion to us when we didn't deserve it. We love because He first loved us and in our goodness, which is now part of our new life with Christ, the world is able to taste and see that the Lord is good.

And yet we must work diligently in pursuing a goodness which we not only possess in Christ but must be shown to the world as well. In a sense our goodness, which is found in Christ, must be able to pass in front of this world as we show them mercy and compassion and as we point to the only One who is ultimately good.

And so goodness is the first thing mentioned as being an essential quality for the one who has faith given to him by God. Next in line is a goodness which then adds knowledge. And this is where we will pick up next week. But let me just say that when we approach this list in verses 5-7 we need to be careful not to create something which God does not intend.

As we'll see next week this is not a ladder where we continually add the next step in our walk with Christ. Rather all of these spiritual elements are equally important and essential in making up the whole man, just as the whole armor of God cannot exclude the other parts and still be considered the whole armor of God.

And so, we might look at these different elements of our Christian life coming together as we wade into the pool of the waters of God's grace where each one simultaneously surrounds us and affects us as our lives of faith are engaged.

And so we cannot say, I will add self-control once I have mastered knowledge, and I will then add brotherly kindness only after I have mastered godliness. This is not Peter's intent. Our whole man has been saved and our whole being is to be affected.

But it does not exclude the means for advancing in these areas of spiritual growth. As each part is doing its job then each individual will be encouraged by the next person and the body will function as God intended it. But it's all predicated on the truth of God's word which points to faith in Christ.

EPH 4:15-16 ..."speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Each of us has a part in this symphony of salvation which we're all called to participate in as we spread the truth to every living person. Part of that responsibility is to grow personally as we encourage each other to love and good deeds, as we leave behind the life of death and condemnation and daily embrace the light and life we have in Christ by faith.