

Sunday July 4th, 2010.

BOB. BUILDING: OUTREACH: BELONGING x27. JTH

2 Peter 1: 2 – 11. (pp299, 300).

Stone on stone – building so we don't fall.

Have you ever watched someone building a wall, or a building?

Fascinating – and always makes me want to have a go.

- Many types of walls – walls built with large quarried stones, with breeze blocks or bricks and cement, or dry stone walls.
- Most are expected to stay up many years – a lifetime or more, unless it's just a temporary structure.
- Most building even with paid builders or brickies is time consuming and skilled.

This metaphor of building **stone on stone** is used not just of building the whole church – the living community of people but also of **building the character and qualities of God into our lives.** (Building character is work of the Holy Spirit and sometimes called Sanctification).

Building Christian character into our personalities and actions is:

- Laborious – we have to work at it all the time.
- Requires commitment on our part.
- Requires God's encouragement and also the encouragement of other Christians who know about bringing about change and improvement into lives.

In the ancient world in which the Christian church began it was not unusual to have lists of qualities and graces that people valued. Lists are easy to learn – either by rote or by setting them to music. In a world where scrolls & later on books were very expensive people needed ways of remembering God's message and the teachings of the church. So *Paul in his letter to the Galatians* spoke of and listed the fruits of the Holy Spirit's work in Christians lives who were co-operating with God and *Peter* here writes a list of graces/ qualities that followers of Jesus need to build into their lives if their Christian witness is not just going to tumble down around them.

Peter knew that as Christians we need reminding of what has gone on in the past – what God has done for us – but also we need reminding of what we can and should be building now. (So he says in *v12* that he will keep reminding them!) He sought to remind them of the qualities that were in God and fully demonstrated in Jesus Christ and encourage Christian disciples to add these into their lives. (Peter was particularly aware that there were false religious teachers around trying to tell Disciples that Jesus Christ was not returning).

VV2, 3. Grace and peace come to us because of our knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Grace and peace are multiplied to us through building a deeper relationship with God and the One he sent. Relational understanding of true knowledge – getting to know and understand God better. (*John 17: 3 would agree - eternal life is knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ who he sent*). If God is to

been known it is not just because we enquire after him but because he wants to be known and reveals himself – *Job 11:7*)

V3. God's eternal power – Christ gives us everything we need to live a genuine life of piety or godliness – that is to have a real reverence for God and also humanity.
(Gr. eusebeian religious life/ piety/ godliness)

Avoiding destructive collapse of our Christian life:

V4. Peter is concerned about this. Perhaps he has seen Christian faith collapse or perhaps just dwindle – a part finished work in a human being! He is concerned that:

- 1) they escape the *destructive lusts of the world* (fascination of sin!) and
- 2) that they should share the divine nature (i.e. become more like Jesus)

His method is that they there need to apply themselves to building: adding stone on stone to their initial faith or trust in Jesus for Salvation.

They need as it were to be lining up the bricks and be diligent in building them into their character. They need the following qualities in ABUNDANCE and not just in small measure. If they are to inherit the full ESTATE of their relationship with God then they must day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, decade by decade keep adding these qualities and actions that result into their lives:

To FAITH add GOODNESS – virtue, the basic elements of good citizenship, and the moral courage to do what's right.

To goodness add KNOWLEDGE – as we've said this knowledge is a growing intimacy with God and building understanding. (Not just facts like “doing the knowledge”)

To knowledge add SELF CONTROL – temperance. Peter has already spoken of the *destructive lusts of the world* and our fascination with them is great. It may not be an addiction to alcohol, or sex, or drugs although for many it is, it may be an inability to control our tongue from gossip or slander, or any destructive behaviour pattern

To self control add ENDURANCE – patience not as a passive thing but the experience to see beyond the current difficulties and hang in there!.

To endurance add GODLINESS – piety as described above – reverence for God and humanity. Not just “the religious” orders but every Believer to be pious. We do good works out of reverence for God and humanity.

To godliness add CHRISTIAN AFFECTION – Gr. Philadelphia – kindnesses shown to fellow men and women.

To Christian affection add CHRISTIAN LOVE – AGAPE – the goal is sacrificial love. Showing others what we ourselves have received from God.

Build a beautiful, stable life that is not easily knocked down whatever life/ the world throw at us. These are not hard/ rigid bricks but loving action upon action.

- **V8 If we do this then we will be active and effective (working)** – not barren and unfruitful (an unemployed Christian)
- **V9 The alternative is myopic or short sighted Christians**, who have forgotten that they have been purified from past sins. (Celebrated at Baptism). No past remembrance no future *grand design*.

Peter encouraged these Christians to be DILIGENT. Co-operate with the God of grace. This is the same encouragement as *Paul's, work out your own salvation – Philippians 2: 12, 13.* Peter doesn't want them to abandon their faith (to fall/experience destruction). He wants them to build – to add to their faith. Every day he wants us to get up and to continue building stone on stone. *V12* he acknowledges that they are *firmly grounded* but they need to build their characters wider and higher.

The threat they faced was false teachers who wanted to:

- Lead them into immorality &
- Also sought to say that Christ will not return.

Peter reminded them *v19* that the day would dawn and the morning star was in their hearts. There is a day of judgement & destruction where those things shoddily built or the things which God does not approve of will be destroyed. Build what will survive: these qualities are listed.

Help one another in this – *v12* remind one another. We are part of a living community of people whose characters are being built stone on stone. Not one of these qualities/ graces can be crossed off the list. We can't saying, *I don't like that one.* All those “ingredients” are needed IN ABUNDANCE – and we need to keep adding them and doing them so they become second nature!

*“The Christian life must not be an initial spasm followed by chronic inertia”,
Moffat.*

So often it can be just that. We should in a way be able to look back and remember what with God's help we have been enabled and empowered to do. We mustn't just place our faith in Jesus and go no further. We are to diligently build into our lives those actions, & ways of thinking that are pleasing to God. These are the things which will stand whatever the world and life in general throws at us.

A new person: with God's help and one another's' encouragement we will build a new person stone on stone. And together we will build a new community – the people of God.