

When I was in college, there was a saying that I'm sure was very old by that time. The saying was that "B's and C's get degrees." And I encountered this saying also in seminary, except it was a little bit different then. Then it was "What you call a seminarian who gets straight A's? Pastor. What do you call a seminarian who gets C's? Pastor." Of course, the point is well made. It's not about being perfect in school that makes a man a pastor. He doesn't have to have straight A's.

But I always noticed something: that those who insisted on this the most, those who spoke about this the loudest were often those that I would had a "good enough" attitude about it all. That they were saying that, "Oh, it's good enough where I'm at. Why should I have to put in more effort when it's not going to make that much difference in the end? I'm just going to be where I am and leave it there." Which of course shows a kind of indifference, doesn't it? A kind of lack of caring about excelling. They didn't want to do better, because they figured, "Well, this is good enough." And unfortunately, that's exactly where they left it.

And Christians, there are all too many these days, I'm afraid, who treat being a Christian in the same way. That this is good enough. Content to be where we are right now, and we'll just leave it at that. "Jesus has saved me," we say. "Jesus has made it so I'm not going to hell, and that's good enough." Of course, that's all true. We don't want to downplay that in the slightest. But what does that say about that person? There is no desire there for anything more. There is no desire to excel. It's a get out of jail free card approach to being a Christian. It's good enough, so why would we want to do anything more?

Of course, maybe they would say, "It's because we're never going to measure up. We're never going to be perfect." And that's true, of course. We do struggle with sin in this lifetime, and it's something we're going to continue to struggle with. But do you say this because it's true or as an excuse? "I'm never going to be perfect, so I don't even need to try. It's good enough, and we'll leave it at that."

But Christians, Peter in our Epistle reading for this evening urges us to be more than just good enough. He urges us to excellence, to be the very best Christians that we can be. Not because we are somehow going to earn things for ourselves, not because we're going to end up in heaven because of it, but because it is a gift from the Lord. God has done all of these things for us, which should lead us to ask: how much does that gift mean to you?

Peter says, verse 3: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." And notice what Peter says here. He doesn't say that we get all of these things because we have done a whole bunch of good things, that we get these things because of our works, because of our striving. Not at all. He says it is God's divine power that makes us who we are. That it is God's divine power that brings us to where we are today. This power has given to us very great things, all things which pertain to life and godliness. You are who you are today, living in Christ, as a free gift of God. You are who you are today, holy before the Lord, as a free gift of God. All of this has come not because we have deserved it, but because God in his love and his power has given all of this to us.

And this has all come, he says, "through the knowledge of him who called us," through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That when we call on his name, we will be saved. That is a promise that God has made to us: that God will save us by his grace, that God will save us because of his Son. That is a very great gift indeed!

Peter goes on to say: "By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." These promises that he has made to you, he makes to you in Jesus: promises of life, promises of salvation, promises of everything that he wants to give you. And he gives it freely in his Son, Jesus Christ.

And on top of this too, through those promises, we become something like God. We become holy, just as God is holy. We become righteous, just as God is righteous. We become good, just as God is good. And all of this comes, Christians, by grace, by his free gift and mercy. And because of this too, we have been taken out of the world. We are no longer a part of the world, but rather a part of God, purely by his grace. All of this that he has done for us in Jesus is a gift, and a very great gift indeed.

But the question we must ask ourselves is: "What does that gift mean to you?" Because as he goes on to say in verse 5: "For this very reason"--everything that he has just been talking about, because it's all a gift--"for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love." These are all gifts of the Spirit, all fruits of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh. They are not things that we try to do as a result. They are things that God gives to us. And so he wants us to seek after them, to be the very best Christians that we can be, because this is who he has made us to be. This is the very picture of what it means to be a Christian. Don't we want this for ourselves? Isn't this who we want to be, because of what God has done for us?

But unfortunately, we get sidetracked. We fall into this "good enough" kind of attitude and think that it doesn't actually matter. But when we do that, Christians, we run into a very great danger. Peter goes on to say: "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins." This indifference, this "good enough" attitude can lead us away from God. It can make the knowledge of Jesus Christ unfruitful, ineffective, idle, coming to nothing. Because this "good enough" attitude leads us to be lazy, to be lax in the things of God. And when we stop caring about what it means to be a Christian, pretty soon we will find ourselves away from God entirely. We will lose focus, becoming so nearsighted, Peter says, that we don't even know what's going on in front of us. We can't even see our way anymore, because we have become distracted by the things of this world. Forgetting even that we have been cleansed, that we are baptized, that God has made all of these promises to us. A "good enough" attitude can lead us to make shipwreck of our faith. Why do you think there are so many warnings in the Bible about falling away? Do you think it's an accident? God warns us not to fall into this mindset, because "good enough" will soon lead to nothing at all.

But, Peter says, this great gift of God should drive us to seek after excellence, not settling for "good enough," not settling for a C+ kind of Christianity, just getting through these things. But to become A+ Christians, to be the very best that we can be and to seek after God with all that we have, because all of this is a very great gift of God. We run after these things, Christians, because Jesus means that much to us. We run after these things because heaven means that much to us. We run after these things because God's gifts mean that much to us. In gratitude seeking to be more and more like God because of his very great gift in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is why Peter finishes: "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We strive after heaven and the things of God, because God in his grace has provided for us the way. God in his mercy has also set it before us, calling us to run, showing us our prize, Jesus Christ himself.

So Christians, let us not be content with "good enough." Let us be more than good enough. Let us fight against our sin because Jesus is our salvation. Let us fight against the corruption of this world because Jesus is our hope. Let us love one another because Jesus first loved us. Let us be self-controlled and disciplined because Jesus is worth every cost. Let us not be "good enough Christians." Let us be "A+ Christians," because Jesus is our prize.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have given us all things in your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us always to seek after him, and lead us in his ways, so that we may strive to be like him in everything. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.