***2 Peter 1:5-7 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.***

We’re with the Apostle Peter this morning, probably somewhere in Rome, living in a time of extraordinary persecution of the Christian church. Peter is in his mid-sixties. The Roman Emperor Nero is blaming this new sect, called the Way, for every ill impacting the empire. The year is around 64 AD, about 30 years after the Resurrection of Jesus. The church has been growing, not by way of TV or Mega churches, but by way of discipleship, Christians sitting together and sharing life’s joys and pains. Though this Way, now known as Christianity, has a reputation within communities of being peaceful and loving, Nero needs a scapegoat to blame and, like so many times in history, the Christian church is easy to blame. The Apostle Peter, who has a direct knowledge of Jesus, having walked with Him for His whole time on earth, having witnessed Jesus’ miracles first hand, is writing this letter to a general audience, with the purpose to encourage the people being persecuted for their faith. Many have done nothing but love and help their neighbor, seeking to introduce them to the Hope of Eternal Salvation, Jesus. Imagine being dragged from your home, hunted like animals, and people refusing to do business with you because of your faith. Peter’s audience is living that. Into this we step this morning.

Peter writes in verse 5 *But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge.*What very reason? The very reason given in verse 4 just above – exceedingly great and precious promises given to us by God through faith in Jesus, so that we may be partakers of the divine nature and leave the corrupt lusts of this world behind. That’s a great reason. Do we fully grasp the Love and the Honor that God shed on us through His Son? If there were ever a great reason, this is it – a reason to give all diligence, make all haste, show all earnestness. We must be diligent in our walk treating it as very special.

Peter instructs us to add to our faith virtue. He’s confident that his audience consists of believers in Jesus Christ . He tells these believers to add virtue or ***active*** courage to their faith. Remember, these first century Christians are being hunted and killed – think courage to share their faith is a necessity? Oh yes. Matthew 10:33 Jesus says that if we deny Him before men, He will deny us before the Father. Courage is critical as we walk steadfastly with Jesus. We must be ready to be rejected by the world, bold in our confession and faith, ready at any opportunity to reach the lost. Peter is saying – as your faith grows, so too must your courage and your bravery.

To this virtue add knowledge or wisdom of God and knowledge of the Faith. Have this knowledge ready to share. When someone asks why we believe, are we ready to give an answer based on both the Word and our personal experiences? Peter exhorts these first century Christians to understand sound teaching, because they were the encountering non-believers looking for the Truth daily. It’s the same today. Most come to Christ, not by a great sermon, but by encountering a follower of Christ who loves, teaches, and disciples them.

Verses 6-7 *to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.* Peter continues – to knowledge, add self-control or temperance, choosing wisely where we invest our being properly. Moderation in our appetites, resisting the things that do not lead to God. Using the things of the world as a means to worship and glorify God, not as a replacement for God. Add Perseverance – using our perseverance to turn away from our selfish desires and turn ever more directly to the will of God. In the first century church, this meant persevering in suffering, staying attuned to the precious promises, even while soldiers roamed the streets, and Christians burned in the courtyard. Today, we must turn from our comfort and ease and pursue God, turning from the lure of the deceitful song we hear night and day. To perseverance godliness – a continual focus on God’s wisdom, power, goodness, truth, mercy, providence, and Presence. A never ending awareness of His Love and the Sacrifice He made to save us. To godliness brotherly kindness or love of our brothers and sisters – our godliness must not be solitary and lonely, but shared with brothers and sisters. While some say, “I need no church, but can worship God all alone,” Peter counters – you can, but your fruitfulness as a Christian will not grow in that way. Godliness is demonstrated in brotherly kindness. To brotherly kindness love – Christian love toward all men, as image bearers of God, whether they believe as we do or not. This includes the Romans kicking in doors then and includes non-believers screeching on Social Media and in workplaces today.

This letter would have hit like a hammer, as it is read by Christians running for their lives. Peter, who saw Jesus transfigured, stood with Him as He raised the dead, breakfasted with Him on a beach after the resurrection, is saying – Be brave, knowledgeable, self-controlled, resolute, possessing godliness, and demonstrating love for both believers and non-believers. Peter says the same to us this morning. Jesus’ Promises are still precious today. We may not be running for our lives, but we are still Living for Christ. Time is growing short – we must ask – how does my life reflect the Savior I love? May it reflect Him more brightly each and every day.