

Sunday Morning Message

January 10, 2021

2 Peter 1:1 – 11 – Add To Your Faith Virtue

Series - Experiencing God's Grace in the Midst of Suffering

Text – 2 Peter 1:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – 2 Peter 1:1 - 4

Introduction to the Series

The writer of this letter is identified as Peter. Peter was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was not only one of the twelve, but also a member of the inner circle of the Lord, which also include James and John. Peter knew a little something about growing in the Lord. Early on in his apostleship, Peter would often try to do things His way. He was a bit impulsive, and somewhat outspoken. Peter's famous failure in the flesh came when he denied knowing the Lord, and this immediately following his self-confident boasting that he would never do it.

Peter, however, didn't stay defeated. He got back up, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, was greatly used of the Lord. His message at Pentecost yielded the fruit of 3000 souls trusting the Lord Jesus. Peter was also used of the Lord to lead Cornelius, a Gentile man, to faith in Christ.

Here in this second general epistle or letter from Peter, he is writing near the end of his life. We estimate that the date of this writing was around 66 AD. He will be martyred at the hands of Nero shortly after this epistle was written, probably around 67 AD. It was most likely written from Rome. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside-down, having requested this form of crucifixion because he felt unworthy to be put to death in the same manner as the Lord.

The theme of this letter is much the same as Peter's first epistle. He is encouraging believers to remain faithful to the Lord even under incredibly difficult circumstances. Additional emphasis in 2 Peter is given to the exposure of false teachers as well as to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Another significant difference that should be pointed out is that the scope of this letter seems to have been intended for a much broader audience than 1 Peter. That first epistle was written to a specific region in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) and is referred to in this letter as being previously written to these same recipients, but this letter is addressed to all believers, presumably beyond the geographical boundaries of the first letter. Of course, the Holy Spirit intended that both letters be included within the Canon of Scripture and would thus be written for the benefit of all believers.

Introduction to the Message

Last week, we introduced this subject of building upon our faith by explaining that if we are going to do this, we must be diligent – “giving all diligence, add to your faith ...”.

Wiersbie:

“Where there is life, there must be growth. The new birth is not the end; it is the beginning. God gives His children all that they need to live godly lives, but His children must apply themselves and be diligent to use the “means of grace” He has provided. *Spiritual growth is not automatic.* It requires cooperation with God and the application of spiritual diligence and discipline.”¹

We also said that if we work diligently to develop these seven attributes found in vs. 5 – 7, we will be rewarded with fruitfulness, security, and also with eternal rewards.

Finally, we spoke of the consequences of neglecting to develop these traits in our life of faith – we will become spiritually blind, and may even forget that we are saved.

Transition – This morning, our focus will be on this first Christian character trait of virtue:

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; (2 Peter 1:5a)

I The Explanation of Virtue

Dictionary Definition

behavior showing high moral standards: *paragons of virtue.*

- a quality considered morally good or desirable in a person: *patience is a virtue.*
- a good or useful quality of a thing: *Mike was extolling the virtues of the car | there's **no virtue in suffering in silence.***
- archaic virginity or chastity, esp. of a woman.

The Greek word that underlies the English word virtue is the word, ἀρετή (*arête* – pronounced ä-re-tā')

- 1 a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action - virtue, moral goodness
- 2 any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity

The Greek word is only used in two other places in the Bible besides here in 2 Peter:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (2 Pe 1:5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

*whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* (Philippians 4:8 KJV)

*"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the **praises** of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"* (1 Peter 2:9 KJV)

Note – the word. “virtue” is used three times in the gospels (once in Mark 5:30; and twice in Luke - 6:19 and 8:46). All of these cases involved someone touching Jesus, and receiving healing. In these examples Jesus said that “virtue” had gone out of Him. This meaning is slightly different, and the underlying Greek word is different (δύναμις – dynamis – power)

So, we can say based on the New Testament usage, and the definitions listed that virtue means a moral excellence or purity. It can be said that a person who has virtue knows what is right and will do it. He fulfills his purpose as a Christian in glorifying the Lord.

Wiersbie:

To the Greek philosophers, it meant “the fulfillment of a thing.” When anything in nature fulfills its purpose, that is “virtue—moral excellence.” The word was also used to describe the power of the gods to do heroic deeds. The land that produces crops is “excellent” because it is fulfilling its purpose. The tool that works correctly is “excellent” because it is doing what a tool is supposed to do.

A Christian is supposed to glorify God because he has God’s nature within; so, when he does this, he shows “excellence” because he is fulfilling his purpose in life. True virtue in the Christian life is not “polishing” human qualities, no matter how fine they may be, but producing *divine* qualities that make the person more like Jesus Christ.²

It is similar to the word “character.” We would say that a person has character if they have virtue.

Someone has defined Christian character as the sub-conscious doing of right consistently.

Bob Jones Sr. said, “the test of character is what it takes to stop you”.

Someone once said, “the measure of a man’s real character is what he would do if no one would find out”.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (2 Pe 1:5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Dr. Bill Rice said, "character is the doing of right without regard to inward desires, or outward pressures".

Other synonyms for virtue - goodness, righteousness, morality, integrity, dignity, honor, decency, respectability, nobility, worthiness, purity; principles, ethics, and strength

II Examples of Virtue

There are many examples of individuals who possessed virtue in the Bible; and unfortunately, there are also many examples of people who lacked virtue. Samson comes to mind, even though God used him at times. King Saul is another example.

There are some Bible characters that possessed character, or virtue, for much of their life, but then lacked it at some key moments. For instance – David showed virtue when he defeated the giant, and also at many other times of his life. Yet, he lacked virtue when he committed adultery with Bathsheba.

One example that I would choose to represent virtue, or good character would be "the virtuous woman" from Proverbs 31. She was modest, industrious, faithful to both the Lord and her husband, loving, and caring.

"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." (Proverbs 31:27-29)

Another example in Scripture of someone who possessed virtue is Joseph – Turn to Genesis 39:7 – 20.

Joseph's virtue cost him many times in his life. His brothers were jealous of his virtue, and sold him into slavery. His virtue here in Genesis 39 cost him his cushy job in the home of Potiphar. Even though his virtue cost him some temporary pleasure, Joseph consistently did the right thing, and he consistently demonstrated moral excellence. Eventually, his virtue paid off, and God elevated him to the position of prime minister of Egypt, which placed him in authority over his brothers, and his old boss, Potiphar.

There are many other Biblical examples that we could look at. Stephen and Paul come to mind.

And there are also many examples in more recent times:

I personally had the privilege of knowing a man (Doug Kaiser) with moral excellence prior to my own salvation. He was the dairy manager of a Shoprite, and though he had an excellent spirit, he would never participate in any crude or immoral jokes. He had a moral purity, a moral excellence about him.

III The Exhibition of Virtue

Practical Helps in developing virtue in your life, so that you too can shew forth the praises of Christ.

A Focus on Virtue

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9 KJV)

B Forsake (or Flee)

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22 KJV)

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Timothy 6:9-11 KJV)

C Follow

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." (Romans 14:19 KJV)

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." (1 Thessalonians 5:15 KJV)

"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." (3 John 1:11 KJV)

Determine that you are going to do the right thing. Yield to the working of the Spirit of God within you, and follow the principles of the Word of God.

Do right!

Bob Jones said, "Do right though the stars fall".

Conclusion

The first of the seven things that we are to add or fully develop in our life of faith is virtue.

Can it be said of you, that you are a man or woman of virtue?

Do you possess a moral purity, a moral excellence; the ability to the right thing, to take the high road in any given situation, even when it may cost you something?

I read about a family that were just exploding with virtue:

The Hiding Place, by Corrie Ten Boom

The Ten Boom family lived in occupied Holland during World War II. The Ten Boom's were a Christian family that aided Jewish people by allowing them to hide in a secret room in their home.

Eventually they were caught, and they were all hauled off to jail. Mr. Ten Boom, who was in his seventies at the time of his arrest was offered a pardon by the Gestapo officer if he promised to cease and desist of helping any more Jewish people.

The Gestapo chief leaned forward. "I'd like to send you home, old fellow," he said. "I'll take your word that you won't cause any more trouble." I could not see Father's face, only the erect carriage of his shoulders and the halo of white hair above them. But I heard his answer. "If I go home today," he said evenly and clearly, "tomorrow I will open my door again to any man in need who knocks." [ten Boom, Corrie; Sherrill, John; Sherrill, Elizabeth (2006-01-01). *Hiding Place, The* (pp. 151-152). Baker Book Group. Kindle Edition.]