

Series: Seven Additions to Faith

Title: "Virtue"

Text: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Introduction

Last week we talked about the essentials of growing and developing in faith. To live the Christian life, we must receive the faith of Christ and live our life with His faith. As we develop this dynamic, mountain-moving faith, we can grow from little faith to great faith, to perfect just as Abraham the "Father of Faith" did in his life. But according to Saint Peter, growing and developing in faith is only one aspect of Christian growth.

In his second letter, he says that there are several things we need to add to our faith to become mature, effective believers. Let's take a look at Peter's second letter and see what he thinks we need to add to our faith.

But first, let's do a little review on developing faith. The Bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6) The Bible also says that whatever is not of faith is sin. (Romans 14:23) From Hebrews Chapter 11, we learn that faith is in the present. Faith is NOW! We also know that faith is for today, and hope is for tomorrow. You can go from little faith to great faith, to perfect faith by developing the principles of faith taught in the Word of God.

Volumes of books have been written on how to develop your faith. Yet the one thing that seems to be lacking in many churches and saints today is faith. Practicing faith is a pursuit that's at an all-time low. People today (even Christians) don't trust anyone! The Media has turned us into cynics and skeptics about nearly everything. But, developing our faith is just the beginning! Peter teaches that not only do we need to develop faith and trust in God, but we also need to add some other things to our faith.

Let's begin reading in 2 Peter Chapter 1 Verse 1, "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:" ([2 Peter 1:1 NKJV](#))

Who is Peter writing to church? He's writing to US, to all those who have obtained like precious faith! How do you obtain faith? Well, Peter says it comes through the righteousness of God and our savior Jesus Christ. That's the kind of faith we need! The faith of Christ! The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus is the author, and finisher of our faith! It is the faith of Christ that saves us.

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." ([Galatians 2:20](#))

The Bible says that every believer has faith. According to scripture, God has given every man the measure of faith according to the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4) You don't need to pray for faith; you don't need to fast for faith; you simply start exercising and developing the faith that Christ has already given you. As we release the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, we grow in faith and experience the supernatural work of Christ.

Alright, look at verse 2, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue," (2 Peter 1:2-3 NKJV)

It is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth. And the Holy Spirit teaches us about godly living because God's purpose is to develop us as His instruments of glory and virtue.

Verse 4 says, "by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4 NKJV)

The Word of God is replete with promises and blessings for every believer. The tragedy is that many Christians today live far below their privileges in Christ Jesus because they do not know that God has already provided for their needs through these exceeding great and precious promises.

By practicing our faith and following the principles of the Word of God, its blessings and promises, and truth, we become partakers of the Divine nature and escape the lust of the flesh. If you don't know who you are and what you have in Jesus, you are destined to become a slave to your circumstances! Study the Word of God, and discover the dynamic resources and blessings available to you as a believer. Let Christ reveal himself to you. Partake of His Divine nature. Let His life and His ministry and His love fill your heart and flow out through your actions.

The truth is, you can read the Bible all day long and never get a thing out of it because the truths and blessings contained in the Word of God are not intellectually discerned; they are spiritually revealed. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The New Testament truth is that you must allow the Holy Spirit to inspire these promises and blessings within your spirit. When we do, the Holy Spirit empowers us to overcome the flesh, sin, and self.

Verse 5, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge," (2 Peter 1:5 NKJV)

Remember, receiving Christ as your savior and developing your faith is only the beginning of living the Christian life. Peter says there are things to add to your faith! Don't ever become satisfied with what you accomplished yesterday. Keep growing in the Lord! Keep pressing toward the mark! Keep adding to your faith.

Giving all diligence, add to your faith what? Virtue. That's what we're going to study today - and to virtue knowledge; "to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:6-8 NKJV)

God's goal for us is to be fruitful. He doesn't want us to be barren. He wants us to be successful. "For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble." (2 Peter 1:9-10 NKJV)

That is certainly advice worth listening to! What's the first thing Peter says to add to your faith? Virtue.

I. Defining Virtue

What is virtue? The New American Standard version calls it: Moral Excellence. The NIV and the Phillips translations say: Goodness. Virtue is the quality of life that causes us to reflect the likeness of God. Virtue is the quality that makes us stand our full stature and exercise courage, strength, and confidence in our faith.

The word virtue is an action word. The original term meant 'force' or 'energy' and was illustrated in the finest discipline and fitness. It described a readiness for action and effort.

The Latin word 'vir' means "a man or hero." The word "virtue" meant the extraordinary quality of a person or hero. Peter suggests that we should add to our faith the moral excellence and goodness of the greatest hero of all, Jesus! God's goodness needs to be lived out in our lives. God wants us to be like him?

Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded, "Why do you call me good? There is no one good but God." Jesus tried to explain to this young man the same truth he often shared with his disciples: Only God is Good! But if you've seen me, you've seen my Father because my Father and I are one.

You become a completely new person in Christ when Jesus comes into your life and forgives you of your sins. But you must turn your back on the old lifestyle and start living the way God wants you to. And until you are completely tired of how you've been living your life, you will not change.

Becoming a Christian and following Christ won't appeal to you until you realize your life is not what you want it to be. To live the Christian life, you give up the life you've been living and ask God to give you a whole new life.

First, you must admit you are not following God's plan for your life, which, yes, makes you a sinner! It's hard to admit and say, but it's the truth, and you know it. Secondly, you must be willing to give up your sinful living, receive Christ's forgiveness, and accept the new life He offers you. When you do, what a difference it makes! Not only does God deal with your past life, but he also gives you a future!

That future involves becoming a better person than you could have ever imagined!

II. Partaking of the Divine Nature

We become partakers of God's divine nature. That's why we say true believers are in the world but not of the world. When you become a partake of His divine nature; you begin to mirror and reflect the image of Christ.

You know that when you look at the moon at night, the light you see is simply a reflection of the Sun. The moon doesn't really generate energy; it simply reflects it! When you look at the moon, you actually see a reflection of the Sun in the moon. And in the same way, when we become Christians, we begin to reflect the light of God's Son in our life. So that when people look at you and see your goodness, moral excellence, and virtue, they are really looking at a reflection of Christ in you.

The only Christ that some people will ever meet is the Christ that lives in you. If we do not add to our newfound faith in Christ, Virtue, then when people look at us, they may only see a half-moon, or a quarter moon, or maybe there's no reflection of Christ at all! We are an open book, a living letter describing God's moral excellence and goodness.

Too often, people spend a great deal of time trying to modify biblical standards and justify or rationalize sinful behavior instead of adding to our faith, virtue. Some try to convince themselves that sinful behavior is OK. But that doesn't persuade God, and it only undermines your virtue.

It's true; you may be criticized or even ridiculed. Some may say you're weird or different, or out of touch. When you follow Christ, you may not be fashionable, but you will be virtuous.

III. Reflecting the Divine Nature

Our mission as believers is to reflect God's very nature to our world. God has called us to purity and moral excellence, and goodness. If you have to compromise your virtue to be accepted by the world, then forget it! God is not as concerned about your circumstances as he is with your attitudes and behaviors in the midst of your circumstances. Christians don't model the world; they follow Christ!

Virtue is faith in energetic action. Sometimes one thing happens by virtue of another, or the power of one thing actually produces another. It was often the case in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Remember when the woman pressed through the crowd and secretly touched the hem of Jesus' garment? The Bible says that Jesus knew that virtue had gone out of him. Jesus realized that healing for this woman flowed automatically out of him by virtue of the fact that she believed him to be the Son of God.

The Bible says that Peter was walking down the street one day, and when his shadow fell on the sick, they were healed. There should always be something within us of the virtue and character of Christ that causes people to sit up and take notice.

People always expected something unusual to happen whenever Jesus was present. Why shouldn't they expect Jesus to do the same thing through us when we reflect the supernatural and divine nature of the living God. The virtue of God is released in energy and power through us when we act in faith. It is the strong and constraining force that draws us to Christ and allows Him to work through us.

As we demonstrate the virtue of Christ in how we live, it draws others who need God's help and gives them hope to believe that God can meet their needs too!

Conclusion

That is what Peter means by virtue.

The Holy Spirit equips us with the energy and power of moral excellence, goodness, and faithfulness that reflects the very nature of God himself. Virtue is a practical and kinetic energy that resides in our will necessary to carry our faith into action.

You might say it is the grace for doing what is right! James says, "You say you have faith, but I'll show you my faith by my works." Virtue carries with it a spiritual courage and determination that propels us into action.

Peter says every believer needs this virtue added to their faith. We need believers who reflect and model the moral excellence, goodness, and faithfulness of Christ. The world needs to see Christians who have this full virtue of Christ! The kind of virtue that when they walk into the room, the reflection of Jesus in their lives makes people want to find out what makes them so different and unique.

Our prayer should be for Christ to raise up saints today from this generation whose presence in the room causes others to want to meet this Jesus and experience His salvation and healing and encouragement and comfort and counseling.

Hollywood's glitter and glamour have blinded many believers; they don't even identify with authentic Christian discipleship. Satan is doing his best to press every person into his mold. Satan is anti-God, anti-Christian, anti-Jew, and in the end, anti-humanity. His goal is to rule the world! If we could just get our eyes back onto Christ, what a tremendous difference we would begin to experience.

What kind of person would you be if you followed Christ every day? Paul says it all starts with a faith encounter with Christ. But Peter says it takes more than just faith

to impact your world. We must add virtue to our faith and become fruitful in reflecting the very nature and presence of Christ. Don't settle for being a mediocre, status quo believer. Add to your faith the virtue of Christ." Become a Christ-centered, Christ-reflecting, Christ-directed, Christ-anointed believer; it will change your life and your world.

Out of your fellowship with Christ, you will experience personal excellence and spiritual growth and be able to model the very character of Christ before others. The very presence of Jesus will flow out of your life, and you'll see your family and friends, and coworkers desire the virtue of Christ they see reflected in you.

So get started, add to your faith – Virtue!