



ADD TO YOUR FAITH – VIRTUE

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2 Peter 1:5-9

February 14, 2024

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8, ⁸*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* The writer of Hebrews declared in Hebrews 11:6, ⁶*But without faith it is impossible to please God.* Further, in Luke 17:6, Jesus proclaimed to the apostles after they asked him to increase their faith, ⁶*So the Lord said, If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.*

These verses express the significance of faith in the life of a child of God. These verses also reinforce the value of faith and the need for God's children to pursue and deepen their faith relationships with God.

In 2 Peter Chapter 1, Peter established that possessing faith is not the end goal in our Christian journey. Rather, faith is the foundation upon which other virtues are built. Peter shared that God has given us very great and precious promises that empower us to be partakers/participants (which is the Greek word, *koinōnos*, and means partners) of the divine nature. Think about it. We are partners with Jesus in his divine nature.

To be an effective partner with Jesus, Peter shared that we need to add these seven virtues to our faith: Virtue, Knowledge, Self-Control, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly/Sisterly Kindness and Love.

Why is it important to add these virtues? To produce an effective and fruitful knowledge of Jesus. Peter answered in verse 8 that if these virtues are ours and increase within us, they will produce an effective and fruitful knowledge of Jesus.

The first Virtue that we add to our Faith is Virtue, that is, moral excellence. May our virtue (moral excellence) reflect the virtue (moral excellence) displayed by Jesus in all of our actions and attitudes.

THINK ON THESE THINGS
Philippians 4:8

February 15, 2024

Gandhi said, “Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words, Your words become your actions, Your actions become your habits, Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny.” Simply put, Gandhi was saying that ones thoughts become ones actions. Far too often, we try to change our actions by focusing on our actions. We soon discover that changing our actions never changes our actions. To effectively change our actions, we much change our thinking.

Paul understood this principle as he wrote this letter to the church in Philippi. In Verse 8 of Chapter 4, Paul provided a list of qualities that should occupy our thoughts. His list included thinking on things that are true, things that are noble, things that are just, things that are pure, things that are lovely and things that are of good report. Paul, then, summed up the list for those who cannot remember the individual qualities on the list by concluding, if there is any virtue [moral excellence] and if there is anything worthy of praise—think on these things.

It is too easy, at times, to let our thinking become distracted by what is happening around us. To become discouraged by what other people are saying and/or doing. To become diminished by our own beliefs of where and how we anticipated things would be. As our thoughts are distracted, discouraged and diminished, so our actions will be.

No matter what has happened in your life and especially when negative things are happening in your life, turn your thoughts away from the negativity and place them on things that reflect virtue and praise.

THE MODEL OF GLORY AND VIRTUE
2 Peter 1:2, 3

February 16, 2024

Many of us, when young, looked up to someone whom we wanted to be like. It may have been a parent, aunt or uncle, grandparent, older sibling, teacher or neighbor. We were drawn to how he spoke, how she dressed, the car he drove or the job she had. There were qualities they possessed that resonated within us and drew us to them as a model for the qualities we could possess to ensure we achieve a similar level of success.

Peter shared that the knowledge of Jesus gives us everything that is needed for life and godliness. Even more, what a blessing that we did not have to pursue Jesus to receive it. Rather, Jesus called us to himself by his own glory and virtue. Notice, Jesus called us or invited us to come to him by the same qualities that he expects from us – glory and virtue.

Therefore, Jesus is the model of glory and virtue. We can possess these qualities that will ultimately give us what we need for life (spiritual vitality) and godliness (godly living).

Are you living a life that reflects spiritual vitality and godly living? If not, perhaps you have not responded to the call from Jesus to model your life after Jesus. Jesus is calling you, “Look up to me.” “Be like me.” If your life does reflect spiritual vitality and godly living, are there areas of your life where you can receive more knowledge of Jesus? Are there areas of your life you need to adapt to better follow the model of Jesus?

SINGING THE PRAISES OF GOD
1 Peter 2:7-10

February 17, 2024

I often share quotes and phrases from my parents in my teaching and preaching. By doing so, I make their wisdom available to people who never had the opportunity to hear it directly from them and to future generations who will never have the opportunity to meet them. Additionally, it is a way for me to sing their praises and celebrate their contributions in molding and shaping me into who I am.

In these verses, Peter identified two basic responses to Jesus’ coming into the world. First, for those who believe, Jesus is a precious stone – that is, someone to be elevated and adorned. Second, for those who do not believe, Jesus is a stumbling stone – that is, someone to be lowered to the point that those who do not believe find themselves stumbling over him.

In contrast to those who stumble over Jesus, Peter celebrates those who believe in Jesus and identifies them as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and God’s own special people. Those who believe in Jesus enjoy a personal and intimate relationship with God and receive the blessings of being God’s own special people.

Those who believe in Jesus also have the responsibility to proclaim (to proclaim means to publish and make widely known) the praises (the word, praises, is the Greek word, *aretē*, which is also translated, virtues) of God who called us out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, who made us God’s people and who now receive God’s mercy.

Are you singing God’s praises? Are you proclaiming to everyone, everywhere the virtues of God and how they have marvelously and miraculously served you? Are you making widely known the benefits of your personal and intimate relationship with God? Are you publishing your testimonies so future generations will desire God’s virtuous activity in their lives? How will others know how awesome your God is if you are not singing your God’s praises?