**7 Additions to Faith**

**Virtue**

**2 Peter 1:1-10**

**Introduction**

Christians must grow in Faith. A believer can grow from little faith, to great faith, to perfect just as Abraham the Father of Faith did in his life. However, according to the Apostle Peter, growing in faith is only one aspect of Christian growth. In his second letter Peter writes that there are several things we need to add to our faith in order to become mature, effective believers.

In our series on developing faith we learned that without faith it is impossible to please God and whatever is not of faith is sin. Hebrews Chapter 11 says that faith is NOW! “Now faith is….” Faith is for today, hope is for tomorrow. A believer can go from little faith to great faith, to perfect faith by developing the principles of faith taught in the Word of God. There are volumes of books that have been written on how to develop your faith. There are faith teachers, preachers, faith healers, faith seminars, and volumes of books and materials on the subject of faith. Yet one thing that seems to be lacking in many churches and saints is faith. Many Christians just don’t trust anyone! Many are cynics and skeptics about nearly everything; often with good reason!

Developing faith is just the beginning! Peter teaches we need to develop faith and trust in God, but we also need to add some other things to our faith. Let’s learn about these important additions to our faith. 2 Peter Chapter 1 Verses 1-10, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:”

Peter writes to all those who have obtained like precious faith. How do you obtain faith? Peter says it comes through the righteousness of God in Jesus. That’s the kind of faith we need! That’s the kind of faith we need to develop; the faith of Christ! The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. It is the faith of God that saves us. Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the FAITH of the SON OF GOD who loved me and gave himself for me.” Every believer has faith. According to Ephesians Chapter 4, God has given every man the measure of faith according to the gift of Christ. Believers don’t need to pray for faith or fast for faith. They need only exercise and develop the faith that Christ has already given them.

Verses 2-3, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:”

The Holy Spirit guides us to truth and teaches and transform us into the instruments of glory and virtue he created us to be.

Verse 4, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

The Word of God is replete with promises and blessings for every believer. The tragedy is that so many Christians today live far below their privileges in Christ Jesus. They do not know that God has already provided for their needs through these exceeding great and precious promises. When we practice our faith and follow the principles of the Word of God we reap its blessings and promises and truth. We also partake of the Divine nature and escape the lust of the flesh.

Those who do not practice their faith fall easy prey for Satan and can become a slave to their circumstances. Believers should study the Word of God and discover the dynamic resources and blessings that are available through Christ. 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. You can read the Bible all day long and never get a thing out of it. Why? Because the truths and blessings contained in the Word of God are not intellectually discerned they are spiritually revealed. 2 Timothy 3:16 records that, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The New Testament truth is you must allow the Holy Spirit to inspire the Bible’s promises and blessings to your spirit. When you do, the Holy Spirit empowers you to overcome the flesh, and sin, and self.

Verse 5, “And beside this add to your faith, virtue.” Receiving Christ as your savior and developing your faith is only the beginning of living the Christian life. Don’t be satisfied with what you accomplished yesterday. Keep growing in the Lord! Keep pressing toward the mark! Keep adding to your faith.

“Add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

God’s goal for us is to be fruitful. God wants us to be successful. He doesn’t want us to fail or lose our footing in life. God wants us to have successes and accomplishments to lay at his feet when we finish our course on this earth.

Verse 9, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:”

Peter says the first thing you need to add to your faith virtue. So what is virtue anyway?

1. **What Is Virtue?**

Virtue has been defined as the quality or practice of moral excellence or righteousness. Cardinal virtues are said to be; prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance while theological virtues are considered to be; faith, hope and love. Virtue is linked to goodness, righteousness, morality, integrity, dignity, honor, decency, respectability, purity, valor, ethical behavior and a principled life-style.

The New American Standard version translates virtue as moral excellence. The NIV and the Phillips translates virtue as goodness. Virtue is the quality of life that distinguishes us as set apart to reflect the likeness of God. Think about that! You have been set apart to reflect the likeness of God! It is the quality that makes us stand our full stature with courage and strength and confidence in our faith and relationship with Christ.

The word virtue is an action word. The original term has been linked to ‘force’ or ‘energy’ and was illustrated in the finest discipline and fitness. It describes a fitness and readiness for action and effort. The Latin word ‘vir’ meant “a man of valor or hero”. The word “virtue” meant the special quality that causes a person to be a hero. The Apostle Peter says that as a people of faith we should add to our faith the moral excellence and goodness of the greatest hero of all, Jesus Christ. God’s goodness must be reflected in your lives.

1. **How do you become Virtuous?**

Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus in Mark Chapter 10 and asked, “Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responded, “Why do you call me good? There in no one good but one, that is God.” Jesus tried to explain to this young man the same truth he often shared with his disciples: God is the source of all goodness and only God is Good! But then He would say, “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen my Father, because I and my Father are one.”

When Jesus comes into your life and forgives you of your sins, you become a completely new person in Christ. As a Christian you choose to live your life as a Christian! You choose to treat people and life the way Jesus did! That often means you have to turn your back on the old life style you were living, change your ways, and start living the way God wants you to live.

God calls you to change your world, not let the world change you! Becoming a Christian and following Christ won’t appeal to you at all until you realize how destructive sin is and you get tired of living your sinful life. Sin is fun when you first start out! It’s daring, exciting, it’s breaking all the rules and Satan and even your friends encourage you to do it! Sinning is great until the fun wears off and the pain and consequences start stacking up! The sad reality is that so many believe that if you do more of the same you will get a different result. So they keep searching for that initial “high” they felt when they first began sinning. Unfortunately, the pleasures of sin only last for a brief season, but the pain can last a lifetime! The truth is that until you are completely sick of the way you’ve been living your life you’re not going to change. The way back to a virtuous life is to first admit you are a sinner. Secondly you have to be willing to give up your sinful living and accept Christ’s forgiveness and new life. When you do what a difference it makes! Not only does God deal with your past life, he gives you an incredible future!

1. **Why practice Virtue?**

Your future in Christ gives you the strength and resources to live a life of joy and peace in the midst of a chaotic and sinful world. That’s awesome in itself! But it doesn’t stop there! It also involves becoming the personal representative of Christ on the earth. You actually become a modern day apostle; empowered by Christ to represent him and help people who are caught in the web of sin to actually escape and find a new life and new hope. You will either change your world or the world will change you! True believers know we are in the world but not of the world. When you become a child of God and partake of His divine nature you begin to mirror and reflect the image of Christ.

When you look at the moon at night, the light that 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 are actually seeing a reflection of the Sun in the Moon. In the same way, when we become Christians we begin to reflect the light of God’s Son in our life. When people look at you and see your goodness, and moral excellence and virtue they are really looking at a reflection of Christ in you.

You can’t fault sinners for sinning! That’s the job description of a sinner. Sinners sin! What bothers me is when Christians sin! Or maybe I should say, What bothers me most is when I sin! The only Christ that some people will ever meet is the Christ that lives in you. If we do not add to our faith in Christ, the quality of virtue, people may only see a half moon, or a quarter moon, or maybe there’s no reflection of Christ at all! The Bible says that we are an open epistle, an open book, a living letter describing the moral excellence and goodness of God. Don’t try to change the Bible’s standards or justify or rationalize sinful behavior; instead add to your faith virtue. You can try to convince yourself that your sinful behavior is OK because everyone is doing it, but can you convince God? Satan uses temptation and any other vice to undermine your virtue.

Our mission as believers is to reflect the nature of God to our world. God has called us to purity and moral excellence and goodness. If you have to compromise honesty and integrity to be accepted in the world, then forget it! Just walk away!

God is not nearly concerned about your circumstances as he is about your attitudes and behaviors in the midst of your circumstances. God is interested in your sense of morality and integrity and dignity and honor and truthfulness. God is more interested in purity and ethical behavior and a principled life-style than whether you’re popular or the best looking or the coolest person in the group. Don’t model the world, follow Christ!

1. **Virtue takes Action!**

Virtue is faith in energetic action. Sometimes one thing happens in virtue of another, or the power of one thing actually produces another. That 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 and expect something to happen when we are in their presence because we reflect the supernatural and divine nature of the living God.

The virtue of God is released in energy and power upon us when we act upon our faith. It is the strong and constraining force that draws us closer to him. When we demonstrate the virtue of Christ in our lives, it draws other people who are in need and gives them hope to believe that God can meet their need too! That is what Peter means by virtue. When we allow the Holy Spirit to equip us with energy and the power of moral excellence and goodness and faithfulness we begin to reflect the very nature of God himself. Virtue is the practical energy and vitality of the Spirit that resides within us that influences our will to make the decisions necessary to carry our faith into action. It is the grace for doing! James says, “You say you have faith, but I’ll show you my faith by my works.” Virtue is the spiritual courage and determination that propels us into action. Peter says the first thing you need to propel your faith into action is virtue!

**Conclusion**

Every believer needs this virtue added to their faith. Our world today needs Christians dedicated to the virtue of Christ! When you walk into the room, does the reflection of Jesus in your lives make people want to find out what you so different. We are inundated by politics and Hollywood these days. Many people can’t even deal with real life issues anymore. The peace for your life does not come from this world. The Prince of Peace is Jesus! If we could just get our eyes off the problems of the world and back onto Christ we can become part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Just think what kind of person you would be if you lived your faith and followed Christ every day. Paul says it all starts with faith. But Peter says it keeps going on from there! We must add virtue to our faith in order to reflect the very nature and presence of Christ to our world. Don’t settle for being a status quo Christian.

Become a Christ-centered, Christ-reflecting, Christ-directed believer and it will change your life and then you can change your world.

Add to your faith virtue.