Virtue

Intro: 2 Pet. 1:3-11  "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: 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. And beside this, giving all diligence, 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. 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 neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In this lesson we shall give specific attention to the second characteristic listed by Peter in the portion of God’s word often referred to as the “Christian graces”—the trait of virtue. The importance of this subject can readily be seen. Speaking of this attribute notice what Peter says in the latter part of verse 10 -11 “for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” In this lesson we shall give specific attention to the second characteristic listed by Peter in the portion of God’s word often referred to as the “Christian graces”—the trait of virtue. The importance of this subject can readily be seen. Speaking of this attribute notice what Peter says in the latter part of verse 10 -11 “for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

1. Although an important subject, it is, never-the-less, a much neglected subject.
2. In this lesson we shall concern ourselves with the significance of the term “virtue” and its application to us today.

I. DEFINITION OF THE TERM VIRTUE.

A. What does the term “virtue” as here used by Peter mean—what is its significance?
B. Let us be quick to note that the word does not here mean what it so commonly means today.
   1. Today the term means: right moral conduct, or moral excellence, or chastity.
   2. In its original sense it had an entirely different meaning (Greek ἀρετή—arete) defined; manliness, power, and courage.
C. Therefore, let us now notice these three definitions given to virtue as here used by Peter and the application of those definitions to us.

II. MANLINESS.

A. The Latin word vir means “man” and the Latin term virtus means “the special quality of a man” in other words, that which makes a man a man.
B. 1 Cor. 16:13 “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong.”
   1. Bear in mind that this standard of manliness must be according to God and not according to man himself.
   2. Isa. 55:8-9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
      a. Pro. 14:12 “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”
b. Jer. 10:23 "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

3. God might not agree with what man might consider manly and vice versa.

C. What then is that standard of manliness acceptable to God?

1. The pattern is revealed in and through Jesus Christ, God’s Son.
   a. 1 Pet. 2:21 "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps."
   b. 1 John 2:6 "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

2. What are the characteristics of manliness portrayed by Christ?
   a. Phi. 2:5-8 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
   b. He made himself no reputation, took the form of a servant, humbled himself, became obedient to death
      (1) Heb. 5:8-9 “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”
      (2) Basically the very opposite of that considered manly by the world.
   c. It takes someone with fiber, character, strength to measure up to this standard: it takes a man!

III. Power.

A. We oftentimes use virtue in this way.

1. We say there is virtue (power) in a given medicine.
2. We say, “this is true by virtue of the fact...”

B. Thus, we should not be surprised to find the term being used in the same way in the scriptures.

1. Luke 6:19 “And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”
2. Luke 8:46 “And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.”

C. 1 Pet. 2:9 “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 marvelous light”

1. The word translated praises is the Greek term ἀρετή (arete) or viture.
2. In other words, we are to show forth God’s power in us in the transformation of our lives.
3. But do we manifest to the world a saved life, do we desire others to use us as an example, a pattern of Christian living?
   a. 1 Cor. 11:1 “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”
   b. 2 Cor. 3:1-3 “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? 2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.”
IV. COURAGE.

A. “The determination and strength to stand up for that which is right; to profess one’s faith.”

B. In the days of Christ, the apostles, and the early church it took supreme courage (virtue) to profess faith in Christ and His Gospel.
   1. Those who did so were persecuted and often put to death.
   2. It was such a test that many did not do it.
      a. John 12:42 “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:”
      b. Matt. 10:32-33 “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

C. Today we have the same great task of confessing and professing our faith in Christ and his Gospel, and though we may not be physically persecuted and put to death, nevertheless the same degree of virtue (courage) is needed.
   1. How often the cause of Christ suffers because men lack this trait (cf. drinking, dancing, “running with the crowd”).
   2. Men refuse to accept the Gospel’s invitation to the alien sinner because of a lack of courage.
   3. Christians refuse to confess their sins because of a lack of courage.
   4. The Gospel of Christ has suffered because our brethren have not been courageous enough to defend it.
   5. Yes, we need courage in every phase of our spiritual life, in living that life victoriously until the end; the courage to say, Phi. 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Conclusion: 2 Pet. 1:3-11 “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: 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. And beside this, giving all diligence, 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. 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: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”