**Add To Your Faith...Virtue (SR: 2Pet. 1:1-11)**

 The qualities the apostle enumerates capture the *essence* of discipleship. With them in our lives, heaven is *assured* (1:11). The list of characteristics is what is *necessary* to supplement to our faith.

**I. Faith Is The Foundation (1:5).**

A. Faith is never static, but growing and expanding.

1. Faith has to be the beginning and foundation for any and all qualities if these qualities are to please God (Heb. 11:6). Virtue, knowledge, self- control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love with a firm foundation of faith in Jesus Christ activate the spirits that He zealously desires in us.

2. There is a process of addition. We must advance to deeper things. These are the true deeper things in contrast to what many sincerely believe.

3. The word “add” or “supply” is from *epichorego* and means to *provide at one’s own personal cost* (AG). While these are praiseworthy to God, they are repulsive to the worldly, so there will be a cost in developing these qualities. This requires *diligence*, the bookend for this pericope.

B. The characteristics join hand in hand with faith and work together. Many believe the list culminates in love as the ultimate goal for all of these Christian virtues. That is a very reasonable conclusion to draw given the pre-eminence of love in passages like 1 Corinthians 13.

**II. What Is Virtue?**

A. The word is not often used in the NT and it is given two meanings.

B. The meaning of “moral excellence” is preferred by many (NASB; cf. Phil. 4:8).

1. It is excellence that procures a pre-eminent estimation for a person. It is excellence that gives worth.

2. It is strength of character that maintains moral integrity.

C. Out of this understanding grows a second meaning – moral courage.

1. We are to develop moral *courage* and hence possess moral *excellence*. Our character comes first by contemplation (Phil. 4:8).

2. *Contemplation* of what is right MUST be accompanied by a *resolve* to do right regardless of consequences (Rom. 12:9). There is firmness of resolve. It is not “I will try”, but rather “I will.”

3. The virtuous Christian will do what is right because it is right and there can be no compromise (1Cor. 15:58).

D. In persecution, they will continue to confess Christ (Matt. 10:32).

1. There is still opposition to real Christianity and we must hold on. When one is tested & virtue prevails, patience is strengthened (James 1:2f).

2. Faith is worthless if one doesn’t have the courage to stand up for it and to live it even in the face of threats and dangers. To realize one’s danger and yet stand is courage (1Cor. 2:3).

**III. Examples.**

A. Our souls rejoice to see godly characters manifested in God’s people.

1. What we believe, should be followed with courageous ethical living (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:1).

2. The importance of virtue to other spiritual development becomes more apparent by biblical examples.

B. Joseph exercised not only self-control, but also moral courage (Gen. 39:7-12).

1. To refuse her was to risk his position. Even so, Joseph did what was right!

2. He possessed *virtue*. This gave him *worth* in the service of God.

C. Daniel knew the consequences of praying in defiance of the king (Dan. 6:7).

1. Yet he had the moral courage to do what he knew was right. He did not seek to hide his faith (Dan. 6:10). He was prepared to accept the consequences.

2. His three friends were also men of virtue (Dan. 3:16-18). Every Christian is a soldier of the cross called to the same courage (Rev. 2:10; Eph. 6:12).

D. Elijah’s challenge is as current as today’s newscast (1Kgs. 18:21).

1. There is no rebuttal to that kind of argument, but it takes courage to accept it. Joshua’s summons falls in the same class (Josh 24:14f).

2. Joshua and Caleb had virtue when they insisted that Israel could take the land even though there were many hostile people to overcome (Num. 14:7-9).

E. How were the Apostles able to stand boldly? (Acts 5:29)

1. They had been threatened (4:21). Did they not realize these threats could be carried out? (4:4; 5:40, 33).

2. They did right because it was right, not because it was the easiest, most pleasant course to follow, or because it would make them popular.

F. We may also speak of Stephen.

1. He stood before the Council without regard for his own safety and wellbeing. He preached without compromise (Acts 7).

2. He lost his life (7:56). Stephen was a man of virtue. Then there was Paul (2Cor. 11:22-30). Now that is moral courage and excellence!

G. The supreme example of moral courage and virtue is Jesus Christ.

1. As Jesus went to the cross He was dependent on God (Heb. 2:13).

2. He had the moral courage to lay down His life. Only by so doing could our salvation be possible. His virtue enables & empowers us to be virtuous!

3. *“His moral excellence is embodied in his selfless love whereby he gave his life for sinners and always acted for the benefit in all circumstance.”* (Hamilton, *Truth*,37)

 If we would grow as Christians, if we would be on fire for God, we must seek God’s help in adding moral courage. We can have such virtue by faith in the promises of Christ (Phil. 4:13). Cultivation of virtue and the other qualities in Peter’s Holy Spirit inspired listing ensures our stability (2Pet. 1:11). Will you have the moral courage to confess Christ and obey Him? (Acts 22:16) Are you a person of virtue? Consider that question now as we approach God with a hymn of worship.