**Growing in Grace – Virtue**

*2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-7*

**Introduction**

1. **2 Peter 3:18** – we are commanded to grow in God’s grace.
2. **2 Peter 1:2** – He is seeking to multiply grace to us through the knowledge of Jesus.
   1. Ultimately, that we share in the divine nature **(v. 4).**
   2. This connected with the glory and virtue of Christ that we are called TO **(v. 3).**
   3. Attained through the knowledge of Christ which instructs us in the way of life and godliness **(v. 2).**
   4. Knowledge increased to the bearing of fruit when we supply diligence, and add to our faith the list of virtues **(vv. 5-8).**
3. The first matter to add to our faith is virtue **(v. 5).**
   1. These form an ascending list – they grow out of each other logically.
4. Virtue Defined
5. Virtue – aretē
   1. properly denotes whatever procures preeminent estimation for a person or thing; hence, “intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue,” (VINE)
   2. uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue (BDAG)
   3. (1) a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; (1a) virtue, moral goodness; (2) any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity (THAYER)
   4. properly, manliness (valor), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed) (STRONG)
      1. “In Homer primarily of military valor or exploits, but also of distinction for other personal qualities and associated performance that enhance the common interest.” (BDAG)
      2. A common meaning with the Greeks, more narrow than the general moral excellence – courage, manliness, valor.
   5. Comments:
      1. “All the things which the apostle specifies, unless “knowledge” be an exception, are “virtues” in the sense in which that word is commonly used; and it can hardly be supposed that the apostle here meant to use a general term which would include all of the others. The probability is, therefore, that by the word here he has reference to the common meaning of the Greek word, as referring to manliness, courage, vigor, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected.” (Albert Barnes)
      2. “Courage or fortitude, to enable you to profess the faith before men, in these times of persecution.” (Adam Clarke)
      3. “by *virtue* here we may understand *strength* and *courage,* without which the believer cannot stand up for good works, by abounding and excelling in them.” (Matthew Henry)
      4. “moral excellency; manly, strenuous energy, answering to the *virtue* (energetic excellency) of God.” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown)
      5. “it is Christian manliness and active courage in the good fight of faith.” (Pulpit Commentary)
      6. “The problem of pinning down which trait is most in the mind of the apostle is not easily settled. All in all, the translation of ‘virtue’ or ‘moral excellence’ is probably to be preferred, with the awareness that it is an active, not a passive, quality.” (Oberst)
6. Bible Usage of Aretē (5x)
   1. **Philippians 4:8** – call to meditate on good things, ultimately learned from Paul **(v. 9).**
      1. True, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report – all under the umbrella of “virtue” and “praiseworthy.”
      2. Meditation on anything that is of moral excellence.
   2. **1 Peter 2:9** – proclaiming things of God as His children.
      1. ***“Praises”*** (NKJV); ***“excellencies”*** (ASV; NASB; ESV; YLT)
      2. Praises – i.e. what about that is worthy of praise.
      3. I.e. proclaiming the excellence of God, especially as it pertains to His grace and mercy bestowed on His people.
   3. **2 Peter 1:3** – the “glory and virtue” of Christ who called us.
      1. His glory – ***“as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14***).
      2. His virtue – the manifestation of that glory in the moral excellence of His existence in the flesh.
   4. **2 Peter 1:5** (2x) – what we are to add to our faith.
7. Context – **2 Peter 1**
   1. **(v. 2)** – grace multiplied in the knowledge of Christ.
   2. **(v. 3a)** – supplied all things pertaining to life and godliness.
   3. **(v. 3b)** – ***“called us to his own glory and excellence [virtue]” (ESV***)
   4. **(v. 4)** – promises from the call to partake in the divine nature.
   5. **(v. 5)** – exhortation to grow in grace **(3:18)** by adding to faith.
      1. ***“for this very reason”*** – all that came before.
      2. I.e. because of God’s offer of an increase in grace to partake in the glory and virtue of Christ, i.e. the divine nature.
      3. Also – (**vv. 4b, 9)** – because you have escaped corruption through the cleansing of sins – don’t just remain, or return, but excel.
   6. ***“add to your faith VIRTUE”*** – i.e. the goal of progressing beyond the fundamental answer of faith to the gospel call to the end of that call, partaking in the “glory and virtue” of Christ, “the divine nature,” the spiritual maturity of one imitating Christ in all things.
      1. "Moral rectitude, uprightness of character (considered as being a manifestation of manly vigor)." (Melvin Elliott, “The Language of the King James Bible”)
      2. Inhering in the idea of “moral excellence” is the courage and strength to excel to such and in such ***“in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation”* (Philippians 2:15).**
8. The Goal of Partaking in the Virtue of Christ
9. Not Called to Mediocrity, but Excellency
   1. Imitators of God and Christ – **1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1**
      1. The highest standard being given to follow and measure up to is not to promote a lax approach and effort.
   2. In the title – **Acts 11:26** – disciples called Christians.
      1. Disciple – *mathētēs* – “(2) one who is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views, disciple, adherent” (BDAG)
         1. “A ‘disciple’ was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher” (VINE)
      2. Christian – *christianos* – “’Christian,’ a word formed after the Roman style, signifying an adherent of Jesus” (VINE)
      3. Example – **Acts 4:13** – they had been with Jesus.
   3. **1 John 1:7** – walking in light. (Exclusive, or absolute – v. 5)
   4. **1 John 2:1; 3:6, 9** (word in us) – not to sin.
   5. **1 John 2:6** – walk JUST as He.
   6. **1 John 2:15** – abstinence (totality inhering in the word).
   7. **1 John 3:3** – pure as He.
   8. **1 John 3:16-17** – love as He.
   9. **1 John 3:18** – talk talk, and walk walk.
10. Our goal should be to live in such a way that when people look at us, they don’t see us, but Christ – **Galatians 2:20; Matthew 5:13-16**
11. The Need for Courage to Reach the Goal
12. Implications of Following Jesus
    1. Different:
       1. Eating w/ tax collectors and sinners – **Mark 2:13-17** – not fellowshipping their sin, but teaching them – **v. 17** – call to repentance
       2. Not conforming to human traditions – **Matthew 15:1-2**
       3. Not doing what feels good, but what is right – **Galatians 5:16-17; 1 Peter 4:3-4**
    2. Challenged:
       1. By what authority? – **Matthew 21:23**
       2. Questions about – **Matthew 22:15-17** (Taxes); **Matthew 22:23-28** (Resurrection); **Matthew 22:34-36** (Commandments in the Law)
       3. Ready to give defense – **1 Peter 3:15**
    3. Targeted:
       1. Seeking to destroy Jesus – **Luke 6:11; 19:47-48; 22:2; John 5:16; 11:53**
       2. Expecting persecution – **2 Timothy 3:12**
    4. Hated:
       1. Jesus was hated, and they will hate His disciples – **John 15:18-20**
       2. Hate light, and we are children of light – **John 3:20; Ephesians 5:8**
13. Be Strong and Courageous
    1. Words of encouragement to Joshua in taking Moses’ place as leader of Israel into the promised land – **Joshua 1:6-9**
    2. Add to faith virtue – properly, manliness (valor), i.e. excellence (intrinsic or attributed) (STRONG)
    3. Be brave, be strong – **1 Corinthians 16:13**
       1. ***“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (NASB)***
    4. Paul’s encouragement to Timothy in his preaching efforts – **2 Timothy 1:6-8** – Not fear, but power, love, and sound mind.
    5. Derive courage from the source of our promises, and the expectation to receive them – **Psalm 27:11-14** – WE COURAGEOUSLY LIVE FOR GOD AS WE WAIT ON HIM IN FULFILLMENT OF HIS WORD.
    6. It takes bravery to stand for the Lord always, and to go on increasing in Christ.
    7. Context – **2 Peter 1:5; 2:1-3** – courage to stand against false teachers.

**Conclusion**

1. If we do not aim for being Christ-like in moral excellency, then we will utterly fail to please God.
2. We must have the goal of the virtue with which Christ called us.
3. This goal must be undertaken with great courage, valor, manliness.
4. The call of Christ is not for the faint of heart, and we must overcome the fears that lay ahead the path of following Him.
5. Only then can we grow in the grace of Christ.