



VIRTUE
PART ONE

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And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8For 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. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

The apostle Peter instructs us to give all diligence to add various qualities to our faith. To “give all diligence” means to do something very carefully, with persevering, painstaking effort. So Peter wants us to carefully and perseveringly add certain things to our faith.

But isn't it true that we only have to have faith? Well, we start with faith, but according to these Scriptures, we have to add something to our faith.

Do you have faith? Faith is the ability to trust in God. And if you've been born again, you have that ability, because you've received the gift of faith which now lives in you. As Ephesians 2:8 says, *by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* Faith is not something you struggle to work up. No! It's a gift of God, which is already yours if you are born again. In fact the gift you received, to be exact, was Jesus Christ Himself! He lives in you and He has faith in the Father. Jesus Christ has faith! He trusts in His Father God constantly. He has faith, and He lives in you. So if He lives in you, then you live by the very faith of the Son of God.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) It says, the life I now live in this body, I live **BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD**. In other words, the Son of God has faith, so I live by His faith. Not by my own faith, but by His faith! As always, we depend on Jesus in everything. He's all-sufficient; He's our salvation and our sanctification and He's also our faith! If I'm trusting in God, really it's because Christ within me trusts in God and I'm depending on Christ. So if we're born again, we already have faith, and it's high quality faith, because it's the faith OF the Son of God!

But according to the Scriptures, we mustn't stop there; because **faith without works is dead**. There's no point knowing the will of God if we don't do it. Faith is made perfect, or made complete, by what? By works.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 21Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (James 2:14-23)

**IT'S ONE THING
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So faith without works is dead. Faith is completed and made perfect by works. If we're born again, we already have faith. But we need works also. So we need to add to our faith virtue, and the other things that the apostle Peter mentions so that our faith will be perfected and we'll not be barren or unfruitful in our life in God.

(When we say works, we're not talking about searching around for something or other to do to try to achieve something for God. No. **We're talking about obeying that which God specifically requires of us.** There's an important difference between those two approaches. Our works are only of value if and when we are being guided by the Spirit.)

**GOD
DOESN'T GIVE US
PRE-FORMED
GODLY HABITS.**

Imagine someone gives you a car. The car is ready to take you wherever you need to go. But to make use of the car, you have to get into it, start the engine and begin to drive. If you don't do this, the car is still useable but it won't be of any benefit to you. You have to use it. Your faith is like that car. You already have it, but you have to *walk* in that faith. You have to put it into practice. **You have to choose to live according to your faith in God.**

This is what Peter is talking about when he says we must add virtue to our faith. "Virtue" means to live the way God wants. A virtuous person is someone who lives right. Not just knowing what God wants, but also doing it. So, "**virtue**" means "**the power to act.**" Acting according to what God wants. Taking the initiative and acting according to His will.

For example, imagine that one day my son gets ill. I know I need to take him to the doctor. I could say to myself, "I really ought to take him to the doctor," and leave it at that. Or, I could act according to what I need to do, and take him to the doctor, listen to the doctor's advice, buy the correct medicines, and make sure that we take good care of my son. In that way I'd be acting in virtue, doing what I know needs to be done. In the same way, **it's one thing to know the will of God but it's another to take the initiative and actually do it.**

Who's going to add the virtue to your faith? God? Your Pastor? No. They can't do it for you. You have to do it. When God touches a certain area in your life and begins to show you what He wants in that area, you need to take the initiative to begin to obey Him. And **form a habit of obedience in that area.**

Here's an example. In my adolescence, for three years I had a lot of emotional struggles and I didn't want to eat. For those three years I hardly ate anything, lost a lot of weight and therefore got quite ill. God began to show me that He loves me and that I needed to take care of myself and eat. But I had formed a habit of not eating. So it was difficult for me to begin to eat. At times I wanted to push away the food. So I had to take the initiative to take the food and begin to eat it. Even when it was difficult for me to do so. I had to form the habit of eating normally. I had to choose to obey what God had shown me. It wasn't enough to just know, "God loves me and wants me to take care of myself." No, I had to act on that truth.

When you were first born, did you already know how to get dressed? No, of course not. No-one is born like that; someone had to show you how to do it. You had to learn, and over time you had to form the vitally important habit of getting dressed every morning. Maybe it wasn't easy to learn and form this habit! Perhaps for a while as a child it was difficult to put on your socks. "Oh, how do I do this?" Or perhaps you used to put the buttons of your shirt in the wrong button-holes and it ended up all wrong. It was difficult to learn. You had to concentrate to get it done right. And if you were like a lot of children, sometimes you'd totally forget to get dressed and you'd arrive at breakfast in your pajamas and someone had to remind you, "You're not dressed! Go and get your clothes on!"

Why? Because you weren't born knowing how to get dressed! But the day came when you no longer needed help because you'd correctly formed the habit of taking the initiative and getting dressed yourself every morning. Now you easily do it without a second thought, because the habit is well formed in your life.

Apply this principle to your life with God. When you were born again, God didn't give you pre-formed godly habits. You have to develop them, and that's just not easy at times. It takes diligence. He's put His Spirit in us to show us what He

wants but we have to get into the habit of doing His will. To start with this is difficult. A lot of things try to hinder us.

But our spiritual education is all about forming godly habits, based on the supernatural work of God in our soul. Thank God that He does so many supernatural works in our souls. Thank God. We can't explain everything He does in us. But for certain, it's up to us to take the initiative to obey His voice, to form habits based on His will.

Faith says, "I have God's Spirit and I know what He wants." That's what faith says. Great. From there, virtue says, "Now I'm going to do what He wants." Let's not stop with faith. Let's add virtue.

At times we refuse to do this, out of laziness. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* (Hebrews 6:11-12) Do you want to inherit the promises of God? I do. In which case we need to live by faith and patience and not become lazy in terms of doing what God wants us to. Normally God guides us one step at a time. So, **we need to take the step that God has placed immediately in front of us.** And then, He will give us another step. Rome wasn't built in a day. The same principle applies in our spiritual life. We move forward little by little, and the important thing is to do what He is wants us to, step by step.

So what does He want in our lives? *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* (Micah 6:7-8) We must do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Simple, isn't it? Walking humbly with our God includes opening, and continuing to open, our heart to Him so that He can guide us. Accepting what He tells us.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. (1 Samuel 15:22) If I have something important to say to my children, naturally I want them to pay attention to me. If they were to say to me, "Oh, Dad, instead of listening to you right now, we'd prefer to bake you a cake," how would I respond? "Thanks, but I don't want a cake. I want you to pay attention to me." As the Scriptures say, to obey is better than sacrifice. To hearken, that is, to pay attention, is better than offering sacrifices. We need to pay attention to God and obey Him.

Not too complicated, is it? God simply wants us, as new creations who have the Holy Spirit inside, to pay attention to Him and then to obey Him. So what does He specifically want in your life? It's very possible that you know the answer to that question. Perhaps you don't know what He wants from you a year from now, but really you know what He wants from you at this point in your life. If you don't know what He wants in your life now, and you want to know, He can be trusted to show you clearly.

What step does He want you to take? If you know, what should you do now? Do it! Do it trusting that He's with you and that He will help you. We have to take the initiative and act. I've learnt that whenever God shows me something He wants in my life, I always have to add virtue and choose to act on what He has shown me.

It's difficult to begin to form new habits. **New habits of believing, new habits of thought, new habits of behavior.** For example, perhaps faced with some kind of problem, you tend to think in your heart, "God isn't with me in this. He's just not interested," or "He's abandoned me." But God wants you to form a new habit; that of responding to your problems like this, "God, You're always with me. Sooner or later we'll come through this, rejoicing in Your victory." So, for example a problem arises and you begin to accept the idea that God isn't with you. But you remember what God says about that and you choose to trust Him. Trusting is difficult at first because your emotions, your circumstances and your mind all discourage you from trusting. But each time you choose to trust in Him, you are forming a little more of that godly habit in your life. And you know what? Over time, the habit will be well formed in your life and without even thinking about it, you'll react according to the Word of God. And so you'll walk in more peace and strength in your heart.

**FAITH SAYS, "I
HAVE GOD'S
SPIRIT AND I
KNOW WHAT HE
WANTS."**

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge. Notice the order: faith, then virtue, then knowledge. . It's very important not to waver in obeying what God has spoken to us. But at times we do waver, because we want the knowledge before we add the virtue. We say to ourselves, "I don't know. I'm just not sure about this. I don't know if I'm going to do this or not. I just don't know." **We don't act with confidence because we want more understanding before we're willing to obey.**

For example, God called Steve to live and minister in Honduras. Even though he'd visited before so he had an idea of what life was like here, in many ways when God spoke to him he lacked understanding about what it would really involve for him. But God had shown him His will, "Steve, I want you to be in Honduras." So he came without having full understanding in some areas. By faith, in his heart he heard God's voice, and he acted in virtue, *doing* what God had put in his heart. Later, once he had obeyed God, he got more understanding. But at times we want more understanding before we're willing to obey. We want to be able to understand and explain logically what God says to us before obeying. But remember the order; **first faith, then virtue, and then knowledge**. Obey God first, and later He'll give you the appropriate knowledge. At times I've made mistakes because I've sought too much understanding before simply acting on what God wants.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8) What does it mean to be double-minded? To be wavering. To have a divided heart and mind, hesitating between different opinions. Obviously there is a time to be careful, a time to seek God's will, but **once He has spoken to us, we need to act**. We needn't be double-minded. The double-minded man is someone who wants above all to be "prudent, discreet and circumspect." It's not wrong to be prudent. But **it is wrong when our "prudence" hinders us from obeying God.**

"A double minded man," i.e. a discreet man, diplomatic and wise—"is unstable in all his ways." The man who does not put God first in his calculations is always double minded. "If I do," "Supposing," and "But"—these are all in the vocabulary of the double minded man. If we begin to weigh things, we let in that subtle enemy against God, viz., insinuation. When God speaks we have to be resolute and act immediately in faith on what He says. When Peter walked on the water, he did not wait for someone to take his hand; he stepped straight out, in recognition of Jesus, and walked on the water. (Oswald Chambers, from "Our Brilliant Heritage")

God showed Steve that he needed to move to Honduras, and he decided, "Yes, I'll do it..." If he'd then sat down and weighed the pros and cons, perhaps doubt and confusion would have entered his heart because he wouldn't have been simply acting on what God had clearly shown him. Peter walked on the water until he began to weigh the pros and cons. Then he saw the storm and began to think, "My God, perhaps I'm going to sink," and focused on this, he did begin to sink. But **at first he acted in faith, with virtue, because he saw Jesus; that's how he did the impossible.**

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (2 Peter 1:6-7)

That's all for today. We haven't talked about temperance (self control), about patience, about godliness, about brotherly kindness. Note that (charity) is the last quality on the list here. This implies that if we truly want to walk in true, mature love, we have to possess and develop the other things that are listed. Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness. There's a lot to think about in this. However, for now let's focus on virtue. The power to act. Take the initiative, and form habits based on God's will and His Word. Even though your circumstances, your emotions and your mind may scream for you to pay attention to them, have the courage to add virtue to your faith and to think and act according to what God wants. *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.* (2 Peter 1:8) Amen.

**VIRTUE SAYS,
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