

Quality Faith: Virtue

Last week I started a series on Quality Faith. I talked about how we can have good faith and bad faith. We can have faith in many things.

Faith is simply a belief, confidence or trust in something or someone. Faith does not always pertain to God.

What we place our faith in (beliefs, confidence, trust) has an incredible impact on our lives.

There is a biblical principle “believe and receive”. Joyce Meyer says if you walk around complaining how you are sick and tired of this and sick and tired of that.....don't be surprised when you become sick.....and tired.....

We must believe in God's promises, not in our circumstances. We have faith whether good or bad, but we need to have quality faith!

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT)

11 Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

Does faith in God mean that nothing bad will ever happen? No, but it does mean that you have confidence and trust that He can work in your situation, no matter how impossible it may seem.

Faith is what saves us! Faith in Jesus saves you eternally. But faith in the promises of God will save you continuously.

It will save you from depression, condemnation, despair, hopelessness, you name it. Trust God. Trust Him, it's the answer to every problem!

PRAY

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NKJV)

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,
3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

So by His divine power Jesus has given us ALL THINGS that pertain to life and godliness.

It's by His power, He has extended to us His grace and grants us the faith that we have.

Do you realize you only have faith in Jesus because He granted it to you in the first place? Think about that sometime, it will about make your head spin.

But it's buy that divine power, grace, and faith, that we are able to hold fast to His exceedingly great and precious promises! So.....

2 Peter 1:5-9 (NKJV)

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Because of the blessings of God, because of His promises, give all diligence....

Diligence is having an urgency, seriously and thoughtfully giving maximum effort.

What are we to give this maximum effort toward? adding these godly characteristics to our faith! Add to your faith, virtue! That is what we're going to focus on this week. Adding virtue!

Now keep in mind, it starts with faith! If you don't have faith in Christ for salvation, in God's promises for this life, then you are not adding these characteristics to faith

And if they are not added to faith, they are worthless in the scope of eternity!

Why is virtue so important, what does it mean, why is it such a valuable characteristic?

It includes integrity, honesty, compassion, and love and this is the substance of what biblical character (that is right standards, strength, courage, modesty, and purity all done in excellence) is to be. We acquire Virtue by our faith, our obedience to Christ, being persistent in Him.

*Virtue sets a Christian apart from the world.

"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point." — C.S. Lewis

Ture virtue represents a moral excellence that is judged against the Word of God, and only the Word of God....not your friends, not the media, not your own mind....

Just because someone is considered a good person according to the standard set by the world, that does not mean they measure up to the Word of God.

Virtue is moral excellence, that is a level of morality that is superior, better, higher. Does this mean you are better than other people? NO

You aren't better than anyone else, seriously. You don't have "better" morals than other people.

"Good and great are seldom in the same man." — Winston Churchill

Moral excellence is living by a different standard or a higher way of life....God's way!

His way is superior! My way is not better than your way, your way is not better than your neighbor's way. They are all inferior and subpar. Only God's way is excellent!

Jesus is the standard! Right now, in your mind, in your heart, you need to make a decision, every standard that you have set, does it line up with the Word of God. If it doesn't, it's a standard that is subpar. You need to submit to the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Virtue is filtering every decision through the Word of God (not just the difficult ones), then act based on the standards of the Lord!

God sets the standard for virtue....He has given us ALL THINGS that pertain to life and godliness.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Virtue must rely on Jesus, not the wisdom of man

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

There it is again.....the power of God. It's by that very power (the message of the cross) that we are granted grace and faith, promises and life!

In a society of rebels, people who are selfish, who seek only to obtain more and never to give, we see a society of people who do not want virtue. Instead we see a society that wants to define their own morals. They want to decide what is right, because they don't want to stop sinning!

So in that respect, people don't want virtue. They don't want moral excellence....

But at the same time, people DO want virtue. Let me clarify.

If you are dishonest, people get hurt.

If a husband or wife is unfaithful, their spouse gets upset.

If you promise to do something and then don't you are deemed irresponsible.
If you slack off at work people think you are lazy.
If a person doesn't care for their children, they are seen as a deadbeat dad or mom.

See our society knows virtue. But our society just doesn't like the responsibility part of virtue.
People don't want to be constrained by rules!

Virtue is moral excellence, the standard is the bible.

But people want to separate performance and values. You can see this in the public's view of President Bill Clinton.

Our society gave him one of the highest approval ratings in the history of this country, yet his behavior during his presidency was one of the most irresponsible and shameful in the history of this country.

You can't separate performance and values.

Colossians 3:17 (NKJV)

17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

This means to act consistently with who Jesus is and what Jesus wants!

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Our behavior is to be conducted in a way that honors God!

Virtue is more than just doing the right thing when it is convenient. It means having the fortitude to make right decisions in every area of life, regardless of opposition from outside influences.

For the Christian, those decisions are based on their knowledge of the Word and their desire to live a life pleasing to God.

In Proverbs 31 Solomon states the value of virtue.....

Proverbs 31:10 (NKJV)

10 Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth is far above rubies.

It's not that you can't find a virtuous wife, but they aren't easy to find. There aren't many! This certainly does not only pertain to women. Virtuous people are hard to find!

Peter writes that in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

This pattern repeats itself throughout history. Virtuous people are hard to find. One would think they'd be easy to find on a Sunday morning but stumbling into any church in the world, however that's not the case.

Solomon says that virtue is more valuable than worldly wealth. A virtuous life results in eternal life, the wealth of this world is temporary....

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If Jesus is our treasure and our heart is with Jesus, would we not produce virtue? Virtue is the first thing we are instructed to add to our faith...

add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

I don't think it is coincidence that virtue is the first thing you add to faith. If you have faith in Jesus, the first characteristic you should see as a fruit of that is virtue.

I'm not saying instant perfection, but an instant desire to live as He lived. An instant desire to get sin out and to live as He desires for you to live.

We pray "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"

We need mothers and fathers with virtue, moral excellence. We need children being taught virtue, not only in word but in deed. Parents need to practice what they preach.

Christians need to have virtue, enough compromise!

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Character and conduct begin in our mind. Our actions are affected by our thoughts, what we meditate on.

Concentrate on God's Word, think about God's Word, it will result in virtue.....

2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV)

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If we do these things, beginning with add to your faith, virtue, we will never stumble.

That's when we stumble, when we lack faith, when we lack virtue. Peter tells us the key, it starts with a knowledge of God. The Word. The Word is the standard, if you don't have a knowledge of the Word, how can you have virtue!

Read your bible, talk about it with others, go to Sunday school, or men's group on Saturday morning, or a women's gathering.

"To be proud of virtue, is to poison yourself with the Antidote." — Benjamin Franklin

But we must never forget the source....ultimately virtue is possessed by God Himself. That is why Jesus is the standard, He IS moral excellence, He didn't just write the book on it....HE IS THE BOOK!

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

God who is perfect couldn't set a standard that was any less. So the standard is impossible to obtain, there is no way to do it yourself.

I know some are thinking....Wow, thanks for the encouragement pastor!

But there is good news....Jesus Christ met this standard on your behalf!

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When we put our faith in Him by the grace of God we may be saved, and then virtue may be produced in our lives!

Glory to Jesus!