

UPON THE ROCK

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VIRTUE

Tom McLemore

“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with *virtue...*” (2 Peter 1:5).

What is the meaning of the term translated “virtue” (Greek *orate*)? There are several nuances of the meaning reflected in its use in classical Greek: eminence, merit manliness, martial valor, praise, and glory. The common element in all these ideas is *excellence*. But, what is excellent? Of course, the idea of excellence is relative to the recognized standard. No doubt, for many people of the Greco-Roman world, the standard of excellence would have been some of the pagan gods, along with the heroes immortalized in history, epic poetry, and drama.

However, Peter directs attention to the true and highest standard for *orate*. In I Peter 2:9, he writes of the excellence of God: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds (*tas aretas*) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” As one studies the Old and New Testaments, one is impressed with the steadfast love, holiness, faithfulness, mercy, and justice which produced God’s mighty acts in the religious history. The zenith of God’s excellencies is reached in his gracious and loving work of salvation in Christ. Every trait of God which may be noted in his dealings with men is part of the excellence to which Christians are summoned.

In 2 Peter 1:3, the author states that: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (*arete*).” Thus, the virtue or excellence to which we are summoned is also that which the Lord Jesus Christ manifested in his life upon earth. In general terms, *orate* is “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13) and includes the mind, meekness, gentleness, affection, steadfastness, love, faithfulness, reverence, obedience, and etc. of Jesus Christ (see Philippians 2:5; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Philippians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Ephesians 3:19; 5:2, 25; Hebrews 3:6; 5:7, 8; 10:7, 9). When God “brings the first-born into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’” (Hebrews 1:6). He “received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” (2 Peter 1:17; Matthew 3:17; 17:5). “He has done all things well” (Mark 7:37). He “reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent (*diaphorCteron*) than theirs” (Hebrews 1:3, 4). Therefore, to know God and Christ (to have “knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,” 2 Peter 1:3, 4) is to possess a full and complete definition of *orate*. In light of this declaration, the goal of attaining virtue is to be more and more like God and Christ in this present age.

In the text, virtue is recommended as a supplement to faith. What is the relationship between virtue and faith? Suffice it to observe in this study that Peter, in several passages, declares the importance of faith. Christians “by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). Genuine faith is “more precious than gold,” and when it passes the test, it will redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7). “As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9). “Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:21). By firm faith one is to resist the adversary. (1 Peter 5:9). “And without faith it is

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impossible to please him..." (Hebrews 11:6). Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

And yet, more than faith is required in order for us to be partakers of the divine nature. Those who believe must also become! Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:20, 26), faith without virtue is deficient! Christians are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). As indispensable as faith is, without virtue (and all the other items in 2 Peter 1:5-7), a believer will not succeed in pleasing God. He will be ineffective and unfruitful in the service of God, despite his faith. Alone, faith cannot establish the believer's likeness to the one in whom he believes. Faith must be supplemented by virtue.

How may we go about gaining the virtue which supplements faith? According to the text, acquiring virtue involves strenuous effort. What steps should be taken? According to Peter, the attainment of virtue is via a sincere and diligent study of the excellence of Christ and the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. This necessitates much time in the scriptures used in observing and meditating upon what is revealed concerning the glory and excellence of the Father and the Son. In Philippians 4:8, Paul urges: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence (*arete*), if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

But more than study and reflection is required. Paul taught that one must endeavor each day to put into practice the excellencies of which one learns in the study of God and Christ. The saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent (*kala*) and profitable to men" (Titus 3:8). "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent (ta *diapheronta*), and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

What motivates one to supplement his faith with virtue? Heaven is an eternal abode prepared for human beings who, through sanctification, are suited for eternal life and have become like those who already dwell there, viz., the Father, the Son, and the elect, faithful angels. If we desire that inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us, we will earnestly seek to take upon ourselves, as much as possible, the nature and excellence of the ones who invite us to live there eternally. Until we are conformed to the image of God's son, the kingdom will not be ours. We have been blessed with a tremendous privilege—the opportunity to become partakers of the divine nature. We have been enabled to escape the corruption that is in the world because of passion. We have been given God's great and very precious promises, and we know that he is able to perform what he has promised because of his divine power.

Surely, only the greatest spiritual blindness and the grossest ingratitude would lead one to resist the call to supplement faith with virtue! A desire to live with God eternally and a lack of desire to be like him are incompatible! On the other hand, the greatest source of confidence that one is indeed called and chosen by God in Christ and that one may successfully live the Christian life without falling is an unflagging zeal to make the virtue of the Father and the Son one's own. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). With these things in mind, with Christ's great and precious promises in our hearts, and with God's help, let us get busy supplementing our faith with virtue!

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Diligence in Living the Christian Life: Knowledge

When I was a little boy I would watch the cartoon *G.I. Joe* every morning. The show would always end with some type of moral lesson.

love Him is to do what He says for us to do. (John 14:15; John 15:14; I John 5:2-3).

I John 1:5-7 teaches that if we "...walk in the light..." we will have fellowship one with another. That is, we will have fellowship with God and with Jesus, and with all who have fellowship with God and with Jesus. But, what if you continue walking in the light (according to God's Word) and I stop walking after the Truth...after His commandments? Well, if I stop walking in the light, my fellowship with God is severed ... I no longer "have God" (John 9: Compare Isaiah 59:1-2) ... and since my fellowship with God is severed, my fellowship with all who are in fellowship with God is severed as well. There can be no unity where there is no agreement in the Truth. (Amos 3:3).

OUR SINCERE PLEA

The sincere plea of churches of Christ if for unity based upon agreement about what the Bible teaches. We love God...we love Jesus the Christ...we love the church of Christ...we love the Bible, that "light" which guides us...and we love YOU! We want YOU to come to a knowledge of the Truth so that you can be saved. ([Timothy 2:4; Compare again John 8:31-3]). The Lord is not willing that you should perish, but that you should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3). Please let us know how we may be of service to you in these most important matters of the soul. Contact us to know more about the salvation of your soul. We are here to serve you in these matters!

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"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4:11).

Now it becomes clearer, doesn't it? That which we are to speak the same...in order to attain and in order to maintain unity...is "...the oracles of God...". — The Holy Bible! You see, if you speak like the Bible teaches...and I speak like the Bible teaches...we will be speaking the same thing, and, according to the inspired apostle Paul, we will be ONE; there will be ". . . no divisions among us..." (By the way, how many divisions is "no divisions"?) But...if you continue to speak as the oracles of God, and I begin to teach from a man-made creed, or manual, or catechism, or discipline book, or confession of faith...etc., (or just my "think so") I will be the one causing the division for I will have then "departed from the faith," and if I do this I am no longer "abiding in the doctrine of Christ" Timothy 4:1-3; 2 John 9-11), but I am abiding in some man's writings and doctrine. Peter says that if we ". . .speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11), it is God who gets the glory. Well, what if we speak as the oracles of Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley, or Spurgeon? Who gets the glory then?

This principle is stated clearly again at 1 John 1:5–2:6. Take a minute now and read those 12 verses. The "light" is of course the Way of God. It is what the Lord referred to as the "strait gate" and the "narrow way" (Matthew 7:13-15). This Way is indeed a lighted way, for it is by the Word of God that we are directed to it, and onto it. The Psalmist wrote, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalms 119:104-105).

We are to ". . . walk in the light as He is in the light..." This simply means that we are to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). It means that we are to continue in His Word so that we can be disciples indeed; so that we can be made free by the Truth. (John 8:31-32). It means that we are to walk in Truth; to walk after His commandments. (2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3, 4). In fact, the only way we can know that we know Him is to keep His commandments. (1 John 2:3-6; Compare Hebrews 5:8-9). The way we show the Lord that we

After teaching the children about the dangers of smoking or drugs, or how to overcome peer pressure, the main character would always say, "Now you know, and knowing is half the baffle." I will admit that although the phrase stuck in my mind (I remember it nearly twenty years later), I never really comprehended what it meant until I began studying for the subject of this article. When it comes to living faithfully as a Christian, knowing is half the battle. Simply put, we cannot do what we do not know.

Before I can live faithfully as a Christian, I must first become a Christian. However, I cannot even become a Christian without knowledge of Christ. How many people are not Christians because they know nothing about the risen Savior? "Without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6) and "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Paul rhetorically asked, "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). The answer is that they cannot. Think about it this way, the reason many people have yet to obey the Gospel is because they do not KNOW about Jesus. Without knowledge of the Gospel they have absolutely no hope for salvation, even if they are zealous in doing good (Romans 1:16; 10:1-2; Acts 10:2,22; 11:14).

But what about those of us who have heard, believed and obeyed the Gospel? For us knowing is half the baffle as well. There is a "blueprint for faithfulness in 1 Peter 1:5-10," 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." After becoming a Christian it is necessary for us to add these things to ensure our faithfulness. We have the assurance that if we do these things we will never fall. Would we not be in a sad and dangerous condition if we did not KNOW these things. Without the knowledge of

these “Christian graces” we might not know how to make sure we remain faithful. This is why we have been given the charge to “study to show thyself approved unto God’ (II Timothy 2:15). Keep in mind it was the Bereans knowledge of the Scriptures that made them noble and commendable (Acts 17:11).

It is interesting to note the things proceeding and following knowledge, as recorded in II Peter 1. The fundamentals of Christianity are faith and virtue (moral uprightness). When faith is produced in the heart of a sinner his desire is to change his way of living/repent It is by faith that he abandons a life of sin (Ephesians 3:16-21) and begin to live for Christ. No longer does he seek to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but to produce the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:19-26). His next step is to grow in knowledge (II Peter 3:18), which is a command. Paul struggled with carnally minded Christians because they did not grow in knowledge. Why they should have been teachers they were in need of being taught (Hebrews 5:12-14). They were spiritually immature, babes in Christ, Christians in diapers because they did not seek to grow in KNOWLEDGE. If a Christian refuses to add knowledge to their faith and virtue, they will not be able to add self control (temperance), patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. If they do not add these things they cannot be assured of their salvation or confident they will not fall. It is a shame for a Christian to not have a proper knowledge of God and godly things (I Corinthians 15:34).

Keep in mind knowing is only “half the baffle.” The other half is doing. Just as I cannot do what I do not know, it does me no good to know and not do. Paul warned about those who were “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3:7). It appears their problem was not that they did not know, but that despite knowing they were not willing to obey. Some have known and then turned away from the truth, to which Peter says, “it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them (II Peter 2:21). With knowledge comes responsibility and obligation.

Through knowledge of Jesus we are able to escape the pollutions of the world (II Peter 2:20). Through the knowledge of the Scriptures we

How is this unity in Christ to be had? Can we all understand the Bible alike? The fact is, if we understand the Bible *at all* we will all understand it alike. The fact that some do not understand it alike is proof only that some misunderstand it! The Word says, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (I Corinthians 1:10-13).*”

The church at Corinth was a divided church. This is contrary to the Lord’s prayer in John 17:20-21, of course. Some had sectarian spirits...wanting to follow after men rather than the Lord. Paul’s inspired, rhetorical questions make strong arguments against such an attitude. Christ is not divided, so why are you dividing.. .Paul was not crucified for you, so why are you following Paul.. .You were not baptized in Paul’s name. ..or by Paul’s authority.. .so stop following Paul... Of course, the apostle later does admonish these same Corinthians to follow him, but ONLY as he followed Christ (I Corinthians 11:1). He did not want them to be “*Paulites*” or “*Paulinians*”. He wanted them to be Christians!

The apostle is very strong in his language to this divided and drifting church, He said that they should all speak the same thing...have the same mind and the same judgment...and the end result would be “*...no divisions among you...*”.

Simple, isn’t it? All that we have to do in order to attain and to maintain the unity that Jesus the Christ prayed for is to think and speak the same thing. Can we do this? Well, heaven says we can, so if a man comes along and says we cannot do this...HE’S WRONG!!! God says we can and must “. . .speak the same thing...”!

Well, what is it that we are to speak the same in order to attain and in order to maintain the unity that our Lord prayed for? Peter wrote,

Is New Life In Christ Like New Life in Sports, Politics, etc.?

We have reviewed the implications of New Life (Newness of Life) as used in Romans 6 and related passages. In the outset, questions were posed as to whether or not New Life is similar to the new life gained by an organ transplant recipient, or an inspired sports team, or a rejuvenated old town. Or, to put it another way, to what might we liken New Life?

I have a friend and his wife who are professional real estate appraisers. In talking with them, part of the process that they follow when they appraise a piece of property is the obtaining of what they call “comparables.” They research recent property sales in the area of the property to be appraised and make appropriate adjustments to determine an appraised value for the property of interest.

This is a good and accepted process for real estate. However, when it comes to New Life, there are no comparables! There is nothing to which New Life compares, or, to frame it as Jesus did, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

HOW MAY WE ATTAIN THE UNITY THE LORD PRAYED FOR, AND HOW MAY WE MAINTAIN IT?

By James E. Farley

That which may truly be called “*The Lord’s Prayer*” is found in [John 17](#). In this beautiful prayer, our Lord prayed for Himself and for His apostles. Then He prayed for all who would believe on Him through the words of the apostles. (John [17:20-21](#)). That is, all who read, understand, and believe the New Testament (Compare [John 14:26](#); [John 16:13-14](#); [Ephesians 3:3-5](#)). He prayed for you and for me. Specifically, He prayed that all who believe would be *ONE*. The reason for this one-ness is so that the world may believe that Jesus is who He says He is! Therefore, we can know that denominational division is certainly that which contributes to infidelity and atheism!!!

are able to be wise unto salvation (II Timothy 3:15). Grace and peace are multiplied through knowledge (II Peter 1:2). The knowledge of Christ is worth anything you must sacrifice to attain it (Philippians 3:8).

Knowledge is too often the “missing link” between a Christian remaining a babe in Christ and “going on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). “Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction” (Proverbs 10:14).

TEMPERANCE

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.” (Proverbs 25:28) The picture in this striking passage is of a city that is defenseless against its enemies because there is nothing to restrain them. Such describes many people. They have nothing to protect them from the ravages of life because they have nothing to restrain them. They have no temperance or self-control.

Ahasuerus, king of ancient Persia, once threw a party for some of his highest officials. During the six months this party lasted he decreed “that they should do according to every man’s pleasure.” (Esther 1:8) This philosophy drives too many people. “If it feels good, do it,” “I want WHAT I want WHEN I want it! Don’t tell me I have to wait. I have the right to have it now, and somebody better see to it that I get it, or I will sue because my rights have been violated. I deserve happiness, and that means doing whatever I want, whenever I want. Don’t tell me it’s dangerous. Fix it so it isn’t. Don’t tell me it hurts others, I deserve to be happy.” And somehow, the selfishness of this attitude is lost on them, Some even praise the “self-assertiveness” of such thinking. Too many are like the lazy people of Amos’ day. They “lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David: that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” (Amos 6:4-6) These lazy people lie around all day

gorging themselves on fine foods, listening to music, and bathing themselves in precious perfumes and ointment, while feeling no concern for the suffering going on around them. They are totally self-absorbed, and feel they should be deprived of nothing they desire. After all they have their rights. They are entitled to these things.

Into the midst of an overindulgent, intemperate society Christ brings a message of self-restraint and self-mastery. He demands that we not let our desires run wild, but that we restrain them for our own good. He told the story of a young man who took every thing he had and wasted it with “riotous living”, only to end up craving pig slop. (Luke 15:11-16) He showed the tragic circumstances of a man who “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day”, but eventually found himself in eternal torment. (Luke 16:19-31)

The apostle Paul calls for us to learn and practice self-restraint in every aspect of our lives. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.* (Emphasis mine, PLG) Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore, so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) Paul reminds that we have a responsibility to learn temperance or self-control, and bring our bodies under that control if we are to “strive for the mastery”. Failure to do this will result in our being cast away.

Paul further said, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” (2 Timothy 2:3-5) Those who strive to please God must practice the temperance (self-control) that is required of a soldier who wants to be faithful to his duty. We must not indulge ourselves unduly in the pleasures of the world, lest we forget our primary purpose.

his day, Paul wrote, “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:18). The slave Paul speaks of voluntarily and permanently agrees to serve another; God through Christ in this case.

The End of New Life

“End” as used here means final design or objective, not termination. What is the final design of New Life? Let Paul answer the question. “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:22-23). The end of New Life is eternal life (Note: There is no difference in the expressions everlasting life and eternal life). The objective of entrance into Christ is eternal life. The end is not the beginning. The end is achieved by and through the processes that Paul identified and that have been summarized in this article. Eternal life (i.e. eternal blessed rewards) is not a possession at the time of entrance into Christ; it is a promise to those who persevere in faith and obedience to Christ.

Hear the grand apostle as he neared the end (termination) of his physical life and the end (objective) of his spiritual life. “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Again, he wrote, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

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must be found “in Christ,” the place where New Life exists. To be in Christ, we must determine how to get into Christ. If one wants to be in a room, or in a store, or in a town, he/she must find the way to the location, then into it. Just finding it isn’t enough. A person may find a house but not be able to gain access. To be **in** a place, one must come **to** the place and then come **into** the place. So it is with Christ; just knowing where He is isn’t enough. To have New Life, we must get **into** Christ.

Search as you may in reliable biblical translations and you will find one and only one way to get **into** Christ. And, there are only 2 verses in all of God’s Book that tell how that is done. Read them both (emphasis mine – JB): “Or do you not know that as many of us as were **baptized into Christ** Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3). “For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27). God’s Global Positioning System tells anyone and everyone who desires to be **in Christ** what they must do to get **into Christ**. To be in Christ you must be baptized into Christ!

The Responsibilities of New Life — Stop, Assess & Go

First, we are to **stop** —living in sin, that is. This simply means that we are not to continue in the habitual practice of sin. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1-2). New righteous objectives replace old carnal affections.

Secondly, we are to **assess** our new and living relationship to God in Christ. “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:11). Note the key phrase in this verse — “reckon yourselves.” To reckon simply means to reason, to think or to account. Hence, the apostle instructs us to properly assess our new relationship to God in as much as we are alive to God and dead to sin. God is the source and direction of the New Life.

In the third place, we are to **go** — go about achieving the work that God wants us to do. We are no longer our own, rather we are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In a figure especially relevant in

Temperance is one of the qualities the Holy Spirit wants to develop in the life of the Christian. (Galatians 5:23) He wants to work in our lives, through the Word of God, to make us more self-controlled. Like the other aspects of the “fruit of the Spirit” this will happen over time, if we allow the Word to work in our lives. So what is this “self-control” or “temperance” that the Spirit wants us to learn?

Self-control literally means “to hold one’s self in”. It is mastery of self. It is learning to tell ourselves, “You may not do everything you want to do. There are things that are harmful to you and others, and as pleasant as they may be, they are off limits.” The one who truly wants to please God is not governed strictly by what he wants to do. He will not listen to Satan’s lies about that being the way to happiness and purpose in living. He will understand that self-indulgence often leads to sin, and that separates him from God. (Isaiah 59:1-2) He will choose to deprive himself of things he should not be doing anyway. Self-control also means telling ourselves, “You must do things you do not want to do.” Sometimes the problem is not restraining wrong desires, but motivating ourselves to do what we ought to do. Failing to do right is just as sinful as doing wrong. (James 4:17) Learning to be a “self-starter” can be one of the most difficult things we have to do. It means meeting our responsibilities when we would rather be playing golf or going fishing. It means putting money in the bank when we would rather spend it on something we want. It is doing the right thing even though we prefer not to.

Self-control means learning to think of others ahead of ourselves. A lack of self-control usually stems from selfishness. It is putting self ahead of everyone and everything else. But the one who wants to please God will learn to deny himself for the benefit of others. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Philippians 2:4)

Self-control means learning the difference between “cannot” and “will not.” Often we say we cannot do something, when we really mean we will not do something. We just do not want to practice the self-control necessary. Is it, “I cannot quit smoking” or more honestly, “I will not quit smoking.”? “I cannot control my temper” really means “I will not control my temper.” “I cannot control my tongue” is more accurately,

“I will not control my tongue.” These are not easy, but not impossible. And they must be done if we are to please God.

Temperance (self-control) should be a growing quality in the life of all who want to please God, “And add to your. ..knowledge temperance.” (2 Peter 1:5-6)

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PATIENCE

II PETER 1:5-11
Larry G. Reynolds

The apostle Peter writes a second letter to encourage Christians to grow in grace and knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (II Peter 3:18). The reason he wants them to grow in knowledge is because that grace and peace are multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (II Peter 1:2). Peter then shows what growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves (II Peter 1:5-7). It involves the development of seven graces, which are: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Each grace is necessary and must be developed in conjunction with the other. As you read these graces you will notice that each one is to be added to the previous attribute. This suggests the idea of each grace working in harmony with the others to produce an overall effect. We cannot be selective and just pick the ones we like and leave others behind.

In this article we will discuss the attribute PATIENCE. It is used twenty-six times in the New Testament. Vincent defines patience as “Not merely endurance of the inevitable but the heroic brave patience with which a Christian not only bears but also contends” (Word Studies, Vol.1. p.679). Vine says the Greek term means, “to bear patiently, endure” (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words p.168). The challenge that Peter sets before us is to add patience to our character, which helps to develop a godly character out of devotion to God.

the words of Peter: “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” (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Revelations from Romans (7 of 12) The Revelation of Newness of Life in Christ (Romans 6)

Jim Bullington

“New life” - the phrase is intriguing. I’ve heard the recipients of organ transplants speak of new life following their operations. Sports teams get new life when they suddenly are motivated by a great play or series of plays. A declining town gets new life when a fresh administration with progressive ideas takes over the government. Are any of these akin to the new life about which Paul wrote? “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4).

The Place of New Life is a Spiritual Location

Place speaks of location. Many newer cars have Global Positioning Systems. These are marvelous systems that can direct the traveler from point A to point B with pinpoint accuracy. The entire system depends upon a complex set of physical coordinates and a monitoring system (satellite) to detect and report movement of the automobile. However, physical coordinates cannot describe the place of New Life. That’s because New Life isn’t located in a physical place. It is not in Rome or Salt Lake City; neither is it in Jerusalem nor Mecca. Rather, New Life is in Christ Jesus, a spiritual location.

In the same context cited previously, Paul writes, “... reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:11). Therefore, if we are to have New Life, we

day to day walk among men and before Him we may be found “blameless, harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke” (Philippians 2:15). God revealed the truth unto men, that we may grow ever closer to Him by seeking, knowing, and following His will [truth which is after, or toward, godliness] (Titus 1:1). It is by means of the word of God that man is provided with the knowledge necessary to live as God would have him to live (2 Peter 1:3).

Godliness is an attitude which shapes conduct. It must ever be guarded against the cares, the worries, the sinful thoughts and the selfish motives which are so characteristic of this world. Godliness is something which we must follow after (1 Timothy 6:11). We must heed the advice of Paul when he wrote, “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7). Godliness requires great effort on our part. It requires that we humble ourselves, resigning our will to His. Growing in godliness is a lifelong commitment. The effort we put forth will be well rewarded. Recall again the words of Paul, “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). The child of God who has committed himself to living a godly life will find contentment in any circumstance this life may put before him, for he knows that the only matter of true importance in this life is being right with God (1 Timothy 6:6). Herein is one of the rewards of godliness in this life. However, the far greater reward for the godly is eternal life in heaven. This makes all the effort, all the struggle, all the persecution worth whatever small price we are called upon by our Lord to make.

As Christians, we must determine to live godly lives in this world so that we may spend eternity with Him Who is the object of our reverence, our affection, our devotion, and our love. In view of that last great day, Peter poses a very important question, “[W]hat manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11)? The question is already answered for us—our lives must be holy and godly if we are to enjoy the eternal bliss of heaven. Those who refuse to grow in godliness will face God in the judgment unprepared, as the psalmist declares, “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand [withstand, PM] in the judgment” (Psalm 1:5). If we are not growing in godliness, then soon selfishness and pride will dethrone God in our hearts, and no longer will He rule in our lives. Let us heed

The ultimate challenge is to grow as a Christian and become more like Christ. Failure to grow will cause us to be shortsighted and not become all that God wants us to be. James wrote, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4). The writer of Hebrews knew what the faith-weakened Christians needed when he wrote, “For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36). You will also notice in the New Testament that prayer and hope are often joined with patience. “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;” (Romans 12:12). “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Peter joins patience with virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. Paul in Romans 5:3, joins patience with, tribulation, experience, and hope. Each one of these attributes is dependent on the other, but without the patient determination to endure to the end the prize of heaven will be missed. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7,8). What great companions patience has in the New Testament Scriptures.

Patience is demonstrated in the Old Testament in the lives of the Patriarchs and Prophets. David wrote, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1). James spoke about the Old Testament prophets as “an example of suffering affliction, and of patience (James 5:10). The New Testament speaks of Jesus commending churches because of their patience (Revelation 2:2,3,19). But perhaps the finest example exhibited of patience is the life of Job. He was a healthy, wealthy, devoted family man. It is said that he was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and shunned evil (Job 1:1). Unknown to Job or any of his friends, God had granted Satan permission to try the patience of Job. His wealth was taken, his children are tragically taken, his wife encourages him to curse God, and he lost honor among his friends. He endured all of Satan’s tribulations and remained faithful to God. The latter end of

Job's life sees him receiving a double portion of blessings, which rewarded his patience. Job eventually died, but thousands of years later James wrote about his patience. "Behold, we count them happy which endure, Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). When we grow in patience it will help us be all that God wants us to be and receive the promise of heaven.

GODLINESS

Patrick Morrison

Godliness is one of the Christian graces about which Peter instructs Christians to grow and mature (2 Peter 1:5-11). It is one of the qualities of Christian living which should epitomize the child of God. These qualities or characteristics are built upon one another such that one cannot proceed to the next until he has in a sense mastered the preceding quality. This is not to say that one will perfect these qualities in his life, for diligence and vigilance are required on our part to ensure that we do not regress or become stagnant in these holy virtues. For instance, one will never have a perfect knowledge of the word of God, for the pursuit of such is a lifelong endeavor. However, one cannot truly grow in temperance without proper knowledge of the word of God. Self-control is built upon the foundation of Biblical knowledge.

Each of the Christian graces is to be added to the foundation of faith, without which no one can truly claim to be a Christian, much less grow in the grace and in the knowledge of that way. Upon this foundation is then added virtue, or moral vigor. This is the willingness, the courage, to do what one knows to be good and right. One deficient in virtue is living a token Christianity, a life void of substance and value. One determined to stand for what is right then needs direction for this moral vigor. So to virtue is added knowledge. One cannot stand for what is right when he does not know what is right. By study of the word of God, we are given guidance and purpose for our faith and virtue. Those willing to do what they know to be right, and who have the proper guidance in spiritual matters, realize that they practice that for which they stand. It is the utmost in hypocrisy when one makes a determination to stand before the world in defense of

what he believes, and to know what is right and good, but then be unwilling to live it out is his every day life. The faithful child of God must ever practice self-control—temperance lest the faith he proclaims and affirms to others not be allowed to shape his own conduct. Those of the faith, willing to stand for the truth, and who put that truth into practice in their own lives will stand out from the world. This non-conformity to this world will bring ridicule and persecution upon the faithful Christian. To one's self-control must then be added patience, or endurance in the face of trials and tribulations. One who has learned to control himself knows that he cannot control what others will do to him. Therefore, he leaves these matters in the hands of God, all the while remaining steadfast in the faith. He remembers how the innocent Son of God suffered at the hands of vile sinners, patiently enduring those momentary afflictions with the hope of glory ever in view. To patience is then added godliness, a reverence, respect, devotion toward God. As one grows in godliness, it will reinforce all these aforementioned virtues. One who venerates God as he should will desire to be pleasing to his Creator and Father. He will also learn to instill within himself the same motives and qualities that are characteristic of the Almighty, evermore fashioning himself after things heavenly and eternal rather than terrestrial and temporal. As a child of God becomes more godly, he becomes more godlike.

The Bible teaches that godliness is profitable unto all things, both in this life and the life to come (1 Timothy 4:8). While many things in this life have intrinsic value, and some have earned value, nothing except that which is of Divine origin can be said to be profitable unto all things. The way one regards God will determine the way in which he regards his own life, his own soul, and the lives and souls of those round about. We must all answer the question, "What think ye of Christ" [and the Father, and the Holy Spirit, PM] (Matthew 22:42)? The child of God seeks to live a godly life (a life shaped by one's view of God, and his subsequent relationship with Him) upon this earth, thereby enjoying the blessings of this life, while ever looking toward the life to come. As Christians, we need to pray for our civil leaders so that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives "in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:2). God's word directs us as to how we may live godly lives, for His grace teaches us that "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). The precious will of God gives guidance to our lives (Psalm 119:105) so that in our