

speaking to God's people

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bible studies

Subject: **Walking with Jesus – Pt 2 – Virtue**

Scripture

Introduction

Commentary

The apostle Peter defined a process to help people to progress as Christians, and so I will be using the pattern he defined in 2 Peter 1:5-7, which says:

*5 For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,
6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,
7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

Last time I covered the aspect of faith and this study is a brief look at virtue.

Virtue, according to the dictionary, relates to “moral goodness.” As Christian we are called to change our ways and part of that process is to cease doing the evil we did prior to becoming Christians and instead to clothe ourselves in good works, that is, to behave in a manner fitting of the name “Christian.”

1 Peter 4:3	<p>When we come to the Lord we are called to change our ways. The first part of the process of coming to the Lord is about having faith, which I looked at in the last study. Next though we need to look at how we are leading our lives and seek to walk in the ways of virtue.</p> <p>Peter considered this issue and wrote about it in this scripture in his first letter. He said:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>3 Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry.</i></p> <p>He clearly puts a line in the sand and says, its time to make a change. Its time to give up your past ways and live a good life rather than doing whatever you pleased.</p> <p>The essence of this is to live a life of repentance, and this was the first message of the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and the apostles. All of these began their ministries preaching the way of repentance and the need to change.</p>
Matthew 3:8	<p>Matthew writes that if you follow the ways of repentance then you need to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>8 Bear fruit that befits repentance</i></p> <p>The word “repentance” comes from the Greek word “metanoeo”. What it means is to “change your thinking.”</p> <p>If you are able to change the way you think then you can change the way you behave and act. And when you change your thinking to align with the requirements of the New Covenant and in obedience to the word of God, then you will be moving down the path of virtue.</p> <p>But what is this “fruit” that befits repentance?</p>

<p>Gal 5:22-23</p>	<p>Paul spoke of the need to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his letter to the Galatians. He described the fruit of the Holy Spirit in this verse.</p> <p><i>22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control</i></p> <p>All of these things are attitudes of the way one needs to behave as they grow in the Lord. These are the outcomes of changing the way you think to align with and be obedient to the words of God.</p> <p>But like fruit, this does not appear overnight. You do not immediately become patient, kind, loving, peaceful and so on the day that you come to Christ. Repentance is the starting point, but there is much more required to bear this fruit.</p> <p>But how is this to be accomplished? How can one change the way they think and bear the fruit of the Spirit?</p>
<p>Gal 5:16-17</p>	<p>Paul explains the method by which we can bear this fruit. He tells us:</p> <p><i>16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.</i></p> <p>We are fortunate that we do not have to effect this change in ourselves by ourselves. Instead the Lord has given us His Holy Spirit to do the work of transformation in us so that we can come to the place where we do bear the fruit of the spirit.</p> <p>When we walk in the spirit, we are putting our problems and issues of our flesh into the hands of the Spirit to take action. It is His work to replace the evil ways of our past with the fruit of the Spirit. And in doing that we are able to show the outcomes of virtue in our life.</p>

<p>1 Tim 2:8-10</p>	<p>Paul explained to Timothy, and for our benefit, what this virtue might look like. He spoke of the need for men and women to change their lifestyles in certain ways so that this virtue would shine through. He said:</p> <p><i>8 I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire 10 but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion.</i></p> <p>So we see that he instructs men and women to change their ways. Don't quarrel and fight, don't get angry and pray. He also says that women should adorn themselves with good deeds, not with fancy clothes and jewels.</p> <p>Contrary to the wisdom of this world, the clothes do NOT maketh the man! The quality of a man is not determined by the clothes on his back but on the condition of his heart. And it is virtue that leads both men and women to the Lord and his salvation.</p>
<p>1 Timothy 5:25</p>	<p>As I said, it is not clothing or jewellery that are important, but how a person acts and behaves. How do you assess the worth of a person? It doesn't matter how handsome, beautiful or wealthy a person may be, if they suffer from "stinkin' thinkin'" they are not the people of the Lord. They will not find the ways of salvation when they suffer from pride and arrogance. It is only in humility and obedience to the Lord and the path of virtue that will lead to eternity in Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Besides, you cannot hide good deeds and you cannot disguise virtue. It will be apparent to all because it stands out from the way the world acts and behaves. As Paul said to Timothy:</p> <p><i>25 So also good deeds are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.</i></p> <p>So when you live a life of virtue, you will stand out from those around you whether you choose to or not. Good deeds cannot be hidden.</p>

<p>So what next?</p>	<p>This is a brief discussion and introduction into this teaching on virtue. Certainly more can be added, but I hope in this “taste” you will continue the search for virtue in the Lord Jesus Christ. Please feel free to send me any comments or things you have learned in your own studies or as a result of this information.</p> <p>So now it’s your turn. What would you like to add to this conversation? Send me an email (link below) or engage with me on Twitter (@JohnBLemmon) or send me a comment on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/FreeGiftFromGod and let’s have the discussion continue.</p> <p>Feel free also to send this to others so they can join the conversation. I hope this has added value to your own walk with Christ.</p>
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