

## The Virtues of 2 Peter 1

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by Wayne Goff

Growing up in Bible Class, we memorized the “Christian Virtues” as they were called. I could recite them *mindlessly* in my sleep! But they are extremely important because when we **add** them to our faith they make it possible to have an abundant entrance into heaven. Borrowing from some comments in *Pulpit Commentary*, “Epistles of Peter,” let me summarize them for your benefit.

**Virtue.** This means “power under control.” It is the manly courage which enables a Christian to rise above the world’s standard and be what God wants us to be. This is the virtue of the Christian warrior and is the result of a living faith. Faith, ever working, ever energetic, strengthens the soul.

**Knowledge.** Courage and resoluteness might do more harm than good without the proper knowledge. Men without the knowledge of God can be double-minded, undecided, ever wavering between right and wrong. They are constantly tempted to comply with the evil around them. They profess to hate sin, but they have a lingering love for it. Only the truth of God’s knowledge, permeating their hearts will keep them safe.

**Self-Control.** This allows a man to govern his appetites, and to keep them under the sovereign rule of conscience. The Christian must ever strive to keep his body under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), and his mind pure (Phil. 4:8), in order to be accepted by our heavenly Father.

**Perseverance.** The KJV uses the word “*patience*” here, but the idea is **patient endurance** in doing good as in Romans 2:7. “Some of God’s people have to wait for him in patient endurance, some to work for him in active labor. Both may serve him with equal faithfulness. ... The suffering church of Smyrna is commended; the active church of Ephesus is blamed (Rev. 2:1-11).” The Greek word translated “*patience*,” or “*perseverance*” *literally* means “an abiding under.” Since there are two different Greek words for “*patience*,” we must be careful to know which one is being used.

**Godliness.** “Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, must help to strengthen and develop godliness. Godliness is the spirit of reverence, the holy fear of God. The godly man sets God always before him; the thought of God controls his whole life; his effort is to do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, to live unto the Lord, to seek his glory only....” Simply put, “*godliness*” is the attitude of the heart and mind that is always looking upward to God. It is always aware of God’s presence: “*The Lord is at hand*,” Phil. 4:5.

**Brotherly Kindness.** Out of godliness must flow the love of the brethren. The apostle John plainly taught us that if we say “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar, 1 John 4:20. One cannot have a true love of God while hating his brother who is made in the image of God. “*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart*,” (1 Pet 1:22).

**Love.** “*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*” (1 Jn. 4:8). The love enjoined by Peter is the Divine love (agapé). It is active. It always does what is in the best interest of its object. It is not overly concerned with self because it is absolutely selfless. Only as we are disciplined with the virtues of this Divine list can we hope to love like this! “*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven**; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*” (Matt. 5:44–45). May each us meditate upon these qualities!

