

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Week 7

Putting Things In Perspective

Virtue

What is virtue?

Basic Definition: "Behavior showing high moral standards or excellence"

In Biblical context

- The Greek word "Arete"
 - Properly denotes whatever procures preeminent estimation for a person or thing; hence, intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue, excellencies (giving praise)

1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the **praises** of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."

- Of any particular moral excellence, where virtue is enjoined as an essential quality in the exercise of faith, RV, "(in your faith supply) virtue.

Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any **excellence (virtue)**, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

There are two categories of virtue

- Human virtue – "a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself"
 - Examples: Compassion, responsibility, a sense of duty, self-discipline and restraint, honesty, loyalty, friendship, courage, and persistence are examples of desirable virtues for sustaining a moral life
- Godly Virtue (i.e. Theological Virtues) - **Faith**, hope, and charity (love)
 - Virtue is added to faith

2 Peter 1:5 – "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue..."

Power can also be translated “virtue”

Mark 5:30 – “And Jesus, perceiving in himself that **power** (KJV – virtue) had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”

Luke 6:19 – “And all the crowd sought to touch him, for **power** (KJV – virtue) came out from him and healed them all.”

Luke 8:46 – “And all the crowd sought to touch him, for **power** (KJV – virtue) came out from him and healed them all.”

- In the sense of "power," "miraculous energy or influence" (dunamis, "inherent power, residing in the nature of a thing" (Power of God); contrast exousia, "power arising from external opportunity or liberty of action"(Power of Man).

Why is virtue important?

The presupposition is that human virtues are void of any higher moral standard

- Whatever is good for you, isn't necessarily good for me (and vice-versa)
- It can change at any moment based on how we feel or what we experience
 - A form of humanism – which is a dangerous place to be
 - Without an absolute moral standard – we will be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” Ephesians 4:14
 - Paul's Struggle

Romans 7:15-20 “For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”

- We simply can't obtain true, effective, and lasting virtue just by being good people

Another reason it's important is that as Christians...we are in a fight; between good and evil, right and wrong

Ephesians 6:10-18 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints..."

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6:12

- This fight requires a strength and a **POWER** beyond our own
- If we are without virtue, it becomes very dangerous

How is true virtue obtained?

True virtue represents a moral excellence that is judged against the standard of the Word of God alone

- It's 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.
- Some character qualities that describe this type of virtue are:
 - goodness, righteousness, morality, integrity, dignity, honor, decency, respectability, nobility, worthiness, purity, principles, ethics, etc.

Who do you know that possesses all of these character qualities?

- God (The Holy Trinity)
- True virtue can only be obtained if/when we are IN Christ
 - Paul uses the Phrase "In God" "In Christ" or "In Him" 164 times in his letters/writings

- It is no longer striving for human virtue – all of those things that “make us good”

Romans 3:10-12 tell us “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

It is only through living in relationship with the disposition (nature) of God and FULLY submitting ourselves to Him (FROG – FULLY RELYING ON GOD)

In Christ, we can, AND DO, have...

- an inner serenity which adversity cannot disturb – Colossians 3:15
- a spiritual power that physical weakness cannot destroy – 2 Corinthians 12:9
- hidden vitality that even the process of dying and death cannot quench – 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

What happens if we don't have virtue?

If we are to exercise our faith and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling by carrying out the plans and purposes of God in our lives with His power

- Without Godly virtue we are very susceptible to falling into spiritual abuse, corruption, etc.
- We must guard against misusing that power by obtaining His virtue

2 Peter 1:3-4 “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, 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”

- Only His divine power can enable us to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust

He is calling us to live higher and to rise above

Eph. 4:1-5 “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to **walk worthy of the calling with which you were called**, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.”