

2 Peter 2:5

We saw in 2 Peter 1:2-15 that Peter's goal was to pound these truths into the church for the remainder of his days.

1. God has provided you with every thing you need for life and godliness, along with precious and magnificent promises so that you can be partakers of the divine nature.
2. Because of these great graces, you must apply all diligence in your faith-walk to add to this faith moral excellence, and to moral excellence knowledge etc.
3. If these qualities become yours and are increasing...you will not be useless, unfruitful, blind, or at risk of falling away, but you will have the kingdom abundantly supplied to you!
4. If you missed the first sermon in this series, I would strongly encourage you to go back and get the overview.

We are spending these 8 weeks walking through the qualities Peter identifies in vs 5-7

1. Last week we looked at faith.
2. Today we come to the quality of moral excellence...sometimes translated virtue or goodness.

v5 in your faith supply moral excellence,

I. Definitions

You may not believe it when I say it, but I have off and on over the last 10 years wrestled with what this word "moral excellence" means.

1. It is sometimes translated virtue, goodness, or in this case moral excellence.
2. The problem is, that this word is not used enough in Scripture to help us get a good grasp of what Peter had in mind.
3. It is used in only 2 other places in the Bible outside of this text
 - a. 1 Peter 2:9 *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*
 - b. Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*
4. If we use only what we can glean from these two verses about the meaning of this word, we might say that Peter is telling us to have faith, and then be an excellent Christian.
5. Unfortunately, it is not that simple.

We need to ask, what can we conclude about the meaning of this word as we consider its usage elsewhere in first century Greek writing? Based upon the word's meaning overall we see the following...

1. It denotes a special quality, probably moral courage or moral energy. JND KELLY
2. In the present instance it is quite commonly, and I believe correctly, understood to convey the idea of fortitude, firmness, energy. LILLIE
3. Virtue here means moral power, or, if you like, moral energy—it means activity or vigor of the soul. See to it, says Peter, that your faith is a living faith, see that it is an active faith, see that it is a vigorous faith. D. Martin Lloyd Jones
4. The word rendered virtue properly signifies energy...energy manifesting itself in the active performance of duty, and in bravely meeting the trials of the Christian life. Brown 67

If we put these all together, here is what we can conclude that Peter has in mind. **Moral excellence is moral energy that courageously, vigorously, and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude.**

To better understand what Peter is instructing us to add to our faith, we not only need a definition, but a description.

II. Descriptions

We have defined the word as...**moral energy that courageously, vigorously, and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude.**

1. But we need more than words to help us understand.
2. We need a picture of what this moral excellence is and what it isn't.

A. What moral excellence is not.

1. Abraham
 - a. Abraham had faith.
 - b. He believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.
 - c. But then he turns around and lies to the king of Egypt, puts his wife in a compromising position because he did not have enough fortitude and courage to be truthful and rely on God.
 - d. He feared the king of Egypt...rather than God.
 - e. *It was the not adding to faith, virtue, that made Abraham to equivocate so pitifully in Egypt and Gerar.* Brown
 - f. Thank God he became virtuous in the end!

2. The Chief Rulers

- a. John 12:42-43 *Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.*
- b. The chief rulers believed in Him (a level of faith)
- c. But because they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue (because they lacked moral energy and fortitude) they refused to confess Him.
- d. Fear of man...rather than fear of God.

3. Pilate

- a. Pilate condemned Jesus, not because he believed it was right, but because of his fear of the Jews.
- b. He lacked moral energy, excellence or fortitude
- c. He feared men...rather than God.

4. Peter

- a. Peter denied Jesus not once, or twice, but three times at his most critical moments!
- b. He had just professed his belief in Jesus as Messiah and pledged to stand with him come what may
- c. But he had not supplemented his faith with moral excellence, energy, fortitude, and resolve so in a pinch, he denied that he even knew Jesus.
- d. His fear of man exceeded his fear of God.
- e. Thank God he became virtuous and now is instructing us to add to our faith virtue.

It seems that adding virtue or moral excellence to faith is like adding backbone to your profession.

1. *Who has not had reason to regret how many opportunities of doing good, of honoring God, and promoting the best interests of mankind, he has lost, just for want of a little moral energy and fortitude? How often has he done what he ought not to have done—what he knew he ought not to have done; how often has he not done what he ought to have done—what he knew that he ought to have done, just because he did not “add to faith virtue?”* Brown 68

2. When we add to our faith moral excellence, it is like your doubts and fears dissolve and you are emboldened to do what Christ has commanded and avoid what he has prohibited despite the cost.

B. What moral excellence is

We see this type of moral excellence, energy, virtue, and fortitude applied and displayed for us in the early church.

1. Acts 4:13 *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

2. Acts 4:23-31 *When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? 26 ‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’ 27 For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. 29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

3. Acts 5:27-29 *When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men*

Moral excellence is moral energy that courageously, vigorously, and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude just like the early church did in the face of continual opposition, suffering, and persecution.

1. When you think of it this way, is there any wonder Peter is telling his disciples to immediately and diligently add to their faith moral excellence?
2. A cursory reading of 1 Peter says that the church was suffering persecution with more to come.
3. Oh how they needed moral excellence, energy that courageously, vigorously, and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude just like the early church did in Acts.

III. Determinations

What can we take away from what we have learned this morning?

1. How can we be diligent to pursue moral excellence as followers of Christ?
2. How can we add to our faith this moral energy that courageously, vigorously and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude just like the early church did in Acts?

There are at least 5 determinations that we can make today.

1. Determine to be with Jesus

Acts 4:13 *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

2. Determine to pray together

Acts 4:23-24a *When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord...*

3. Determine to be continually filled with the Spirit

Acts 4:31 *31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

Ephesians 5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit*

1. Be filled here, literally means be controlled by
 - a. You can be controlled by grief and sorrow
 - b. You can be controlled by fear
 - c. You can live a life controlled by the Spirit

2. Be filled here is literally “be continually being filled.”

- a. This is not a one time and you are done, but a continually recurring need.
- b. The disciples are completely under cover in Acts 1 until Acts 2 when they are all filled with the Holy Spirit
- c. Then Peter and John are thrown into prison and are rebuked by the religious leaders
 1. Their bubble is burst
 2. But they have fortitude
- d. So in Acts 4, they gather with the believers and pray...and they are filled with the Spirit and preach with boldness
- e. Acts 13:50-52 *But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

4. Determine to fear God rather than men or death

Acts 5:27-29 *When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men*

1. Have the resolve, the virtue, the fortitude, the moral excellence and spiritual energy to stand firm in the face of trial, tests, and temptation.
2. *Let not yours be a timid, feeble, ineffective faith; but let it show a power and energy befitting its source.* LILLIE
3. I am going to resolve now, ahead of time, before the trial or test to fear God rather than men
4. *Work—be strong. Have manly energy, and let it be manifested in prompt decision and resolute action. Behave like a man who believes, who has a clear, fixed judgment of what is true and right, and who is determined to follow it to its fair practical results. Do not look as if you were halting between two opinions. Be not weary in well doing. Be not a double minded man unstable in all thy ways.* Brown 68
5. I am going to obey. To resist evil, to pursue good, and to exercise the spiritual fortitude necessary to exemplify an excellent, energetic confident and powerful Christian life.

Resolve to fear God rather than man or even death!

1. Hebrews 2:14-15 *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

2. Be with Jesus, pray, be continually being filled with the Spirit and fear not!

5. Determine to hope in the future resurrection

Please do not miss what I am about to say.

1. We are characterized by focusing on the past resurrection...important!
2. But the early church seemed to focus much more on the future resurrection and it changed

how they viewed life and death.

1 Corinthians 15:19 *If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*

1. Why would Paul say that? Because if there was no future life, he would be guilty of wasting this life.
2. How many of us rather than saying that will say the opposite?

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

1. David Sitton likes to say that “*reasonable risk guys don’t get a chapter in the Bible! It is the reckless abandon crowd.*”
2. It is the crowd that has a moral energy that courageously, vigorously and actively lives out the faith with great fortitude just like the early church did in Acts!
3. It is the crowd who’s hope, who’s treasure, and who’s life is invested in the future resurrection