

What Is “Virtue” in 2 Peter 1:5?

by Wayne Goff

“**Virtue**” means “manliness, moral valor” with the idea in 2 Peter 1:5 of the actions that declare our faith! The Greek word (*aretē*) is defined by *Thayer’s Greek-English Dictionary* as “a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue, moral goodness” [p. 73]. Marvin Vincent in his work says “Christians are to exhibit virtue or energy in the exercise of their faith, translating into vigorous action” [vol. I; p. 679]. We can best sum up the meaning of virtue in 2 Peter 1:5 as ***the courage to practice what we believe is right.***

God Encourages Virtue

In the Old Testament, when Moses’ time to die had come and God had chosen Joshua to be the next leader of Israel, He encouraged Joshua with these words:

*“Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. **Only be strong and very courageous**, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed**, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:6–9)*

God knew that for Joshua to be successful, he would need the courage to stand up for the Lord and to stand against the enemies they would meet in battle. So it is with us today. Christians very often have to find the courage to stand up against the devil and sin, and especially when the temptation comes in the form of friends and family! Do not let fear rob you of doing the right thing! Be strong and courageous, just like Joshua! Jesus said that we should not fear those who can kill the body but not the soul, **Matthew 10:28**. How many times do we fail to be a good example to others because of a sudden fit of fear?! How many opportunities to testify of God’s goodness are lost because we were afraid we might fail? Friends, this is why courage, or virtue, comes first on the list of things we should build upon our faith. “*And not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God*” (**Philippians 1:28**).

Times When Courage Is Needed

Of course, courage is needed at all times. But there are certain circumstances where our success in those situations will be determined by the amount of courage we possess. Here are a few examples:

- **When we are in the minority.** In today’s society that may be most of the time! But Joshua and Caleb were in the minority when they advised Moses and Israel to take the land of promise!
- **When civil law conflicts.** God is the author of government (**Romans 13**), but there are times when government does not do its God-given job! Sometimes the government can be an enemy of Christianity. When this is truly the case, we must obey God over men, **Acts 4:19-20; 5:29**.
- **When severe temptation comes.** Temptation comes our way, thanks to the devil, and he encourages us to resist and disobey God. God tells us that when we resist temptation it strengthens our character, **James 1:12**. Peter tells us that the trials that challenge our faith can prove the genuineness of our faith, **1 Peter 1:7**. Look to prove your faith in these times.
- **When obedience to God seems unreasonable.** **Romans 12:1** and **1 John 5:3** tell us that our spiritual service is “reasonable” – that is, logical, rational. But we must learn to trust and obey God when it seems otherwise to us.

364102