

“Called . . . to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3)

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IT IS THE Apostle Peter’s endeavour in his second epistle to “stir up” the “pure minds” (3:1) of his brethren and sisters in remembrance of their responsibilities, in view of the glory to be revealed at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are at the end of another year, and I think it would be helpful to look at Peter’s words in chapter 1 and review our progress in the last year in the light of his words.

We read in verse 3 of “Him [God] That hath called us to glory and virtue”. It is not easy to lift our minds up to the glorious future which is before us. The apostles had a vision of it, as we see from Peter’s words in verses 16-18:

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount”.

“Like precious faith”

Peter enlarges on the glory to which we have been called in verse 4: “whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature”. Our faith is of “like precious faith” with the apostles (v. 1), and it comprises the “exceeding great and precious promises” made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. We are not just another sect of Christendom, we have embraced the apostolic faith, which is very different from the doctrines of the churches around us. The material things that we may desire in this life are not to be compared with the precious faith of the apostles. Through this precious faith we may be partakers of the Divine nature, clothed upon with a spiritual body; for the Lord Jesus “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

But when we embrace these great and precious promises, it is just the beginning of a life of probation. During this time we are to develop the attributes that we read of in 2 Peter 1:5-7; we are to grow in the Truth. They start with virtue

and culminate in love (*agapē*), the crowning attribute. The basis for developing these qualities is the “exceeding great and precious promises” of verse 4.

“Add to your faith virtue”

“And beside this, giving *all diligence*, add to your faith virtue” (v. 5). We have been called to glory and virtue (v. 3), and virtue is the first attribute we must manifest. The word translated “virtue”, *aretē*, according to Strong basically means ‘manliness’, and is derived from the verb *airō*, ‘to lift’.

The idea in the word “virtue” here seems to be that we must lift up our minds to God, we must show strength, our actions should be actions of faith and courage. It is interesting that the Apostle Paul exhorts the ecclesia to grow up into a perfect man (Eph. 4:13). This was God’s purpose in the beginning. He made man upright (Eccl. 7:29), and His purpose is that man should be after His likeness.

So Abraham, in the idolatrous city of Ur, lifted up himself to God and left it for the land of Canaan. When he was tested, he lifted his eyes up to God and would have offered up Isaac. It may be significant that his original name, Abram, means ‘High Father’. The word from which this is derived is rendered “lift up” in Genesis 14:22, no doubt a play on this name: “I have *lift up* mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God [Yahweh El Elyon], the possessor of heaven and earth”.

Abraham said this because he had lifted himself up to Yahweh in seeking victory over the four mighty kings who had taken Sodom and Gomorrah, and because he had broken bread with Melchizedek, priest of the most high God. Therefore he would take nothing of the spoil for himself, “from a thread even to a shoelatchet” (v. 23). Abraham’s mind was always upon heavenly things. So we read of the patriarchs in Hebrews 11:16: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city”.

Take the example of Moses, who, at the initiation ceremony when he was to be made the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, lifted up his eyes to God and refused, because “he had respect unto the

recompence of the reward” (v. 26). David, when confronted with Goliath, lifted up his eyes to God. He saw the issue from Yahweh’s point of view. Goliath had defied Israel, the armies of the living God, and David slew Goliath in the name of Yahweh of hosts Whom the giant had defied.

We could give many examples of men and women who manifested virtue. If we would manifest virtue, we need to lift up our eyes to our heavenly Father and act faithfully in accordance with His Word whatever the consequences. Hence the Apostle Paul said: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory”; and he continued: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1-5).

“. . . and to virtue knowledge”

The first quality that we must show is virtue, and it is implicit that this attribute should be manifested throughout our walk in the Truth, it is the first attribute that we should show. But why does knowledge follow virtue?

After Moses had forsaken Egypt the Almighty revealed His Word to him in the wilderness of Sinai. So we read in Numbers 1:1: “And the LORD [Yahweh] spake unto Moses in the wilderness”. So we forsake the world and enter the wilderness on our journey to the Kingdom, and it is here that we hear the Word of God. Virtue is followed by knowledge of the Word.

But Israel did not want to hear that word. Their minds were back in Egypt, so they perished in the wilderness. Where are our minds? Are they back in the world or are they set on things above? We need to take great care at this time of the year as to where our minds are. Are they filled with Christmas or are they filled with the Word of God? Moreover, television is a great danger to us today. It brings Egypt into our home. If we watch worldly things in our home, our hearts are going back to Egypt, and let us remember that the children of Israel perished in the wilderness because their hearts were back in Egypt. Hence the importance of the daily readings. They help us to focus our minds on things above, and often are very relevant to the temptations that we encounter each day.

“. . . and to knowledge temperance”

Peter exhorts us that we should add temperance to knowledge. Temperance is self-control, and the Greek word translated “temperance” here is derived from a word meaning ‘strong in a thing (masterful)’ (Strong). We recognise, as the Apostle Paul did, that in our flesh dwells no good thing (Rom. 7:18) and that the heart of man is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). Knowledge of the Word of God helps us to overcome these things, so that, when we see the wickedness around us, we can say, There but for the grace of God go I.

Knowledge of the Word has a transforming effect upon our minds, as we see from the words of Paul in Colossians 3:9,10: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed [or being renewed] in knowledge after the image of him that created him”. We read in 1 John 5:4: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”. And “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), so the Word helps us to control self, to be masterful, to overcome.

“. . . and to temperance patience”

“Patience” means ‘endurance’, ‘constancy’, ‘being cheerful’. It is “through much tribulation” that we “enter into the kingdom” (Acts 14:22), and tribulation can cause us to lose our self-control and give in to temptation. People treat us wrongfully, and the old man of the flesh wants us to have our own back; but we learn to suffer wrong. This is where patience is required: being cheerful despite our troubles, enduring, being constant.

We see this in Job. Despite the wrong accusations of his friends, he showed patience. Hence the words of James: “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (Jas. 5:11).

Then we have the words of Romans 5:3,4: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope”. From patience comes experience, experience of walking in faith, therefore James says: “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jas. 1:4).

Of these attributes that we are considering, one does not stop when the next one starts, but they all need to continue through our life in the Truth.

“. . . and to patience godliness”

“Godliness” is the word *eusebeia*, which means ‘piety’, from two other words which mean ‘well-reverent’ or ‘pious’. Because the words ‘reverent’ and ‘pious’ have been misappropriated to the clergy and the papacy, we tend to avoid them, but there must be a place for the true meaning of piety and reverence.

It seems to me that the Word is teaching us that we should convey in our words and our bearing a reverence for Yahweh and His Word. It was said of Brother Thomas that he always spoke as though he was in the presence of God. This, I suggest, is godliness.

“. . . and to godliness brotherly kindness”

Brotherly kindness is the quality of the virtuous, as we see from Proverbs 31:20: “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy”. We have the poor and needy among us. How important is this work!

We learn from 1 John 3:17,18: “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”.

Brotherly kindness is manifested in providing not only for the natural needs of others but also for their spiritual needs, loving “in deed and in truth”.

“. . . and to brotherly kindness charity”

“Charity” is love (*agapē*), true sacrificial love, the crowning attribute that Peter speaks of here, and described by Paul as “the bond of perfectness”

(Col. 3:14). Brotherly kindness leads to this. So we read in 1 John 4: “He that loveth not knoweth not God”; and: “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us” (vv. 8,12).

This love encompasses all the attributes we have considered, hence the words of the Master in John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”. The word “know” here means, “A personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known (our heavenly Father), i.e. to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer oneself to be determined thereby”. To fulfil this meaning we need to have a true relationship with our heavenly Father through His Word, through prayer and through the way we walk. This truly is God-manifestation.

“If ye do these things”

But what is truly wonderful is that, if we develop these qualities, we shall be granted a place in the Kingdom of God, as we see from Peter’s words in verses 10 and 11: “for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. What a glorious hope is before us!

But there is a warning in verse 9: “he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins”. As we develop these qualities we need always to remember that we have been purged from our old sins. We remember this when we partake of the emblems of the sacrificial love of our absent Master, he who was the embodiment of all these qualities to the end that he laid down his life for us. May his love for us constrain us to live unto him.

The Book of Job and Other Studies

This 114-page book by Brother D. J. (Jeff) Hammett consists of two parts. The first is a 32-page study, “Job—The Enigma of the Book”, the second is a collection of Brother Hammett’s studies under various titles. The viewpoint on the book of Job is that put forward originally by Brother Joe Thomas of Llanelli, who fell asleep in 1940, and was renowned as a Bible student in his own generation. Brother Hammett suggests it is an approach that is “unusual” and “unlike any that has been produced in the last half century”. *The Book of Job and Other Studies* is available from Brother Hammett at 35 Llys Y Felin, Felinfoel, Llanelli, SA15 4LT; tel. 01554 757414. The cost is £5 plus postage and packing, which for a single copy in the UK is 50p. Any money left after covering the costs of producing the book will be sent to the Christadelphian Bible Mission.