

Building Blocks of Character: Virtue

Peter addresses the very real possibility of apostasy in 2 Peter 1:5-11, and includes seven protective and preventative points which have sometimes been called “Building Blocks of Christian Character.” They would be more accurately called building blocks of character in general, since “character” cannot be fully known or grown into by those outside of Christ. Although many false teachers in today’s religious world deny that a Christian can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:1-6; 10:23-27; 2 Pet. 3:17; 1 Cor. 9:27), Peter not only admits to it, but provides a program of growth that will prevent it. We will examine these seven protective and preventative building blocks in the next several articles. Note that each addition is to be built upon faith in God through Christ, the lofty state from which any fall would be tragic and disastrous.

Virtue (2 Pet. 1:5), in the original Greek, means: “Moral excellence, goodness, uprightness.” The English definition includes in part: “The practice of moral duties and abstinence from immorality and vice.” Peter has already revealed that Christians have been called to “*glory and virtue (1:3)*,” which is a clear and distinct directive towards a morally responsible life. Paul gives us the most complete picture of virtue’s wellspring when he states, “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things (Phil. 4:8)*.” Virtue springs from only the heart that has deeply drawn upon the nourishing word of God (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

“Goodness” fairly represents the observable part of virtue. It implies a concern for others that will help move them toward repentance, as in the “*goodness of God (Rom. 2:4)*.” It implies a deep and abiding concern for the state of mankind (Phil 2:4). Goodness includes unwavering loyalty to the word of truth (Jn. 17:17) as the only thing of redeeming quality (also Prov. 23:23; Jn. 8:32; 14:6). It includes a refusal to share in the error of the ungodly (Eph. 5:7) by bidding them God speed (2 Jn. 10-11), or even seeming to agree with, or take a neutral position towards evil (1 Thes. 5:22). This was the mistake of the chief rulers of John 12:42-43, “*For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*” Let us add to our faith virtue.

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