

## Focus Scripture

2 Peter 1:1-9

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

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# "Maintaining Moral Excellence in a Corrupt World, Part I"

## What is Moral Excellence?

The quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong, i.e., Virtue.

## The Need for Moral Excellence

### Ephesians: 4:17-20 (RSV)

The Old Life and the New

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. You did not so learn Christ!

Isaiah 5:21 – Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. (NIV)

Isaiah 5:13 – Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; those of high rank will die of hunger and the common people will be parched with thirst.

Hosea 4:6a – My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge... (RSV)

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**"...doing what is right  
and avoiding what is  
wrong"**



## Notes

# Where Does Moral Excellence Come From?

**Knowledge** ἡ ἐπιγινώσκω ἡ epignōsis ἡ ep-ig'-no-sis = Knowledge of things ethical and divine; full discernment.

**Virtue** - Basically means excellence; To the Greek philosophers, it meant “the fulfillment of a thing.” When anything in nature fulfills its purpose, that is “virtue—moral excellence.” The word was also used to describe the power of the gods to do heroic deeds. The land that produces crops is “excellent” because it is fulfilling its purpose. The tool that works correctly is “excellent” because it is doing what a tool is supposed to do. A Christian is supposed to glorify God because he has God’s nature within; so, when he does this, he shows “excellence” because he is fulfilling his purpose in life. True virtue in the Christian life is not “polishing” human qualities, no matter how fine they may be, but producing divine qualities that make the person more like Jesus Christ.

**Knowledge** - Faith helps us develop virtue, and virtue helps us develop knowledge (2 Peter 1:5). The word translated “knowledge” in 2 Peter 1:2–3 means “full knowledge” or “knowledge that is growing.” The word used here suggests practical knowledge or discernment. It refers to the ability to handle life successfully. It is the opposite of being “so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good!” This kind of knowledge does not come automatically. It comes from obedience to the will of God (John 7:17). In the Christian life, you must not separate the heart and the mind, character and knowledge.



**Temperance** - means self-control. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls" (Prov. 25:28). Paul in his letters often compared the Christian to an athlete who must exercise and discipline himself if he ever hopes to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:7-8).

**Patience** - is the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult. Self-control has to do with handling the pleasures of life, while patience relates primarily to the pressures and problems of life. (The ability to endure problem people is "longsuffering.") Often, the person who gives in to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures either, so he gives up. Patience is not something that develops automatically; we must work at it. James 1:2-8 gives us the right approach. We must expect trials to come, because without trials we could never learn patience. We must, by faith, let our trials work for us and not against us, because we know that God is at work in our trials.

**Godliness** - Simply means "God-likeness." In the original Greek, this word meant "to worship well." It described the man who was right in his relationship with God and with his fellow man. Perhaps the words reverence and piety come closer to defining this term. It is that quality of character that makes a person distinctive. He lives above the petty things of life, the passions and pressures that control the lives of others. He seeks to do the will of God and, as he does, he seeks the welfare of others.

**Brotherly Kindness** - (Philadelphia in the Greek) If we love Jesus Christ, we must also love the brethren. We should practice an "sincere love of the brethren" (1 Peter 1:22) and not just pretend that we love them. "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10). The fact that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ is one evidence that we have been born of God (1 John 5:1-2).

**Charity** - But there is more to Christian growth than brotherly love; we must also have the sacrificial love that our Lord displayed when He went to the cross; the kind of love ("charity") spoken of in 2 Peter 1:7 is agape love, the kind of love that God shows toward lost sinners. This is the love that is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the love that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts as we walk in the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). When we have brotherly love, we love because of our likenesses to others, but with agape love, we love in spite of the differences we have.

**What happens when I incorporate these things into my life?**

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