

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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ADDING VIRTUE

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Peter exhorts all Christians: “*in your faith add virtue...*” (2 Peter 1:5). It requires “*diligence*” “*on your part*” as an individual follower motivated by the “*precious and exceeding great promises*” which have allowed us to be “*partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world through lust*” (2 Peter 1:4). If the Christian is to maintain spiritual strength, thus insuring against *stumbling*, “*virtue*” must be added to and work with one’s faith (2 Peter 1:8, 10).

The Greek word translated “*virtue*” carried a wide significance in Greek writings. A word that seems to encapsulate the varied applications of the word is “*excellence*”. Thayer defines the word as: “*any excellence of a person (in body or mind) or of a thing, , an eminent endowment, property or quality*” (Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon, p. 73). God’s “*eminence*” or “*virtue*” is connected with His “*glory*”, manifested by his “*power*” to save man through the knowledge of the Gospel. (2 Peter 1:3). Peter uses the Greek word to convey the “*excellencies*” of God’s character

which we as Christians are to “*show forth*” in our lives (I Peter 2:9).

Things “*excellent*” or of “*virtue*” must be what we meditate upon in our daily lives. Paul writes, “*...if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Philippians 4:8). We can fulfill this command of the Lord by filling our minds with the Word of God. There is no substitute for daily Bible reading. Hearing God’s word produces faith (Romans 10:17), and there is nothing in the world more virtuous than the thoughts of God we have before us in His Word.

An area in our lives where “*excellence*” should be added is in our study of the Bible. This is deeper than a mere reading. Putting forth our best effort to accurately know the mind of the Lord demands the expenditure of time, energetic research, and painstaking reflection. The rewards are great. We will gain a deeper knowledge of God’s word. We will know “*why*” we believe what we believe, having confidence due to painstaking testing of our conclusions, and will be able to show others the truth we have learned.

This leads to another area of faith needing the addition of excellence: seeking the lost. We are aware that the soul of man is his most valuable possession (Luke 9:25). We know our Lord’s mission to earth was “*to seek and to save that which is lost*” (Luke 19:10). We understand that the Gospel message is to be “*furthered*” not stagnated (Philippians 1:5).

Surely what the Lord was willing to come to this earth to accomplish and die for demands more than just lip service. It is worthy of our most excellent effort. Preparing ourselves to be “*apt to teach*” (2 Timothy 2:24); being able to *give an answer* to those who ask us *a reason for our hope* (I Peter 3:15); being *prayerful for opened doors* (Colossians 4:3); and then walking through those opened doors with the *effectual* work of spreading the saving message of the Gospel (I Corinthians 16:9) all speak of excellence on your part in the greatest mission on earth.

Is excellence in these areas your virtue? Why not make it your resolution for the year?