

The Right Kind of Virtues

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in {your} moral excellence, knowledge; and in {your} knowledge, self-control, and in {your} self-control, perseverance, and in {your} perseverance, godliness; and in {your} godliness, brotherly kindness, and in {your} brotherly kindness, love. - 2 Peter 1:5-7

In this familiar passage, we find one of several Bible lists of "qualities of character" or "virtues" that Christians should strive to attain in our lives. But have you considered that some of those virtues seem "natural" with some folks, yet completely contrary to the disposition of others? For example, some people just seem "naturally" to be able to exercise "self-control" with much less effort than others, perhaps because of some inherited traits or the environment in which they were raised. Some seem to have an easier time with "brotherly kindness." Others seem more disposed toward "patience" or "perseverance." Do you see what I'm saying?

What is often not fully understood, is the fact that the virtues enjoined upon the people of God are to be *products of the will* - not products of our genes, or the results of circumstances over which we have no control. Let's try to illustrate this important principle by looking at the virtue of "patience" (translated in some versions as "perseverance" or "longsuffering").

I like the definition of "patience" given in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

"Patience' implies suffering, enduring or waiting, as a determination of the will and not simply under necessity."

I especially like that last part: "...as a determination of the will and not simply under necessity." It may well be that a convicted criminal is forced to *endure* his confinement - to *suffer* the loss of his freedom, - to *wait* through the long months or years until his release. His waiting may indeed have the outward appearance of patience. But, in fact, it may well be only the symptoms of a will broken by the State or, worse, just simple hopelessness. This is not the patience of which the Bible prescribes for Christians. This kind of patience is the end result of making up our minds to 'suffer, endure, or wait' *in direct response to submitting to God's will*. If we have been "gifted" in some area of our lives so that we are naturally inclined to be more patient, more loving, more generous, etc., that is well and good. Use that "gift" to the glory of our Lord by submitting it to His will (see Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

That's the key! As we develop and possess the various "virtues" in our lives, we must never lose sight of the importance of exercising them, not out of habit or necessity; but rather as acts of our will which is completely surrendered to the Will of God.

- Bob West, *The Milpitas Messenger*, Milpitas, CA

It is better to be short of cash than short of character.

News & Notes

SYMPATHY: To Eva Stefl at the recent passing of her nephew, Thurman Riggs.

CONTINUE TO REMEMBER: Denver & Florence Cooper and family. Florence is now under Hospice care.

CARE & SHARE BEARS: Each Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. All ladies are invited to participate in this project.

PIZZA PARTY: This Friday, Aug. 20th 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Multipurpose Building for ages 2 to 18 years. R.S.V.P. by this Wednesday, Aug. 18th to Dean & Sandy Spencer (304-387-0389).

PANTRY: Spaghetti & sauce.

BOX TOPS & LABELS FOR EDUCATION: See the bulletin board for details and sample labels to save for Mid-Western Children's Home.

THOSE WITH MEDICAL CONCERNS: George Wiersbicki (brother of Ed), Michael Hanlon (son of Michelle), Ruth Brewer, Jackie Parsons, Marilyn Miller, Harry & Imogene Nice. **Weirton Medical Center (Skilled):** Jessie Stiles (grandmother of Docie Moore). **FOX:** Pauline Clutter, Ruby Eddy. In Iowa: Jack Board. Check the bulletin board for others who are shut in.

MEETING & LECTURESHIP

Chester's Fall Meeting **Charles Pugh** **Sept. 12-16**
WV Christian Lectures **Weirton Hgts.** **Sept. 26-29**

When I Say, "I Am A Christian"

When I say, "I'm a Christian," I'm not shouting, "I've been saved!"

I'm whispering, "I got lost! That's why I chose this way"

When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't speak with human pride;

I'm confessing that I stumble-needng God to be my guide.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not trying to be strong;

I'm professing that I'm weak and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not bragging of success;

I'm admitting that I've failed and cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't think I know it all;

I submit to my confusion asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not claiming to be perfect;

My flaws are far too visible but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I still feel the sting of pain;

I have my share of heartache which is why I seek His name.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I do not wish to judge;

I have no authority--I only know I'm loved.

- Carol Wimmer -

The Seeker, Avenue N Church of Christ, Rosenberg, TX