

Audio Transcript of Sermon
January 18, 2020
Virtue

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. As 2020 started, we considered faith looking at a passage from second Peter one beginning with verse one. Let's continue with that today. Second Peter one verse one.

2 Peter 1:1-10

- 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.**
- 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:**

So, when we take a look at these verses, we know we began this year by looking at faith, and last week, we considered the need for diligence. So, let's focus on again on verse five where it says, *"...and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."* Virtue is part of what we need to have as part of our character

to be in this future happy time, the Kingdom of God. Let's take a look at verse three, where it says, "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:" We'll conclude today's study by taking a look at the impact of virtue on the life of Jesus Christ and what virtue empowered Jesus Christ to do.

To begin though today, let's take a look at the definition of virtue for the words in verse three and verse five. We know that the modern definition of virtue is going to be something along the lines of behaviors showing a high moral standard. How we act should be aligned to our moral standard. That's what virtue means. We are the same whether in private or public, there is no two-faced nature of our character. The Greek word for virtue in these verses in verse three and verse five is *arete* and that is Greek word Greek word 703 from Strong's concordance and it means properly, manliness, excellence, praise.

The Greek word *arete* is not used frequently in the New Testament. It is used in another passage in the Book of Philippians that is similar sounding to the passage in Peter. Let's take a look at Philippians four verse one, Philippians four verse one.

Philippians 4:1-8

- 1. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.**
- 2. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.**
- 3. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.**
- 4. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.**
- 5. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.**
- 6. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.**
- 7. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

Verse eight.

8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

We are reminded on the need to be focused on virtue in our life because of the power impact it has for us down the road.

In the Old Testament, which is the part of the Bible we look to for examples that we can use and apply in our life, we don't find very many people described as virtuous. In fact, there is only one character from the Old Testament where the English word virtuous is used in the translation, and that is the young lady known as Ruth. Here is what you need to know about Ruth. Ruth was known throughout her entire city that she was virtuous. Let's take a look at what's recorded for us in Ruth chapter three and we'll begin in verse six, Ruth three verse six, and as we break in mid-story, Ruth has just received instructions from her mother-in-law, and so in verse six,

Ruth 3:6-11

6. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

7. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

10. And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

How did Boaz describe Ruth as a virtuous woman? Well, in part because he said she didn't get herself involved with a lot of relationships with young men whether they be rich or poor. So, Ruth kept herself out of the scandals that so frequently

engulf young people who are just starting off in life. That's what helped make Ruth a virtuous woman, not only in the mind of Boaz, but the entire city. Ruth was called by Boaz a virtuous woman, and it may make you think are there any virtuous men in the Bible and in the Old Testament? That's going to be a hard word combination to find because I couldn't find any. Let's take a look at Proverbs twelve verse one. Proverbs is seen as a book of wisdom and advice we can use in our own life. Proverbs twelve verse one.

Proverbs 12:1-4

- 1. Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.**
- 2. A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.**
- 3. A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.**
- 4. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.**

In the Old Testament, the society was very patriarchal, and success or failure in the family really depended on what happened with the men. Just because the Old Testament in Proverbs twelve talks about a virtuous woman, does not mean there could not be a virtuous man. Each of us in our relationships, whether we do good or bad, impacts the other people in the relationships that we do have. It's important that what we do, we do and behave out of a sense of moral uprightness, because we do not want to bring shame to ourselves, or other people within our family. The final chapter of proverbs extensively writes about a virtuous woman. Let's take a look at what's written in Proverbs thirty-one. We'll take a look at Proverbs thirty-one beginning with verse ten.

Proverbs 31:10-31

- 10. Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.**
- 11. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.**

We know that there are certain qualities of character that are priceless. That's what's being talked about in these first few verses of Proverbs thirty-one verses ten and eleven. Verse twelve.

12. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

A person who is virtuous focuses on and accomplishes those things that are good.

13. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

So, somebody who is virtuous is somebody who is willing to get their hands dirty to get the work done.

14. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

15. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She takes care of the household needs of the family. Verse sixteen.

16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

Going back thousands of years to a time when it was only the men who would buy property, and in a country where only the men held the property, this is very progressive. Here's a woman who bought property and then used that property to produce a stream of income. Verse seventeen.

17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

Here is somebody who as a virtuous woman who is involved with many projects and gets up early and stays up late. She works very hard.

19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She's multi-tasking, she's doing more than one thing at time.

20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

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She is not only focused on the needs of her family, she considers the needs of other people.

21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

So, the virtuous woman knows that when the cold weather sets in, her family will be able to bundle up in the clothes she has made ready for the family. Today, we might not be in the business of making clothes, but we would be in the business of making sure that we have purchased the clothes we need to wear. Verse twenty-two.

22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Silk is an expensive cloth. Purple was a challenging color to bring into fruition back in the time. And, those all showed wealth and prestige.

23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

Her husband is empowered to do great things because she is there supporting her husband. By the same token, her husband is known for all the right reasons within the city. His wife is a wonderful person who is well respected and well-known. She doesn't have a bad reputation that is hanging around her husband and weighing him down.

24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

She's a business woman, she's making money.

25. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

There are people that I know that should keep their mouth shut much more frequently than they do. Here, the virtuous woman when she opens her mouth, it

is with wisdom, and there is kindness in the words that she says. Verse twenty-seven.

27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

29. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

30. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

31. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

In the Old Testament, I couldn't find a single man who with the translations made available to me were described as a virtuous man. There is a word very similar to virtue that we use in the English language called integrity and integrity is simply the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. David, King of Israel, was considered by the LORD, to be a man of integrity, and He shared his reflections and instructions to Solomon. Again, let's take a look at first Kings nine verse one.

1 Kings 9:1-9

1. And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do,

2. That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

3. And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

4. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

5. Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.

6. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them:

7. Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people:

8. And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house?

9. And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

Going back to verse four, the LORD called David a person of integrity, in heart, and in uprightness. David was a person of incredible passion, and his passion was always focused on God and serving God. Every once in a while, his passion would take him off course, in doing things I'm sure God did not approve of. But, with all of those faults that David had, God still considered David to be a person of uprightness. Being a person of uprightness does not mean that you are without sin. It's impossible in the physical sense to be without sin, unless you have deceived yourself in your own mind. But, you can be an upright person recognizing that as people we are constantly falling short of this mark that God has set for us. And, it makes us realize how powerful the need is for us for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our own life. We'll find out how virtue impacts our spiritual faith when we take a look at that final passage in today's study. David, a man of integrity, of heart and uprightness, wrote many psalms, including Psalm twenty-six. Let's take a look at this psalm today because it speaks of integrity. Psalm twenty-six verse one.

Psalm 26:1-12

1. Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

From verse one, we can ascertain that integrity is a step beyond trust or faith, and that would align very nicely with what we read back in second Peter. Virtue is something that we add to faith, and Psalm twenty-six and verse one indicates the very same concept. Verse two.

- 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.**
- 3. For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.**
- 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.**
- 5. I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.**
- 6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:**
- 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.**
- 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.**
- 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:**
- 10. In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.**
- 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.**
- 12. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.**

Looking at verse eleven we can understand integrity is something we should be aware about in our life. If we are a person of integrity, that is something we should be aware of. We should understand that we are a person of integrity. If we have to get to the place where we have to question our integrity, we probably need to take steps to improve integrity and to improve virtue in our life.

There are proverbs written about integrity. We'll take a look at a few of those proverbs. Let's take a look at Proverbs eleven verse one.

Proverbs 11:1-6

- 1. A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.**

Back in the days of buying and selling, there were sometimes non-standard weights that would be used, and those non-standards would be used to steal from the person who was buying, so, there was a lot of falseness, theft, and graft

in some of those early business dealings. That's why it says, *"...a just weight is his delight."*

2. When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

There are a few sayings that have humored me in my life, one of them is the saying you sometimes hear, that I'm poor and proud of it. Pride is a sin whether you are poor or rich, whether you are a powerful person or a powerless person. Pride is something we need to keep in check, because when we allow pride to take over our life, that brings us to a point of shame. Here it says *"...with the lowly is wisdom."* We can do great things and do wonderful things. It comes down to our mental focus. When we see ourselves as great and powerful, we are ready for a fall. When we see ourselves as being a low person, a servant, that's a much better place to be in, even if you are doing great and powerful things. Verse three, we're talking of integrity today.

3. The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

We're all on this journey called life, and the paths that we might take in our individual stories will vary because we live in different countries, different continents, speak different languages, have different careers, have different family situations. We all have this end destination we want to get to called the Kingdom of God. It will be our integrity that will help guide us. Our virtue will help guide us on this path to the Kingdom of God, *"but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them."*

4. Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

5. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

The Book of Proverbs constantly compares good and evil, good and evil is always being compared. We know that if we are a righteous person, we will allow ourselves to be governed by righteousness. Verse six.

6. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.

Another chapter in the Book of Proverbs that talks about integrity is Proverbs chapter nineteen, Proverbs chapter nineteen beginning with verse one.

Proverbs 19:1-5

1. Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

I suppose we could add to that and say better is the poor that walks in his integrity than a rich person who walks in perverseness. What we seek in this life should not be simply an amount of money. If all we seek is an amount of money, we miss out on many other qualities of life that would be important to anyone, even if the spiritual aspect of life wasn't in the picture. For instance, if all you seek is money, you might find yourself in a career that makes a lot of money, but you might be totally unhappy in that career because it is not satisfying to you in any possible way. It's much better that whatever we do, we do out of a sense of integrity, because integrity simply again, very much related to virtue is about us being honest and having strong moral principles. What do we do when we come across something that is wrong? If you come across somebody giving away free stuff and maybe they shouldn't be giving free stuff, if you have integrity, you are going to pass up on accepting that. I think I've shared with the audience previously that there once was a pastry shop/floral shop in El Paso that went out of business, and it went out of business not because of the wonderful and huge pastries that they used to make. They got a lot of business on those wonderfully huge pastries. They went out of business because some of the employees without permission of the owners gave away a lot of flowers on Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, and as a result the store ended up going bankrupt because thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars in flowers went out the door, and the profits from those flower sales were really designed to help offset some of the other operating expenses of the bakery. So, integrity should keep us from taking things that are not rightfully ours. Verse two.

2. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

As an educator, I can tell you knowledge is powerful. You can use knowledge though for good and evil, and whenever you have knowledge, if you have integrity, you're going to use that knowledge for good. If you have integrity, you're not going to run blindly into something, you're going to want to count the costs to make sure that you can get it done. Verse three.

3. The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

We need to always be mindful of what we are doing, that what we do is aligned to what God would have us do.

4. Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

If you come into money, you will have many people with different levels of morality who will come into your life, and immediately they will try to size you up to determine are you a person of integrity, or are you not a person of integrity. They'll try to get your money either way, they just need to understand what kind of person they are working with.

5. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Integrity is huge in our life, and we absolutely in everything that we do must be cautious and mindful that we walk a life that is a life of integrity. Let's take a look at another passage from the Book of Proverbs, a couple of verses from Proverbs twenty, let's take a look at Proverbs twenty verse six.

Proverbs 20:6-7

6. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

Most people think of themselves as a good person. Very rarely will you come across somebody and in discussion with them find out that they see themselves as a bad person. More than likely, you will see people thinking of themselves as being good in at least some capacity. Verse six talks about the person who is faithful, who will never backstab you. Verse seven.

7. The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

Integrity gives us the moral basis to follow through with actions that are aligned with our character. A person who has their thoughts and focus based on what God would want us to do, following the commandments, that leads to a natural blessing that comes down to the children. It doesn't mean that the children are going to have gobs and gobs of cash because not everyone who is called has a lot of money. Most people who are called by God live modest lifestyles. But there still is this blessing of being raised by a person who was a person of integrity. About three and half years ago my father passed away and it was very sad at the time. As I reflect on the impact he had in my life, what I'm most grateful for is the integrity with which he led his life because he did many things in his life in sacrifice for his marriage to my mother and to my sister and myself. Integrity allows us to bring a blessing upon other people.

Sometimes when we are a person of integrity, people who are not righteous look at integrity slightly through a different viewpoint. If you are a person of integrity and you always do the right thing, you will rub up against people who do not have that same value system. And, when you rub up against these people, they're going to think negatively of you, and they're going to try and call you out on doing the right thing. Let's take a look at Job two. In Job, here's a story of a righteous person who was known as a man of integrity. God called Job a man of integrity and he had this interesting discussion with Satan the devil. Now, what Satan the devil was doing talking with God, I don't know. All we know is what we have described for us in verse one.

Job 2:1-10

1. Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

2. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that

feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

Not recorded in this story, we know that Satan was already working to have God destroy Job. Satan works in each of our lives through temptation and he causes us all to fall short of the glory of God, and then he turns around and that he uses that to accuse us before God. When Satan is called the accuser of the brethren, it's because he has this system. He sets us up through temptation and then he uses our failure in the face of temptation to accuse us before God. And, what does God say? That that is without cause. That's an interesting thing to look at when we are considering our relationship with God. Let's look at verse four.

4. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

5. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

6. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

7. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

8. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

9. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Integrity is something that we have in good times, in bad times. But when we are a person known for integrity, people that do not have integrity, people that do not have God's Holy Spirit working within their life will look at integrity and see our integrity as an effort to con or game the system. What Satan accused Job of in verses four through five was basically that the only reason that Job would be doing what he was doing was to preserve his own life, that he really didn't care about God because of that. And so, integrity is something we have in good times and bad times. And we recognize that even though we may be a person of integrity there are people in our life who may have no respect or regard for

integrity. Integrity, virtue, closely related to our actions as they are aligned to our moral character.

We know that from the New Testament virtue is something that gets added to our faith, and that we need to add virtue to our faith in order to progress and grow spiritually. There's a really interesting passage early on from the ministry of Jesus Christ where the term virtue is used in the English language. A different Greek word is used but I think it helps us understand where the application of virtue takes us. Let's take a look at Luke six, beginning with verse seventeen.

Luke 6:17-19

17. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

People began to understand very early in the ministry of Jesus Christ that miracles could be performed through Jesus, and they came to Jesus.

18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

Jesus was able to heal people of illnesses and for the few people who were possessed of demons he was also able to get rid of those demons. Notice verse nineteen.

19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him:

They wanted to put their hands on Jesus Christ not in a way to kill him but because they wanted to make physical contact with Jesus.

for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

The word for virtue in this verse is not the same word for virtue we looked at early on in today's study. When we look at second Peter one the Greek word *arete* is used for virtue. Here in Luke six nineteen the Greek word translated as virtue is the Greek word *dunamis*, and it is Strong's Greek word 1411, and it means power, strength, or mighty work.

It is through faith and it is through virtue or this moral application and behavior related to our faith that we are able to develop up this power, this strength, and given the ability to do mighty work. Faith is the foundation of our relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. To it, we know through diligence, we will add virtue. Through diligence, what we do spiritually will be done in excellence. What we do spiritually will allow other people to praise God. What we do through virtue will reflect our high moral standards that we have been made aware of through the Holy Spirit. As we live our Christian faith looking at virtue we will be a person of integrity, we will be honest in our behaviors reflecting those strong moral principles.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.