

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



Home of the Southwest School of Bible Studies

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A VIRTUOUS FAITH

2 PETER 1:5

CODY WESTBROOK

The “Christian Graces” are a list of seven Christ-like characteristics that every child of God must cultivate in his life. If we wish to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4) we must make each one of these traits a definite object of our pursuit. The first of these seven qualities is “virtue.” This term is found several times in the New Testament and generally refers to “moral excellence” such as in Philippians 4:8. In the context of our consideration, however, it carries a distinctly different meaning. Here it denotes the idea of moral courage or, as Guy N. Woods put it, “the manliness and the determination to do that which is right.”

It is vital that we have faith in God, and in His word (Heb. 11:6). But, simply possessing knowledge and believing in that knowledge is not enough. James teaches us that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17), and, as Solomon said, wisdom and prudence dwell together (Pro. 8:12). Our faith must be put into action! Having the courage to do this, however, is not always easy. It is not very difficult for us to prepare an answer for an atheist or to arm ourselves against the temptation to sin, but when the battle gets hot sometimes our sword gets stuck in the sheath.

Joshua is a wonderful example of a virtuous faith—one that has the courage to do what is right! After Moses’ death, God entrusted him to lead His people into the Promised Land. It was an arduous task, no doubt, and it is not very difficult to imagine that Joshua surely must have had some reservations about it. But God reassured him that, “...as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not leave you, nor forsake you”

(Josh. 1:5), and further encouraged him to “be strong and of good courage” (Josh. 1:6). Certainly Joshua believed in God and in His power. Having been with Moses and the people through the exodus from Egypt and subsequent wilderness wandering, he had seen the power of God on display multiple times. Yet the reassurance of God’s provision and exhortation to be strong and courageous gave him the confidence he needed to take on the leadership of God’s people. As a result, he led the people in the conquest of Canaan and died after many years of faithful service to God.

Am I determined to do God’s will, no matter what? That is a question that each one of us should contemplate. Like Joshua, we have faith in God. We believe that He is, that He is omnipotent, and that He takes care of His own. We believe in His word and the power that it has to save our souls. But, are we willing to showcase that faith through action? Peter urges us to add virtue to our faith first because without the courage to do what is right, the other six characteristics are basically moot. Before I can ever exhibit real brotherly kindness, temperance, and love, I must have the courage to take the necessary steps to do it! And, though it may not always be easy, we should not fear. Like Joshua, God has promised that He will never leave us, nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). How we all need to develop a virtuous faith!

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The Gospel Radio Network launched in January 2014 as a 24/7 internet radio station broadcasting sound gospel preaching throughout the world. This work is overseen by the elders of the Mount Vernon church of Christ in Mount Vernon, TX.

For a schedule of programs visit them at www.thegospelradionetwork.org



ARE YOU CHALLENGING CHRIST'S AUTHORITY?

Clay Bond '03

In Matthew chapter eight we read about a Centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. The compassionate Savior declared that He would go to the man's house and heal his servant. The Centurion's response provides an interesting commentary on the concept of authority "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (Matthew 8:8-9). This man understood that Jesus had the power or authority, to heal His servant even without seeing or being near him. Jesus' authority extended beyond His physical location and it still does. What Jesus has to say is important to us because it is authoritative!

During His earthly ministry the Jews constantly challenged Christ's authority. One example of this is seen when Jesus went into the temple and drove out those who were buying and selling, overturned the tables of the moneychangers and rebuked them for making His Father's house of prayer into a den of thieves (Matthew 21:12-13). The following day as Jesus taught in the temple, the chief priest and elders came to challenge Him asking, "By what authority doest thou these things and who gave thee this authority?" (Matthew 21:23). These Jewish leaders failed to see that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, did not just have some authority, He had

"all authority" (Matthew 28:18)! Do we also fail to see and respect the authority of Christ? If we do not understand the concept of "all authority" we may be just like the Jewish leaders without even realizing it.

Paul wrote "...whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ..." (Colossians 3:17). Since Jesus has "all authority" what we practice in religion must be found in His Word. Jesus warned that if we do not have Divine authority for what we practice our worship becomes vain (Matthew 15:9). Jesus also said that true worshipers must worship the Father "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). Not only must we have the right attitude when we worship God, our worship must be offered according to what God's Word says (John 17:17).

The Old Testament is filled with examples of those who acted on their own, stepping outside the authority of God's word to do what they thought was best. In each situation we see that what was done was not pleasing to God because it failed to respect His authority. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, fire that was not authorized by God (Leviticus 10:1-20), Saul offered sacrifices which were not authorized by God (1 Samuel 15) and Uzzah touched the ark in violation of God's instructions (2 Samuel 6). These things are written "for our learning" to teach us the seriousness of Bible authority (Romans 15:4). When God speaks He expects us to listen and obey because "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

So much of the confusion and division in the religious world today is the result of religious practices that lack Biblical authority. The truth is, all religious division is the result of human failure to respect Christ's authority over His church.

Over four hundred times in the Old Testament, particularly in the Old Law, we find an interesting phrase "thus saith the Lord." This phrase is the key to avoiding the vain worship Jesus warned about. If we have a "thus saith the Lord" for every religious practice we can be sure that our worship is acceptable and pleasing to God. The question each of us must ask is: Do I have Christ's authority for my religious beliefs and practices?

The Pharisee's questioned Jesus authority because His teachings did not match their traditions. Does the church you attend respect Christ's authority by teaching His plan of salvation (Romans 1:16-17), worshipping according to His pattern found in the New Testament (John 4:23-24), identifying itself by a name

given in His word (Ephesians 3:15; Romans 16:16) and following the structure for the organization of the church given in His New Testament (Philippians 1:1)?

We should always be willing to examine our religious practices and change if we find that what we are doing is not authorized by Jesus Christ. Do you challenge Christ's authority, or do you comply with it? Remember Jesus "...became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9)

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SWSBS Monday **Evening Bible Class**

Begins August 19th, 7:00 pm
(ALL ARE WELCOME)

SOCIAL UNREST

Kevin W. Rhodes

The pervasiveness of decay in today's society pounds a steady drumbeat of immorality threatening not only to destroy the culture but more specifically to undermine the very essence of truth. Under such circumstances, the faithful struggle to maintain their place and even their identity amongst the onslaught of negativity hurled against Christianity and morality in general. As frustration with the environment builds, so does the inner cry for God to do something about it, and so God's people today can appreciate Asaph's plea opening Psalm 83, "Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, And do not be still, O God!" (Psa. 83:1).

The enemies that rose up against Israel displayed a hatred toward God and His people which serves as a reminder of the relationship between darkness and light (Psa. 83:2). Likewise, the foes we face have many faces and come from various directions, and the combination of their efforts wears down the resolve of the weak (Psa. 83:5-8). It feels much like a conspiracy against all that it is right as Satan and his cohorts "have taken crafty counsel against" God's people (Psa. 83:3). They want to eliminate godly influence and the role of faith that challenges their godlessness (Psa. 83:4). However, their ignorance reveals their weakness. They do not realize the power of God that fuels the fire of faith. Therefore,

even in tumultuous times the godly can have confidence that God can overcome them today just as swiftly and surely as He did in the past. The means may differ (Psa. 83:9-10), but their end will follow the same path of all those who presumptuously opposed Jehovah (Psa. 83:11-12). They boast in their wickedness in the moment, but God will destroy their works in the end. They will not stand against His Word forever but will perish in their pride (Psa. 83:13) and flee with fear when the LORD rises up to defend His cause (Psa. 83:14-15). However, despite all the evil they have done, the divine desire remains "That they may seek Your name, O LORD" (Psa. 83:16). It is not vengeance we seek against our enemies but indeed their own salvation, if they will but listen. For if they reject God and His will, they will "be confounded and dismayed forever;" they will "be put to shame and perish" (Psa. 83:17). For in the end, God will be glorified, and all will acknowledge that Jehovah and Jehovah alone is "the Most High over all the earth" (Psa. 83:18). Thus, while God's people today justly speak out with righteous indignation as the forces of darkness led by the prince of the power of the air lead wave after wave of desolation against righteousness, relentlessly charging into the fray to bring down the godly standards that provide the support for society and prevent anarchy, the opposition of Christians must be more than an effort to repel the attack; it should also persevere ever onward in pushing the truth forward so that even our enemies might come to seek God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Therefore, may our prayer, even regarding our most virulent foes, be for their correction and salvation. May God defeat their works, and may God's people win them over to the truth.

From Faith to Faith, Granbury Street Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, October 22, 2017.

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Word of Life

Sundays at 7:30 am

KLBJ Radio 590 AM or 99.7 FM

Past recordings are available to listen to at

swcofc.org/wordoflife

Record for the Week of August 18, 2019

Bible Class	152
Morning Assembly.....	219
Evening Assembly	155
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Tina Jackson is grieving the loss of her father last week in Wharton, TX.

Sue Shamburger is continuing to deal with health issues.

Jill Davis will have a kidney biopsy Tuesday at S. Austin Hospital.

Health Concerns: Tom Genduso, Charles Houston, Caroline Little Pat Lyckman, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith, Bonnie Thetford.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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8900 Manchaca Road
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512-282-2486 Fax: 512-282-5090
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WORSHIP AND STUDY OPPORTUNITIES: Sunday, Bible Classes 9:30 am, Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm

Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm

RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life