

"Faith, Virtue & Knowledge"
Dallas Willard, Gordon College [40:45]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ384Ysy3Q4>

The session was typed from the YouTube (audio only) with good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The [brackets] & **bold** disclose the scribe's commentary and also cross-references to other Dallas Willard teachings.

[Other Dallas Willard teachings on II Peter 1:2-11:

- 1) "Spiritual Formation - Empower - 2004"
- 2) "Faith, Virtue, Knowledge - Bethel 4/5"
- 3) "Spirit of the Disciplines 1 of 3 @ 44:00-46:10 on II Peter 1:5-7]"

Shalom (def.) "Overall well being, fulfillment, abundance that comes to us through our fellowship and confidence in Jesus Christ." He is the Lord of life.

Theme - "Adding to your faith, virtue & Knowledge." (II Peter 1:5)
Knowledge is interaction with Jesus Christ.

You have to think this was written by an intelligent person [Peter] for thoughtful people. Scriptures are writing by intelligent people, of course under divine inspiration but that does not reduce intelligence. It might even help a little bit. This is an intelligent man who is telling us something very deep. Knowledge which is interaction with Jesus Christ leads us through the interaction to great faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

II Peter 1:3-7 (NASB)

1 To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature,...

[4:50] Are you up to that? That's a stunning verse. You want to tie that to thinking about such things as the new birth. Birth gives us nature and we are born into the Kingdom of God through confidence in Jesus Christ. That is faith. Faith is confidence. As we are born into that we increasingly develop the nature that is given to us through the new birth. We are partakers of divine nature... [Regeneration]

...having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust...

"epithumia" - "Lust" (def.) Obsessive desire, ungoverned desire.

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Desire strong enough to control your whole life. When your life is controlled by desire you're in real trouble. The new life comes and the new nature comes with it and we are given an alternative to living our lives governed by obsessive desire. We put desire in it's place. One of the great reasons for the great moral chaos around us is ungoverned desire.

That's what Peter means when he speaks of the corruption that is in the world through "obsessive desire" lust - the dysfunction, the disintegration, the failure. When something is corrupt it falls apart, it disintegrates. That's what you see when you watch the news. At the root of it lies obsessive desire. [See Willard's "Battle of Faith & Spirit"]

"...escaped the corruption" (v.4) - That's for you and me. We are able not to be dominated by desire and to be thrown in to the cauldron of anger and deception and all the others things that destroy human life.

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence... [7:40]

We have "escaped". We are "partakers".

Now, applying all diligence. How much diligence does that leave out? That's something for us to do. Does that remind you of...

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

~ **Faith** - Grace and Faith does not make us passive, it makes us active. You have never seen someone active like those who have been caught on fire by the grace of God, the knowledge of interaction and the faith that arises out of that interaction. Faith is confidence that arises out of knowledge. It is knowledge that gives rise to faith. That faith then puts us in a position that we are in touch with something that is worth everything we can think of to grow in that.

[9:19] *...in your faith supply moral excellence [virtue], and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

The writer is opening up a progression that eventuates in "agape" love.

Agape Love - *"put on agape, the bond of perfectness"* Colossians 3:14

Those transitions are given as a form of knowledge about how we grow in the divine nature. How we grow in the divine nature which is "love".

"Grace & peace is multiplied in knowledge." (II Peter 1:2)

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~ **Knowledge** - We want to do justice to the overwhelming importance of knowledge.

Biblical Knowledge (def.) - "Interactive relationship"

John 17:3 - Eternal life is knowing God & Jesus. That is not knowing about.

That's **Grace** (def.) - God acting in our lives to accomplish what we can't accomplish on our own. Eternal life...the overwhelming importance of knowledge. You don't go on to faith without knowledge. You have to know what you have faith in. That's knowledge. You know that by an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ. You now walk with Him as His disciple and that is faith. Grace then goes with it.

II Peter 3:18 - *"grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

You are growing in "interactive relationship" with Jesus Christ - the living Word of God. Faith comes as a gift but it brings with it the responsibility of the knowledge and grace that comes with it. Faith in Jesus Christ is not just a belief of something He what he did or what he said.

As Evangelical Christians, we have missed the center of discipleship in favor of having knowledge about Jesus Christ. We have focused on being correct in our knowledge about Jesus Christ to the extent that we missed fellowship with Him.

As a disciple of Jesus I am with Him learning to be like Him.

Are you a disciple?

What does that mean to you individually? As a disciple I am learning from Him how to live my life in the Kingdom of God as He would live my life if He were I. That means I don't just trust something He said or something He did, I trust Him in everything that I do. As I go about my work, I am listening to Him, speaking to Him, learning from Him what to do and how to do in the best possible way in reliance upon the Kingdom of God.

~ **Faith**

[16:45]

* Elton Trueblood quote:

"Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation."

That may be a little too much to load on faith. There is room to doubt, to this to ask questions and to grow. I say doubt all you can. All questions are welcome. It very common to say, "You don't want to doubt." I would say doubt all you can. Doubts are welcome.

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* Thomas - put his hands in the wounds of Jesus. We miss the point that this was Jesus' idea. He invited them to touch Him to settle their doubts. If someone rises from the dead, you ought to have some doubts. You can be honest with Him.

That's one of the great things about a walk with Christ is that Faith is not just holding on, it rests in an opening out of knowledge of a reality that we live in.

Faith becomes a continual quest, continual growth. Everyday you get up you should be seeking Christ where you are. What is He doing where you are? Invite Him in. You can count on that He is the best man in the field. Invite Him into your studies, relationships. Trust Him. Have confidence in Him.

Salvation is not something that happens after you die.

Salvation (def.) - *Participating in the life that Jesus is now living on Earth.*

Growth is naturally built into it and it is always a growth in agape which is a growth in love. Once you understand that, you can begin to build on it, and your next step is "Virtue".

~ **Virtue**

[20:35]

The first move beyond faith (confidence) is virtue not great deeds. Great deeds may be wonderful but they are not what we are aiming at.

* I Corinthians 13

...speak with tongues of men & angels without love

...gift of prophesy...faith to move mountains without love

God's concern for us is the development of character. His intention is for all of us is that we should grow to the point that He can empower us to be able to do what we want. What He wants is that we want what He wants. There is some work to do on your want. We are learning not great deeds but great character. Confidence in Jesus is what naturally leads us to take on His character.

Virtue (def.) - *"A settled habit about bringing about some specific good, a habit that is enjoyed in its performance by the one who has it."*

The mark of virtue is the person who has it enjoys the performance. They don't just manage to be temperate by great effort. They love to temperate. They don't manage sexual purity with great effort, they love to be sexually pure. Courage, honesty...virtue is a settled habit of attaining some good in a way that expresses who we are. It's not just one who restrains their desires but one who delights in that.

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* Aristotle - *"The just person is not the person who does what the just person does but is the one who does what the just person does in the way that the just person does it."* [24:00]

Out of their insight to what is good about being just, it means with the delight the just person has in doing what is just.

You'll notice in this passage [in I Peter], we are to decide to do this. Have we decided in our faith to add virtue? In contemporary setting of Christian practice, almost no one decides to do this.

What is heard as the gospel today generally does not relate to virtue and leaves us without a decision to add virtue to faith. What we hear as the gospel today generally does relate to virtue and leaves us without a decision to add to our faith, virtue.

To achieve virtue is not something we do just by direct effort. Any kind of spiritual growth or personal growth from saving money to losing weight comes through the three stages - **V-I-M: Vision - Intention - Means**

Vision - You have to have a vision of how good it would be to add virtue to your faith, to become a virtuous person. In our culture, virtue is not attractive.

* You can have a show called "Miami Vice" not "Miami Virtue"

We have to have a vision then we have to decide to be virtuous. You're committed to doing what Peter said. How do we do this? We have to work through in our understanding and get a vision of what virtue is and why it is good. How do you add to your faith, virtue?

Intention - Many people continue to struggle with various areas of sin because they have no clear view of how good life would be without it. People have not vision of what it'd be like to not do it. People think If I give up on sin, I am really going to miss out on something good.

People are enslaved to pornography. They do not understand how good it is to have a view of human beings to think that pornography is not good. You have to come to the point where you realize sin is slop. Then you begin to see something better. That enables you to form an intention. *"Yes, I'm going to do that."* Then you move on to means.

Means - If you don't have the Vision, you won't have the Intention and the means will do you no good.

* Unused exercise equipment - Means without the Vision & Intention.

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That is true with learning all virtue. We must adopt suitable means. We can do that if we can see the goodness of it and make the decision and form the intention.

Two Steps to be Virtuous:

[29:15]

1.) Have examples to look at. We grow by examples.

The New Testament is very clear that we learn by example. Why no chapter on Spiritual Disciplines? People learned by example. They were following their leaders, above all, following Jesus.

You should have people you know who exemplify the virtues.

2.) Practice - Nearly every attainment human beings know requires practice. You can't do much of anything that you do without practice.

* Trying real hard to play Beethoven will not happen w/out practice.

* Trying to be "kind".

You are bound to fail. That's natural. You learn from it and ask, "*Why did I fail?*" You correct that and then you try again. You have to remember grace is not opposed to effort.

Trying is good. Training is better.

When you try and fail, then you train and try again. Very quickly you begin to see the results.

Fellowship with like minded people will enable us to establish a fellowship whose objective together is to add to their faith, virtue.

You have to be careful to not be lead off into legalism. The object is not performance it is character.

You accept failures that come and find out why the failure happened. You don't justify yourself by your performance. Spiritual disciplines come in and they are not legalism, they are wisdom as you train to put on virtue. In your virtue, you will gain knowledge.

~ Knowledge

[34:15]

The progression that is building is one that you use each step to carry on to the next step. If you practice virtue you will learn so much about the spiritual life and how things work in the the Kingdom of God. You will gain the capacity to live the spiritual life and you will learn to live in it and teach others. Knowledge naturally grows as we practice virtue.

~ **Self-Control**

[35:00]

When we teach - we try to bring understanding, then illustrate, then give exercises.

Exercise Assignment - Can you see how virtue and knowledge puts you in a position to add self-control? Self-control is the reversal of what you see in Romans 7. "Would do, I do not. Would not do, I do." Sit down and think about self-control and how it naturally comes out of virtue and out of knowledge.

Do you have the idea of how you add each of these to the next?

Knowing how to go up the ladder will put you in position to bring the order of peace into your life. It's a choice, it's a challenge that is given to us.

Jesus left us with a mission of teaching people to do everything He said. We can't do that unless we've learned. Is there some you think that is extremely hard that Jesus told you to do? There is not a thing that Jesus commanded us to do that we can not do if we go through the process of learning and discipleship. Not a thing!

You can't do this by yourself but you don't have to do that by yourself. He will help you. He will be your teacher. It is a decision we have to make. We have to have the virtues and the understanding embedded in our bodies ready to go with the power of the Kingdom of God.

The Challenge

[39:20]

Do we as disciples have knowledge of reality that others do not have?

Is there a knowledge of the spiritual life?

Do you believe what Peter is talking about is something that we can understand and do?

In your faith, attain to virtue, in your virtue, attain to knowledge...

What's your decision today?

Can you say, "I am going to do it!"?

Dare we do anything else?

That is the path of peace,

that is the path of joy and love that lies before us.

~ ~ ~ [Full Text of II Peter 1:2-11](#) —> [next page](#)

~ ~ ~ II Peter 1:2-11

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has given us **everything we need** for a godly life through our **knowledge** of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **4** Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may **participate in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5-7 For this very reason, **make every effort** to add [\[8 Divine Steps\]](#)

to your Faith, Virtue (Goodness);

to Virtue, Knowledge;

to Knowledge, Self-Control;

to Self-Control, Perseverance;

to Perseverance, Godliness;

to Godliness, Friendly Kindness;

to Friendly Kindness, Love (agape).

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, **make every effort** to confirm your calling and election. For **if you do these things**, you will never stumble, **11** and you will receive a rich welcome into **the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

~ ~ ~

The 8-Step Divine Ladder to Becoming a Loving Person

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The 8-Step Divine Love Ladder - How to Become a Loving Person

Faith

Virtue

Knowledge

Self-Control

Perseverance

Godliness

Friendly Kindness

—> Agape Love

Friendly Kindness

Godliness

Perseverance

Self-Control

Knowledge

Virtue

Faith

AGAPE LOVE
FRIENDLY KINDNESS
GODLINESS
PERSEVERANCE
SELF-CONTROL
KNOWLEDGE
VIRTUE
FAITH

