

Spiritual Warfare & Moral Excellence – Part 1

Striving for Moral Excellence

In this message, I want to talk about our commitment to moral excellence!

The need for **the church to exhibit a sense of moral excellence** to the world is a critical need in *the world in which we live*.

We are living in a time in which wickedness and a lack of morality is on the increase.

Acts 2:40 - A Vital Church Grows - And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this *perverse generation.*” (crooked)

CEV - Peter told them many other things as well. Then he said, “*I beg you to save yourselves from what will happen to all these evil people.*”

We live in a society that condones and promotes sexual promiscuity, homosexuality, abortion and filthy and coarse language.

Our society is plagued by murder, teen age pregnancies, gang violence, drug usage, and many other ills.

All of which I have just mentioned is flaunted flagrantly through music, television, movies, books, magazines, the internet, and other media resources.

And if all of this is not enough, judgement and justice are compromised too.

We’re seeing criminals go free because of the corruption in our justice system.

Ecclesiastes 3:16 - Injustice Seems to Prevail - Moreover I saw under the sun: *In the place of judgment, Wickedness was there; And in the place of righteousness, Iniquity was there.*

CEV - **The Future Is Known Only to God** - Everywhere on earth I saw violence and injustice instead of fairness and justice.

This is truly the time to be saved from a perverse generation.

God is calling us as Christians to stand in opposition to all we see and hear, while walking in a moral excellence that is **in direct contrast to the evil around us.**

It takes a person of valor to stand against this tide of **wickedness and moral depravity** that is sweeping our land. **Unless we are committed to moral excellence, we too** shall be swept up in a tide of wickedness.

We must be people with the strength of mind or spirit that enables us to encounter the culture in which we live with a firmness that results from **commitment to moral excellence.**

This is something that we have been called to do.

Philippians 2:15 - That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a **crooked and perverse generation**, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Matthew 5:13-14 - Believers Are Salt and Light - 13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. 14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Our Call to Moral Excellence

We find in Peter’s second epistle where he exhorts us to **add certain ingredients to our faith, otherwise we too, will fall** and be swept in **this tide of wickedness.**

2 Peter 1:5-6 - Fruitful Growth in the Faith - 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

CEV - Do your best to improve your faith by adding goodness, understanding, 6 self-control, patience, devotion to God,

2 Peter 1:10 - Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble;

Peter says, “We must add virtue to our faith.”

Virtue is defined as moral excellence.

- **Thayer's Greek Lexicon** – A virtuous course of thought, feeling, or action that leads to moral goodness, any moral excellence as modesty and purity.
- **Webster Dictionary** defines it as moral excellence; conformity to a standard of right; a particular **moral excellence**.
- **Excellence** is defined as eminently good: first class, outstanding.

*This is what **Peter says by the Holy Spirit** that we are called to and that we must be continually adding to our faith if we are to keep from being tripped by the world.*

Paul speaks a lot concerning our moral excellence to the degree that we have been espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin.

2 Corinthians 11:2 - For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

CEV - I am as concerned about you as God is. You were like a virgin bride I had chosen only for Christ.

Chaste – Being pure from carnality, modest, pure from every fault, immaculate.

Virgin means – clean, pure, and holy and applies to all Christians who have come to personally know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

1 Peter 1:13-16 - Chosen to Live a Holy Life - 13 Be alert and think straight. Put all your hope in how God will treat you with undeserved grace when Jesus Christ appears. 14 Behave like obedient children. Don't let your lives be controlled by your desires, as they used to be. 15 Always live as God's holy people should, because God is the one who chose you, and he is holy. 16 That's why the Scriptures say, "I am the holy God, and you must be holy too."

As you can see, God really does desire to have a people who are striving for **moral excellence**. (remarkably good)

- He expects us to be committed in every area of our conduct.
- Such as: sexual purity, language, personal integrity, and honesty.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 - Abstain from every form of evil.

Colossians 3:5 - Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:8-9 - 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

These are all areas in which **Christ wants us to add to our faith moral excellence.**

We should be superior to the world in all these areas if our light is to shine amid a crooked and perverse generation.

The Example of Joseph - When I think of various Bible characters that were not only **committed to moral excellence but also exhibited it**, **Joseph** immediately comes to mind. **Joseph was a person of impeccable character and moral excellence** even during the most adverse circumstances.

Joseph was sold by his brothers to Midianite traders who took him to Egypt and sold him as a slave on the slave market.

Genesis 39:1 - Joseph a Slave in Egypt - Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

He could have become bitter towards God and allowed his morality to become polluted, **but instead he grew in godliness** while **persevering** during unjust treatment.

There is a tendency within a person to **compromise and fall back *in their moral conduct*** when we are going through the fiery trials of life...

Remember! It's during perseverance that we add godliness to our faith.

The blessing of God was upon Joseph's life and his masters house because of his commitment to moral excellence.

Genesis 39:2-4 - 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority.

Joseph had an opportunity to **compromise his moral excellence** but ***chose not to***. **It is during the trials that we add to our faith.**

Genesis 39:6-10 - 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" 8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" 10 And though she spoke to Joseph Day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

The standard of righteousness he had set for himself protected him from compromising his testimony.

What kind of standards are you setting for you and your family?

Setting standards is very important in your overall growth into moral excellence.

If you do not deliberately set standards for your life and your family, you will be swayed by the emotion of the moment.

He had an integrity towards his employer and towards God that he refused to compromise.

He was put into prison for not giving into his masters wife's desires towards him.

Genesis 39:20 - Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.

He could have become bitter but didn't and found favor with the keeper of the prison and was eventually released and **became ruler over all of Egypt behind Pharaoh.**

CLOSE: Joseph is a type of person that God is looking for in these last days.

Darkness and sorrow are going to come upon the earth in these last days just as it did in Joseph's Day.

The world will look to its own prophets and wise men for help. **But will find nothing.**

Then it will be that those who are of **excellent spirit** will be called forth to show **leadership and guidance** through troublous times.

These are those, **like Joseph**, who continued to **exhibit moral excellence** during the fiery trials of life.

Daniel 11:32-33 - 32 Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but **the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.** 33 And those of the people **who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame,** by captivity and plundering.

Knowing God and his Word makes us strong and able to resist evil when it comes.

We must be prepared to face persecution and rejection as we **teach and preach.**

You may not be called to give wisdom and counsel on a worldwide scale the way Joseph was, **but We will all have people around us who are depending upon our moral excellence to lead them out of their misery!**

Isaiah 60:1-3 - The Glory of Zion - 60 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. *** **AS we read these promises, we long for their fulfillment. Patiently wait for God's timing – He controls history and weaves our lives into his plan.**