

# VIRTUE

—According to Saint Nektarios—

Virtue is the voluntary, steadfast, and unchanging decision of free-willed man to execute the law of God. It is the unification of man's free will with God's will.

Virtue is considered true and genuine when it is carried out voluntarily on account of the goodness of virtue itself and not for some other purpose or goal. St. Maximos the Confessor states that the person who avoids sin and executes virtue solely anticipating heavenly glory or fearing eternal hell has not yet come to possess true virtue nor has become like unto God.

Virtuous is the person who freely and willingly desires virtue, and who voluntarily toils on its behalf. Whatever takes place without freedom and choice cannot be deemed virtue—because virtue necessarily is optional and voluntary, and it is linked with and stems from voluntary efforts. Efforts, in turn, are eternal on account of the perpetual battle that takes place between the flesh and the spirit. **“For the flesh desires against the spirit,”** states the Apostle Paul, **“and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:17)**. Job also says that **“man's life upon this earth is a contest” (Job. 7:1)**. Consequently, virtue is the trophy awarded to the champions of this battle. Virtue initially comes into being when man's disposition inclines favorably toward it; subsequently, it matures and is perfected through man's personal struggle and diligence.

A Christian does what is good because he loves it with all his soul, heart, and mind—because good work is the work of God. He who loves God, naturally, also loves God's work. The person who loves God is moved by God Himself to carry out good works. The person who does good is moved and inspired by God Himself—even to the point of self-sacrifice—because his soul has been warmed with the love of God, Who loved man, Who revealed Himself to man, and Who spoke to man in a mystical manner. The faithful person who carries out virtuous

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deeds has completely devoted himself to the works of love and has united his own will with God's will. Such a person considers the works of love as a directive issued by divine love. The faithful Christian feels that he has been created to carry out before God what is **“good and pleasing and perfect” (Rom. 12:2)**. The faithful Christian believes that by doing good works he becomes like unto God, in Whose image he was created. These are the reasons prompting man to work good deeds. They, therefore, who believe that undeserving motives, unsubstantiated promises, and the like, motivate Christians to do good works are greatly deceived.