



Mary Craig Ministries

September 2014

Dear Friend of Mary Craig Ministries,

We hear a lot today about realizing our potential. Slogans include “Be all you can be”; “It’s not just a job, it’s an adventure;” “Aim high.” The military has SOCOM, the Green Berets, the Delta Force and the Navy Seals, those who excel in strength, vigor, bravery, courage, ability, endurance, and self-control. Sports has its Olympians. Education has valedictorians, summa cum laude. You get the idea.

But where does all this come from? And is this worldly or is this something we also find in Scripture?

Arete [a re tay] is a Greek word [Strong’s 703] that summarizes and describes a concept well known to the time of Christ and the Apostles. Arete was the Greek goddess of excellence, virtue, goodness, and valor. Paul and Peter both address this goddess spirit, and we do well to understand how.

1 Peter 2:9 says this:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the virtues [excellencies, arete] of Him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light.

Peter counters this goddess Arete as a source of excellence and all that is included in the concept with the excellencies of God, the one who has called the elect out of darkness into marvelous light. This goddess spirit is a counterfeit; we must look to the One who is the Real and True. We are to show forth the arete of Him, His excellence, His moral excellence, His virtue, His goodness, and His valor. Who is greater than the Living God? Who is like Him? We are to *exangello* [ex ang el’ lo], show forth, publish, and celebrate His virtues, His arete.

Peter tells us more in 2 Peter chapter one. Peter writes to those that have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. He sends grace and peace, asking that these be multiplied unto believers through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Peter 1:1, 2) At the end of his letter, Peter will exhort his readers to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)

In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter will emphasize our need for knowledge of Christ again:

According as His divine power [dunamis, ability] has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue [arete];

The believer is called to glory [doxa] and virtue [arete]. My husband I served at a church whose slogan was “Excellence in all things; and all things to the glory of God.” Did you know that we are called to arete? But how are we to do this?

The Greek concept of arete for man means **realizing potential, being all you can be** in strength, vigor, bravery, courage, aptness, capacity, worth, wisdom, piety, endurance, self-control, moral excellence, and goodness. It doesn't mean being the best; it means **doing your best**. Arete as a concept is a **disposition, with life as a journey** and not a destination. It implies continuing to improve in order to reach one's potential. People of excellence should give **thoughtful consideration** to their decisions and **discipline** themselves to the goal set before them. Today we would probably say, “MAN UP!” For a good article on 2 Peter 1, go here:

<http://www.raystedman.org/2peter/2peter1.html>

Arete means: a manifestation of power characterized by excellence; wonderful act, powerful deed, wonderful deed. For a man it means optimum virtue, ability, and power. The desire to win the crown of arete is the essence of heroism. Arete permeated Greek culture and people were aware of those who were “excellent,” “the best.” Interestingly, the word comes from “aristos,” the superlative of “agathos” [good]. Aristos is the root of our word aristocracy, rule by the best.

Who rules the true believer? The best...Jesus Christ. His being LORD means that as a purchased people, our destiny is in His hands. In knowing Christ, and by virtue of the fact that we have been given exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, we, by **diligence**, can add to our faith virtue [arete]; and to virtue [arete] knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [agape]. (2 Peter 1:4-7)

We don't need to live ordinary lives. Our excellent God calls us and provides the power to be the best we can be. This doesn't mean we will necessarily be the best [Jesus is The Best]; but it does mean we are called to be and do the best we can empowered by Christ, who strengthens us. (Philippians 4:13) The progression doesn't end with arete; it ends with agape, love.

As believers we are to keep to the straight path for our feet and attain our potential in Christ.

Is Peter alone in this? No. We see it in Paul's exhortations to be like Christ [Philippians 2], to work out what God has worked in us both to will and to do of HIS good pleasure [Phil. 2:12, 13]. Paul says that what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ. He's after the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He desires to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:8-11) He hasn't already attained and isn't perfect, but he follows after “if that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended of Christ Jesus,” he says. (Phil. 3:12)

What's he after? This arete. It's a journey to love. He hasn't arrived at perfection. He isn't the best; Jesus is. But he says he is forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before. (Phil. 3:13)

Now the end [goal, point aimed at, purpose] of the commandment is love [agape] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned [sincere; without hypocrisy].” 1 Timothy 1:5)



Look. All fall short of the glory of God. Face it. We fail the righteousness test. We fail the faith test often enough. But we have to keep coming to the Living God, confessing our sins, asking Him to grant repentance [2 Timothy 2:25, 26], knowing that as we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [1 John 1:9], and get up from our pity party, put away the blame game, wash our faces, believe Jesus, and PRESS.

I press toward the mark [goal] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:14

Get on board. Rejoice. Let your moderation, your gentleness, your patience be known to everyone. Don't rock back and forth in anxiety. Don't have your heart filled with phobias and cowardice. Pray properly. Find the peace of God. Think properly. Live properly.

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 [ARETE][emphasis added], and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

See our word, arete? Think about it!

The Apostle Paul calls believers to run the race for the prize, to win the crown. He tells Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1). He calls him to endurance, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2, 3). He calls him to the crown, striving lawfully. (2 Timothy 2:5) And in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, he speaks of temperance, self-discipline, and **balance**.

Do you not know that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, in order that you may obtain. And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

ARETE. Do you see it? I hope after this message, you will see it everywhere. We are called to arete as a glory because our God is excellent. Our God is wondrous. Our God is the BEST, the

HIGHEST, the MOST HIGH God. Jesus Christ shows forth the excellence of the Father. We are called to glory and virtue in Christ and to press to the goal...love.

Arete is not something we achieve, as if we reach perfection; it is something we seek, continually, that at each moment or time of our life we might pursue this excellence, doing our best, giving to God our best. This excellence is based on the excellence of God, who has by His mighty power raised Jesus from the dead and who will and does raise us up from the ash heap that we might **carry on in the race for the crown of life.**

Giving God our best means giving graciously, gladly, generously, and as He guides. We appreciate your gifts to MCM. They enable us to take the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world and across backyard fences. Thank you for your God-given gifts, prayers, and financial support.

By His grace, for His glory,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing. The Apostle Paul,

2 Timothy 4:7, 8

© 2014 Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved.

P.S. Thank you for giving to MCM! Donate: Mary Craig Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 4610, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33338-4610 or through PayPal® online at www.marycraig.org. Go to marycraig.org for the latest articles and words received. Take a look and see all that God is doing through this ministry, in world missions, in evangelism, the Barnabas Project, Craighouse® Christian Fellowship, home visitation, Kinetic Koinonia, media, Bible study books available through the [online Catalog](#), and more. Worship with us 4:30 p.m. Sundays. Grow and flourish in small group ministry at Craighouse® Christian Fellowship, located in the Pompano Plaza at 114 E. Mc Nab Road, Pompano Beach, FL 33060. Log on to www.craighouse.org for a map, current events, and Bible studies. Reach MCM at 954-491-7270. Send in your prayer requests. Follow MCM Bible teachings and Rev. Jim Craig's sermons; go to www.marycraig.org and click on "Audio Bible Studies" or "Divine Appointment" radio ministry; or go to www.mcmtffr.org for audio sermons and teachings and Friday night handout sheets. Free. Mary Craig Ministries, Inc. is a 501© (3) nonprofit corporation founded in 1993. Federal ID 65-0429517.

If you no longer want these e-mails from MCM, please reply back with a request to be removed from our mailing list. If you change your e-mail address, please let us know. If you want to have someone added to our e-mail list, please reply to this e-mail with the information. Thank you.