

2 Peter 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue;
and to virtue knowledge;

Analysis

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge. The phrase "beside this" (kai auto touto de, καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ) means "for this very reason"—precisely because God has provided everything necessary (vv. 3-4), believers must exercise "all diligence" (spoudēn pasan, σπουδὴν πᾶσαν), meaning earnest effort and eager commitment. Divine provision doesn't eliminate human responsibility; it enables and requires it. This paradox of grace and effort pervades biblical theology.

"Add" (epichorēgēsate, ἐπιχορηγήσατε) is rich in meaning, originally referring to a wealthy patron fully supplying a chorus for Greek theater—generous, costly provision. Believers must lavishly supply or supplement their faith with specific qualities. This isn't merit-earning but fruit-bearing, the natural outworking of genuine faith. The list that follows (vv. 5-7) isn't sequential stages but interconnected virtues that mature together.

"Faith" (pistis, πίστις) is the foundation—trusting reliance on Christ and His promises. To this add "virtue" (aretē, ἀρετή), moral excellence or courage. Then "knowledge" (gnōsis, γνῶσις)—not the false knowledge of heretics but discernment of God's will and sound doctrine. True faith produces moral excellence, which requires knowledge to direct it properly. This sequence counters both mindless activism and sterile intellectualism, uniting character and understanding.

Historical Context

Greek ethical philosophy, especially Stoicism, emphasized virtue lists and progressive moral development through human effort and rational discipline. Peter adopts this familiar literary form but transforms it theologically. Whereas philosophers taught self-achieved virtue through reason and willpower, Peter roots growth in divine provision (vv. 3-4) and divine enablement. The virtues aren't abstract ideals but characteristics flowing from knowing God in Christ.

The emphasis on diligent effort would resonate with Jewish readers familiar with Torah obedience requirements while redirecting that energy toward Spirit-enabled growth rather than law-keeping. For Gentile Christians attracted to mystery religions promising instant enlightenment through secret knowledge, Peter insists on disciplined, progressive character development. Against libertine false teachers claiming freedom from moral constraints (2:19), this passage establishes that genuine Christianity produces demonstrable moral transformation. The early church faced pressure both to dissolve into mysticism and to fragment into legalism; Peter charts the biblical middle way of grace-enabled effort.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you balance resting in God's provision with exercising diligent effort in spiritual growth?
2. What specific practices could help you 'add' knowledge and virtue to your faith more intentionally?

3. How might your church better integrate doctrinal teaching with character formation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	αὐτὸ	τοῦτο	δὲ	σπουδὴν	πάνσαν	παρεισενέγκαντες			
And	beside	this	and	diligence	all	giving			
G2532	G846	G5124	G1161	G4710	G3956	G3923			
ἐπιχορηγήσατε	ἐν	τῇ	πίστει	ὑμῶν	τὴν	ἀρετῇ	ἐν	δὲ	
	add	to	G3588	faith	your	G3588	virtue	to	and
	G2023	G1722		G4102	G5216		G703	G1722	G1161
τῇ	ἀρετῇ	τὴν	γνώσιν						
G3588	virtue	G3588	knowledge						
	G703		G1108						

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 4:8 (Parallel theme): 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, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Proverbs 4:23 (Parallel theme): Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

2 Peter 3:18 (Parallel theme): But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Hebrews 6:11 (Parallel theme): And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

2 Peter 1:10 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Philippians 1:9 (Parallel theme): And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Hebrews 11:6 (Faith): But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

2 Peter 3:14 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Ephesians 5:17 (Parallel theme): Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Isaiah 55:2 (Parallel theme): Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

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