

2 Peter 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

Analysis

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness. Peter continues the virtue chain with "temperance" (egkrateia, ἐγκράτεια), meaning self-control or self-mastery. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23) and essential athletic/military discipline. Knowledge without self-control produces arrogant intellectualism; self-control without knowledge becomes legalistic asceticism. Together they form biblically-directed, Spirit-empowered discipline.

To self-control add "patience" (hypomonē, ὑπομονή), better translated "endurance" or "steadfastness"—active perseverance under trial, not passive resignation. Self-control enables endurance by strengthening resolve against temptation to quit when circumstances pressure us to compromise. This virtue directly confronts the false teachers' promise of easy, comfortable Christianity and prepares believers for suffering and persecution.

To endurance add "godliness" (eusebeia, εὐσέβεια), reverent devotion to God expressing itself in practical righteousness. This is Peter's favorite term (1:3, 6, 7; 2:9; 3:11), summarizing authentic Christianity as God-centered living. Godliness isn't external ritual or rule-keeping but heart devotion producing transformed behavior. The progression reveals that knowing God (v. 5) ultimately produces godliness (v. 6)—the goal of Christian maturity. Each virtue builds on and requires the previous ones, creating integrated Christlikeness rather than isolated virtues.

Historical Context

"Temperance" (egkrateia) was highly valued in Greco-Roman ethics, especially Stoic philosophy, which emphasized rational control over passions. However, Stoics pursued self-mastery through human willpower and detachment from emotions. Peter roots self-control in knowing God and His provision, making it Spirit-enabled rather than self-achieved. Jewish wisdom literature also emphasized self-control (Proverbs) but connected it to fearing God and obeying Torah.

"Patience" or "endurance" (hypomonē) was particularly relevant to first-century Christians facing persecution, ostracism, and economic pressure. Jewish apocalyptic literature emphasized endurance until God's eschatological deliverance. Peter connects endurance not merely to awaiting future relief but to developing present godliness—suffering produces character (Rom 5:3-4). Against false teachers promising prosperity and ease, Peter warns that authentic Christianity requires endurance through hardship. "Godliness" (eusebeia) in Greco-Roman usage meant proper reverence toward gods, but Peter Christianizes it as Christ-centered devotion producing moral transformation.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what areas does contemporary culture's rejection of self-control most pressure you toward compromise?
2. How are you deliberately cultivating endurance for inevitable trials and opposition to biblical faith?
3. What would truly God-centered living (godliness) look like in your specific life circumstances and relationships?

Interlinear Text

ἐν δὲ τῇ γνώσει τὴν ἐγκρατείᾳ ἐν δὲ τῇ
to And G3588 knowledge G3588 temperance to And G3588
G1722 G1161 G1108 G1466 G1722 G1161 G3588

ἐγκρατείᾳ τὴν ὑπομονῇ ἐν δὲ τῇ ὑπομονῇ τὴν
temperance G3588 patience to And G3588 patience G3588
G1466 G5281 G1722 G1161 G5281

εὐσέβειαν

godliness

G2150

Additional Cross-References

2 Peter 1:3 (References God): According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Hebrews 10:36 (References God): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Luke 21:19 (Parallel theme): In your patience possess ye your souls.

Hebrews 12:1 (Parallel theme): Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

1 Corinthians 9:25 (Parallel theme): And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

Galatians 5:23 (Parallel theme): Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Titus 2:2 (Parallel theme): That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

Revelation 14:12 (References God): Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 2:2 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Acts 24:25 (Parallel theme): And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

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