

## **Building Character: “Temperance”**

2 Peter 1:6

Temperance is the third element of character that Peter instructs us to add to our faith. No less important than any of the other elements, temperance is essential to the maintenance of a firm and sure hold on our place in the everlasting kingdom (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

In the original language, the word rendered "temperance" in the KJV means "self control." The clear meaning is that the Christian (or any individual) has the ability to control or direct his own person. This would effectively eliminate any attempt to blame outside influences as irresistible or overpowering with respect to our behavior, whether it is good or bad. We are ultimately responsible for our own character and will give an account for it in the final judgment (1 Cor. 5:10). Peter reconfirms that man is a creature of free will. In this case we are to control ourselves with due consideration to the previous building-block of Christian character, the "knowledge" of good and evil.

In our age of self indulgence, self control is too often ignored, or more conveniently misinterpreted. Some have attempted to justify ungodly vices by pleading temperance, suggesting that moderation of any wrong thing would make it right. But it must be understood that temperance can only apply to that which is lawful, while only complete abstinence would be appropriate for that which is unlawful. Remaining under control while doing something wrong will not change the nature of the act that is wrong. As hard as it is to believe, others have attempted to excuse lack of commitment to Christ by pleading temperance, again confusing self control with moderation. Here it must be remembered that, *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do (Lk. 17:10)."* If there is anything in life that Christians are not to be moderate in, it is the work of the Lord, in which we must be zealous and abound (1 Cor. 15:58; Tit. 2:14).

To those who strive for the incorruptible crown, Paul strongly asserts the necessity of self control in all things (1 Cor. 9:25). In other words, we must learn to respond to that which helps us to reach our goal and to abstain from everything that would hold us back (Rom. 12:9; Heb. 12:1-2). In the Christian vocation the gain of reward far outweighs the pain of temperance (Rom. 8:18).

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