

In 2 Peter 1:5, 6, Peter gives us characteristics which we are to diligently add to our faith. First we are to add virtue and to virtue knowledge. To knowledge we are to add self-control and to self-control perseverance. As I am studying through these characteristics, I wanted to take some extra time to delve into the meaning of perseverance.

Perseverance is a translation of the word “hupomone”, which means to remain under. The person who is persevering or enduring is remaining under some circumstance or pressure and he is doing so in such a way that his spirit is not crushed by the circumstances. Perseverance can be the result of remaining under the pressures which God brings directly in the form of discipline. Hebrews 12:7 “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons.” Perseverance can also be the result of enduring the pressures inflicted by the world and its system of evil and persecution. Either way we are to remain confident and strong in spite of the pressures.

In the passage under consideration, Peter instructs us to be diligent to add this trait to the others that are being added to our faith. Diligence means that we will focus our attention on and work toward accomplishing this goal of adding endurance to our faith. Endurance is gained primarily by practice. In order to be diligent in adding it to our faith, we will have to go through various trials and be diligent about taking those trials patiently. Needless to say, that is not an easy task.

What does the New Testament teach us about endurance? James 1:3 tells us that the trying of our faith produces patience. Similarly, Romans 5:3 tells us that tribulation works patience and patience brings experience and experience hope. This is why James says that those who endure are to be counted blessed (James 5:11). It is also why he tells us to count it all joy when we come under the various pressures because we know that these trials will produce endurance in us. Perseverance/patience/endurance is a tremendous goal to reach for. Trials bring joy because we know the result will be good.

The word “experience” in Romans 5:3 is an interesting one which would take an entire study of its own. In essence it means proof or evidence. So the patience that comes from tribulation brings about the kind of experience that proves the genuine nature of our Christian life. Experience is not the flimsy, superficial feeling-oriented concept that we have today. It is the documentation of our Christian faith. Tribulation brings about patience which gives rise to the documentation of our genuine faith which then provides hope. Someone has said that hope looks to the future while endurance helps us get there. You don’t get there if you don’t endure. We will see hope in close proximity to endurance throughout this study.

Patient endurance is required of all Christians. The passage under consideration (2 Peter 1:5,6) tells us to be diligent in adding it to our faith. Peter also tells us in 1 Peter 2:20 that when we do good and suffer, it is commendable before God to take it patiently. Paul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11 that patience is one of the things a man of God is to pursue having fled from youthful lusts and other evils. In 2 Tim 3:10 we find that Paul commends Timothy for having followed his example in the area of patience among other things. An older man who would be a good example to the young men around him must have patience as one of his personal characteristics (Titus 2:2). Patience is one of the attributes that

commended Paul as a minister (2 Cor 6:4).

The kind of patience or endurance spoken of here is not the simple patience that we normally think of when we say we might need some patience when the car ahead of us is moving too slowly or something like that. Patience is the enduring of a trial whether that trial is directly from the hand of God for our discipline or is being applied by the world and its system in opposition to God and His people. We are strengthened by God Himself so that we might endure. (Col 1:11) It is a goal to be sought after, not avoided. According to James in chapter 5 we are not to grumble against one another while enduring the trials. So rather than grumbling and complaining as we often do when going through hardships, we are to be joyful and accept the trial without complaint. That's a tough assignment.

God shows his pleasure in this kind of endurance when he commends the Ephesian church in Revelation 2. He says in verse 2, "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary."

Being able to endure trials with endurance and patience is helpful in providing the support and encouragement needed by others coming after us who may face the same or similar trials (2 Cor 1:6-7).

As I mentioned earlier, there is a strong connection between patience and hope. We already looked at the fact that patience produces the proof in our lives which gives us hope. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he said he remembered their "patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Patience helps produce hope and hope also strengthens patience. When we have a sure hope, we wait for it more patiently like the farmer does for his harvest (James 5:7-10). Even though the word is different, Hebrews 6:11 says that "we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." In other words through our patience we demonstrate the full assurance of the hope we have. Romans 15:4 tells us that through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.

One of the things that is most interesting to me is the close connection with endurance and the final reward. Heb 10:36 tells us, "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." He goes on to say in verse 38 that the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. In speaking in an "end time" context, Jesus tells us that His followers will be hated by all for His name's sake. He then adds, "By your patience possess your souls." In the same kind of "end time" context Matt 24:13 says that he that endures to the end will be saved. 2 Timothy 2:12 tells us that if we endure, we will reign with him.

Our pastor, in preaching on 2 Corinthians 4 called our attention to verse 8 which tells us that though we are hard pressed on every side, we are not crushed. Then in verse 16 we see the evidence of perseverance. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

In a message during prayer meeting he spoke from 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4. It was interesting to see the

connection with what we are studying here. Paul boasted of the Thessalonians for “your patience and faith in all your persecutions.” He goes on to say in verse 5 that this is a “manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer.”

Patience or endurance then is to be the hallmark of the Christian life. It is the pattern of life that results in God’s approval of our lives. We are told to run with patience the race that is set before us. Jesus said that the seed that fell on good ground are those who heard the word and keep it and bear fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). This is the characteristic of a true believer. Love endures all things. As our lives are marked by the love of God, they will also be marked by the kind of endurance that only comes from the power of God at work in us for His glory.