

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Illustration of Virtue in Greek Drama. Part 2.
Knowledge, Self-Control, Perseverance, Godliness**

We are continuing our study of the brilliant analogies between Greek drama and the divine plan of God in **2Pe 1:5-7**, “*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply [epichoregeo] moral excellence; and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control; and in your self-control, perseverance; and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness, love.*”

1. The *epichoregeo* is the one who provided the finances to train the Greek actors. He provided the necessary furnishings and supplies. Bible doctrine is our *epichoregeo*, since it provides everything needed for our own drama, our spiritual life.
2. The *choregeo* (chorus) was composed of excellent dancers and singers. The training of the chorus was of the utmost importance, analogous to the seven qualities in mentioned in **2Pe 1:5-7**—**virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and virtue-love**. These qualities are to be the *chorus line* of our lives.
3. It took time to train the members of the chorus and required a tremendous amount of money and effort, just as there is a cost to develop these qualities in our life, **Pro 23:23, Mar 12:30**.
4. Just as every Greek chorus has a chorus leader, Bible doctrine is the leader of our “divine chorus,” **2Pe 1:5**.
5. The lead actor in the Greek chorus was the most important, and virtue is mentioned first in the chorus line. Basic virtues in the plan of God include enforced and genuine humility, love, worship, morality, courage, and confidence. Virtue goes far beyond morality; it is the quality of intrinsic good. Humility is the foundation for all virtue.
6. In Greek drama, action, time, and place are vital, as they also are in the believer’s life. **Virtue** must be our action, and we are to live **one day at a time** in our place **inside the predesigned plan of God**.
7. There was no Greek drama without a lead actor, and there is no Christian service without virtue first.
8. Christian service includes praying, giving, witnessing, serving, etc., which are all actions of the Christian life, but without the lead actor (virtue), there is no part to be played.
9. As the action of the drama was required to flow together with consistency, so the believer’s lifestyle is to be one of unity and consistency from the power of God within, **Mat 11:30**.
10. The *dramatic contests* also have an analogy to the Christian life. One could become wealthy overnight if he was successful in his drama, just as a positive believer, who is successful in his spiritual life, can become a winner overnight, **Rev 2:7,11,17,26, 3:5,12,21**.

God has provided the concept of **routine** in our life for a purpose, and it is designed to help us organize our life. An organized life depends on organized thoughts. Routine is also important in life because it prepares you for what is not routine. You need to learn to organize the routine aspects of life, so that they do not interfere with the enjoyable parts of your life. The key is being faithful even in the “small” routine things, **Ecc 9:10, Col 3:17, Mat 25:21, Luk 16:10-12**. The monotonous schedule of work and other duties can result in boredom, but it is necessary to prepare us for abnormal or challenging times.

When one failed to prepare for life in a Greek drama, it was known as a “tragedy.” When one succeeded in preparing, it was called a “comedy.” If you fail to prepare for the spiritual life through metabolized doctrine, this too will be known as a tragedy. The tragedy of life and of the world is not that men do not know God; the tragedy is that, knowing Him, they still insist on going their own way. If you succeed in preparing through metabolized doctrine it will be known as a comedy, meaning relaxation and success. Once you begin to metabolize doctrine as your routine in life, taking it in daily, you develop **capacity** from this routine, and there comes a time when you are able to use it in a magnificent way. From your capacity you can handle the pleasures of life (the comedies) as well as the disasters (the tragedies).

Again, **2Pe 1:5** instructs us, “*Now for this very reason also, making every effort, by means of your doctrine supply [epichoregeo] virtue, and in your virtue, **knowledge**...*” The Greek word for “knowledge” is the noun *gnosei*, referring to **academic information**. *Gnosis* is simply perception of doctrine. The reason *gnosis* is used rather than *epignosis* is because Peter can only take us as far as our **volition**. We must make the decision to either believe or reject the knowledge we receive from the teaching of doctrine; it cannot be forced upon us. Peter is saying, “*Supply with your doctrine, virtue; and to your virtue, knowledge.*”

Why is knowledge mentioned after virtue? Why add more doctrine? God wills the highest and the best for us. It is negative volition toward doctrine that prevents us from experiencing it. Even though the sovereignty of God wills you to be a winner, you can still be a loser. The issue here is whether or not you have humility and are teachable. Virtue must take you from *gnosis* (academic knowledge) to *epignosis* (wisdom, metabolized doctrine).

Peter goes on in **2Pe 1:5-6**, “*...and in your knowledge [doctrinal perception], self-control; and in your **self-control**, perseverance; and in your perseverance, godliness ...*” The first member of the chorus is **virtue**; the second is perception of doctrine. The third member of the chorus to which virtue leads is “self-control,” the Greek noun *enkrateian* (from the root word *egkrateia*), which means self-discipline or self-control. Self-discipline and self-control are based on humility and are a manifestation of basic virtue. This word also means an *organized life*. Self-discipline results in an organized life, which is based on two concepts:

1. Having the **right priorities** which means “a time for everything,” **Ecc 3:1-8**, a time for God, doctrine, family, friends, business, etc.
2. **Bible doctrine**, which will give you the capacity to organize your life and have inner happiness with the right priorities.

It is the organized person who is persistent and consistent in the perception of doctrine. Under the doctrine of election, there is no excuse—equal privilege and equal opportunity

for all. You have the same opportunity as everyone else to advance to spiritual maturity, and your personal drama can glorify God, if you so choose. Those who whine and complain have made a series of bad decisions and are in self-induced misery. They have the wrong priorities; they are without *egkrateia*.

The believer must have organization in his use of time and his use of energy, **Eph 5:16**. The self-disciplined believer comes to Bible class, and he is teachable through humility. He has organized his life on the basis of Biblical priorities and a doctrinal scale of values.

Self-control is taught in many passages in the Bible, **Pro 16:32, Pro 25:28, Jam 3:2, Psa 39:1, Rom 6:12**. The Apostle Paul asserts that self-control must characterize the one who would contend for a crown in **2Ti 2:4-5**, “*No soldier on active duty entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life [a believer on active duty in the army of God does not live a normal life and is not in bondage to the details of life], so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier [God enlisted you as a soldier for Him on the day of your salvation]. And also if anyone competes in the athletic games, he does not receive a winner’s crown unless he trains according to the rules.*” Every athlete went through identical training no matter what event he mastered. This is analogous equal privilege and equal opportunity for every believer inside the predesigned plan of God, as the place in which we train and compete.

Many Christians may well believe that they are sinners and that they need to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, but they do not believe that they really need the Word of God daily. They reject the principle of **Neh 8:18**, where a revival was taking place in Israel because of the Israelites’ desire for doctrine from their teacher, Ezra: “*And he read from the book of the Law of God **daily**, from the first day to the last day.*”

The Lord Jesus Christ made doctrine His delight on a day-by-day basis, **Pro 8:30**. Doctrine promises blessings to those who listen daily, **Pro 8:34**. We need the Word of God daily to survive, **Mat 4:4, Luk 9:23**. The Lord Jesus Christ taught doctrine every day, **Luk 19:47**. The early church met daily, **Act 16:5**. The daily intake of doctrine is also taught in **Psa 61:8, 72:15, 119:164, 145:2; Acts 2:46, 5:42, 20:31, Heb 10:25**. A daily commitment to spiritual exercise and self-discipline is dogmatically taught in the Scriptures. It is the only way that you will ever fulfill your drama and your personal sense of destiny.

When a believer lacks self-control, he is defenseless against the attacks of the cosmic system. Only the believer inside the predesigned plan of God is living the Christian way of life, and therefore is qualified to compete in the angelic conflict. The *agonistai* of Paul’s day who were those who worked out just to stay in shape, and did not qualify for the games. Interestingly enough, this word is the origin of the English “agony,” and is analogous to the believer who comes to Bible class but remains in the agony of the cosmic system with his own arrogance.

The *athletai* (athletes) trained under the strict rules of the national gymnasium for ten months. They were not allowed to leave the large walled area of the gymnasium, and had to exercise under the authority of the *gumnasiarch*, the director of the gym (analogous to the pastor). They were all on the same strict diet (other foods being analogous to distractions of the cosmic system). Everyone participated in group exercise naked outdoors, regardless of the weather (analogous to everyone getting the same

doctrinal teaching). Daily trumpet calls had to be met each day at various times; to miss one was to be disqualified. Everyone had equal privilege and opportunity to compete.

1Co 9:24-27 illustrates how we are to be self-disciplined to compete for an “imperishable” reward: “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave [he keeps it in training], lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.*” Each winner in the national games received many rewards, including a crown of ivy leaves, representing the rewards he would receive when he returned home. This is analogous to us receiving eternal escrow blessings when we go home to heaven. He had a special entrance cut into the wall of his hometown city, through which he would pass when he returned. A plaque was hung on the wall after the opening was re-sealed. This is analogous to our names being recorded in the permanent historical record section of heaven because of our invisible impact on history during the Church-age, **Rev 3:12**.

Self-control is the system of authority that gives you concentration on the subject being taught. It gives you good manners, poise, and thoughtfulness of others, so that all believers have the opportunity to fulfill the function of perception and metabolization as ordained by God for the local church. Self-control means (1) **dedication**, (2) **commitment**, (3) **instruction**, and (4) **discipline**. The word “discipline” means to “drive on” or something performed or practiced in order to develop skill. Anyone can exercise, but to stick with it consistently takes character, training, and self-control. Exercise for the Royal Family in the congregation of the local church means (1) **self-control**, (2) **assembling together**, (3) **concentrating** on the teaching, (4) **good manners**, (5) **silence**, (6) **not commenting**, (7) **not disturbing others**, (8) **not moving around**, (9) **objectivity**, (10) **persistence** in spite of distraction.

We are now ready for the fourth member of the chorus line, **2Pe 1:5-6**, “*Now for this very reason also, making every effort, by means of your doctrine supply [epichoregeo] virtue, and in your virtue [supply] knowledge [gnosis-referring to biblical academic information] and in your knowledge, [supply] self-control, and in your self-control, [supply] perseverance.*” “Perseverance” is the Greek noun *hupomonen*, meaning patience, endurance, perseverance, or persistence. It means that in spite of opposition or distractions, you are not influenced by others. It means courageous endurance in spite of all opposition, and includes active and energetic resistance to hostile forces. It therefore means to persevere or to stand fast. This fourth member of the chorus represents *consistency*.

The first four members of your chorus line should be (1) **virtue** (respect, loyalty, and devotion), (2) **knowledge** (perception of doctrine), (3) **self-control** (an organized life), and (4) **perseverance** (endurance and consistency). Perseverance gives us momentum and progress; the believer who becomes “more than a conqueror” is the believer who endures. Endurance fully releases its benefits when the believer refuses to quit. On the road to spiritual maturity we have to keep driving forward.

Hupomonen is used for the ability of the believer to persevere when being pressured, **Jam 1:12**, and for those who stick with doctrine in spite of all the pressure from the kingdom of darkness, **Luk 8:15**. Our Lord said in **Luk 21:19**, “*By your*

endurance you will gain your lives.” The attitude of willing to be victorious, and the will to excel, are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that take place around us.

The Apostle Paul used this same word in **Rom 15:4-5** and **2Co 6:4**, as well as **Rom 5:3-4**, “*And not only this but we also delight in our tribulations knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance proven character: and proven character hope [confidence].*” Trials, temptations, and disappointments can all be helps instead of hindrances if one uses them rightly. They not only test the fiber of character but also strengthen it. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before. If you are ever going to be a part of a ministry from God, you must learn to endure.

Next in **2Pe 1:5-6**, we have the fifth member of the chorus line: “*...and in your knowledge, [supply] self-control; and in your self-control, [supply] perseverance; and in your perseverance, [supply] godliness...*” “Godliness” is the Greek word is *eusebeian*, a technical term for living the spiritual life. The Greek root word *eusebeia* is actually mistranslated “godliness” in the English language. It specifically refers to the spiritual life of the Church-age believer. This spiritual life, *eusebeia*, only functions by *epignosis*, metabolized doctrine circulating in the soul. When left to our own devices, we come up with a lot of different ideas as to what constitutes so-called “godliness.” *Eusebeia* refers to the following:

1. Godliness, derived from the Greek *eusebeia*, connotes the duty and responsibility of the royal priesthood to God under “operation grace.”
2. Godliness, the spiritual life, is related to our Lord’s residence in the predesigned plan of God for His life, **1Ti 3:16**.
3. Godliness refers to residence, function, and momentum inside the predesigned plan of God for your life. This is synonymous with *experiential sanctification*.
4. In **1Ti 4:7-8**, godliness is compared to physical exercise. With doctrine as top priority, it requires continual self-discipline for the function of perception, metabolization, and application of Bible doctrine.
5. Godliness is related to your perception of Bible doctrine, **Tit 1:1**. There is no spiritual life without spiritual metabolism.
6. Godliness, what you do in the spiritual life, is indestructible, **2Pe 3:11**. Everything outside the predesigned plan of God will eventually be destroyed; anything developed inside God’s plan you take with you forever into eternity.
7. Godliness is the Christian way of life in the predesigned plan of God, **2Pe 1:2-3**, “*Grace and prosperity be multiplied to you by means of the epignosis doctrine [metabolized doctrine] from God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has graciously given to us everything pertaining to life [logistical grace] and godliness [the spiritual life], [how?] through the epignosis doctrine of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*”

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