

NV Grand Lodge Short Lecture Series
TEMPERANCE, FORTITUDE, & PRUDENCE

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Freemasonry is sometimes described as a school which teaches men a way of life which has met the test of time. Freemasonry teaches its members all the cardinal virtues which are designed to make a good man a better man, in preparation for football season, this month we will discuss three key virtues relevant to this time of the year: **Temperance, Fortitude and Prudence.**

Temperance: The word "temperance" has acquired an unfortunate connotation in modern times. It is frequently associated with the movement to eliminate the use of alcoholic beverages. But the word has a much broader meaning. The Masonic definition of Temperance is that due restraint upon our affections and passions which renders the body tame and governable and frees the mind from the allurements of vice. Every Mason is then told that Temperance should be the constant practice of every Mason, as he is taught to avoid excess in all things, such as contracting any licentious or vicious habit, the indulgence of which might lead him to- suffer, or to lose his health, or cause him to lose his reputation.

In a general sense it means that one must always exercise a degree of self-restraint and self-control, in all the activities of life, including both words and deeds. The key idea is "moderation in all things." The idea is well illustrated in the old statement: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." It does not mean abstinence except in matters which are inherently bad or harmful.

Fortitude: The second principle under consideration is that of Fortitude. It is closely related to Temperance because very often the use of Fortitude is necessary to being temperate in a specific situation.

In Freemasonry Fortitude is defined as that noble and steady purpose of the mind whereby we are enabled to undergo any pain, peril or danger, when prudentially deemed expedient. The word is related to the word "fort," which originally denoted a structure built around something for protection. **Fortitude, therefore, is that quality of character which gives a person strength to withstand temptation and to bear all suffering in silence.** Fortitude is a virtue, for it permits one to do his duty undisturbed by evil distractions. It is in great measure a frame of mind to regulate one's words and deeds with courage and with determination. It is both a positive and a negative quality in that it creates courage to do what is right and also creates strength or character to withstand intemperance. Above all else, it also creates the mental attitude to bear one's burden bravely when all other remedies fail.

Prudence: The third basic principle, ***Prudence, is closely related to both Temperance and Fortitude, for it is the type of yardstick which is to be used in determining what constitutes Temperance in a specific situation and to what extent Fortitude should be applied.*** Freemasonry defines Prudence as that principle which teaches us to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason, and is that habit by which we wisely judge, and prudently determine, the effect of all things relative to our present as well as our future happiness.

The application of Prudence to our everyday life means that we will use discretion in our acts and words; that we will use good judgment in what we say and do; and that we will use self-

control and foresight in all such matters. It also means that we will act intelligently and with conscious regard of what the consequences will be.

In conclusion, we would do well to remember the words of **Voltaire, a Mason, when he said: "The richest endowments of the mind are temperance, prudence, and fortitude. Prudence is a universal virtue, which enters into the composition of all the rest; and where she is not, fortitude loses its name and nature."**

Freemasonry teaches not merely temperance, fortitude, prudence, justice, brotherly love, relief, and truth, but liberty, equality, and fraternity, and it denounces ignorance, superstition, bigotry, lust tyranny and despotism.—Teddy Roosevelt, US President and Brother Mason

Reference

Cerza, A. (1977, November). Temperance, Fortitude, and Prudence. Short Talk Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://txfreemasonry.org/temperance-fortitude-and-prudence/>