

Our Grace-Driven Effort
 2 Peter 1:5-9
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I want to tell you a true story. There was an old dirt farmer in West Texas. He worked, and he worked, and he barely scratched out a living for himself on his farm. He plowed, he watered, he sowed seeds, he pulled weeds, day and night until he had spent his whole life just barely surviving. His body was giving out because of years of toil. His old tractor and plows were worn out. He could only plant the poorest quality seeds, and he was never able to keep the weeds from choking out the plants he planted.

One day a geologist comes to his house. He knocks on his door, and the old farmer asks the young man to come in and have a seat. They visit for a while. The young man asks him about his farm, his land, and how the farming was working out for him. The old farmer told him his story of how he had worked all his life and basically didn't have anything to show for it.

The geologist told him that he had good news for him. He told him that they had conducted some tests on his land and discovered that deep, deep in the bedrock land was the largest reservoir of natural gas and oil that has ever been discovered. He told the dirt farmer that although he was barely making it and broke that, actually, he was the wealthiest man in the world. All he needed to do was tap into the resources that had been discovered.

The old dirt farmer was startled and could not believe what he was hearing. He looked at the young man and told him he was crazy, and it was time for him to leave. He didn't need anyone getting his hopes up over something that he could not see, and even if it were there, he could never tap into it.

The young man pleaded with the old farmer to let him help him. He told him he would provide the tools necessary to tap into the resources. All he needed to do was work with him, and that the old farmer would receive all the benefits.

This story is kind of true. The part about the farmer is not true, but the moral of the story is true. Many Christians try to live the Christian life in their own power. They work hard, and all they get is a confusing Christian life.

For example, some Christians deal with their sin by doubling-down on morality and law-keeping. So, instead of tapping into the power of the Holy Spirit, they simply do more and try harder.

Some Christians go the other direction. For example, they deal with their sin by simply giving up. They may also deal with their sadness, stress, fears, and anxiety by neglecting God's word and isolating themselves from their local church. Some even tap into pop psychology for relief, but relief is never achieved.

Christians do some of these things and even many other things I have not listed. They fall into these pits of despair because they have forgotten their lives are built on top of an eternal deposit of grace given to them by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter is like the young man pleading with the old farmer, but Peter is pleading with us to tap into the powerful riches of the resources God has so richly provided for us in Christ. This morning, I have two points: The marks of a grace-driven effort and the evidence of a grace-driven effort.

I. The Marks of a Grace-Driven Effort (vv. 5-7)¹

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with . . ."

The first part of v. 5 says, "For this very reason." We need to stop right here. Before we go any further, let me remind you of two reasons the Apostle Peter wrote what he wrote in chapter one.

First, he wanted to prepare the church for false teachers and their false doctrine. False teachers and false doctrine are nothing new. There were false prophets who gave false prophecies in the Old Testament. Peter had experienced the false teaching of the Pharisees that crucified Jesus. Peter knew that false teachers would come and infiltrate Jesus' church the same way. So, the church needed to be prepared.

The second reason the Apostle Peter wrote these words in chapter one was to charge believers to be fruitful in their Christian life. On the cross, Jesus purchased the abundant Christian life for Christians, not the mediocre Christian life. The fact is, if you are not growing in your faith in Jesus, then your Christian life will be confusing and miserable. These are the two reasons he wrote to the churches.

Now, let's examine the first part of v. 5:

¹ We are going to spend most of our time in vv. 5-7.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith . . .”

Peter says, “For this very reason.” Well, what is the reason? The reason is we have been given a mountain of divine resources. Peter does not want us to be like the old dirt farmer who sits on a mountain of resources and does not do anything with them. By faith, we must tap into the divine resources of Jesus.

Peter wants us to supplement our faith. What is faith? Faith in Jesus is the foundation of our spiritual house. Faith is trust in God. Faith believes we have broken God’s law and sinned against God. Faith believes we were condemned to eternity in hell unless someone came to save us. Faith believes Jesus is the Savior God promised to send. Faith believes that Jesus came from heaven and kept God’s law perfectly. Faith believes that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sin against God. Faith believes that Jesus’ death on the cross paid our debt and the penalty of sin. Faith believes that Jesus was buried in a tomb and rose from the dead three days later. Faith believes that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead broke the power of death and sin over us. Faith believes that Jesus reigns and rules in Heaven. Faith believes that anyone who repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will be saved from the penalty of their sin because, in Christ, their sins have been forgiven. Faith believes that God adopted you into His family, and you are now part of God’s people.

This is where faith begins. Now those who have faith in Jesus have a relationship with Him. Living a life of faith means we live lives of repentance. Living a life of faith means that moment-by-moment we trust in Christ. Living a life of faith means we find strength, hope, and life by being in God’s word and worshiping Jesus with other believers who are part of God’s church.

Living a life of faith means we “make every effort to supplement [our] faith.” In v. 5, Peter is calling all Christians to exercise their faith like a muscle. He wants us to plan to make every effort to grow and mature in our faith in Jesus.

The Greek word for “make” is one of those aorist participles. It comes from the Greek verb “do.” It means when you were saved by your faith, you were to start adding to your faith, and you were to keep doing this until Jesus returns.

Often, when we talk about the Gospel at Grand, we talk about what Jesus has DONE, and this is correct. Also, when we talk about what we DO as Christians, we are careful to connect to what Jesus has DONE. The fact is we cannot DO anything without connecting it to what Jesus has DONE. If we disconnect the DO from the DONE, then we become like the old dirt farmer—working in our own strength.

If we disconnect what we DO from what Jesus has DONE, we will become disenchanted with Christianity. Disenchantment with Christianity will cause us to fall into one of two ditches: license or legalism. License means we simply give up fighting sin and just rebel against God. Legalism means we will fight sin, but we will do it through the means of religion, morality, and law-keeping.

Satan does not care which ditch you fall into as long as you are in one or the other. Regardless of which ditch you get stuck in, they are both difficult to get out. Let’s stay out of these ditches and make sure we supplement our faith by the grace of God.

The Greek word for “supplement” in v. 5 means “generous and costly participation.” To supplement your faith is a true grace-driven effort. A grace-driven effort is faith that sweats. It is the costly participation of adding to your faith in Christ.

A grace-driven effort to grow in your faith is intentional. It is deliberate. It is planned. It is costly. It can be painful. It might endure suffering. It may mean late nights or early mornings. It means reading God’s word. It means reading good books about the Christian life. It means committing Scripture to memory. It means studying God’s word by yourself and with others. Finally, it means gathering with the church to worship by singing, praying, listening to God’s word read and preached. No one ever gets to the end of their lives and realizes that they had grown in their faith in Christ but did not know how it happened.

Think about it this way. One day you talked with a friend who told you how they had been exercising and getting into shape. He started exercising and eating better. Before long, he had dropped a few pounds, lowered his heart rate, and improved his blood pressure. He felt stronger and was not as tired as he used to be. He said he was a little sore when he first started, but after a while, the soreness was gone, and he felt stronger. He realized he could do more work and handle more stress because he was getting into shape.

You listen to your friend, and you were so encouraged that you decide to get in shape too. You get up the next morning and look at yourself and think, “I don’t look any different, nor do I feel any better.” You knew you decided to get into shape, but nothing was happening. The next morning—no change. On an on, as the days went by, still no change.

What is wrong? The problem is no one gets into shape by simply deciding to get into shape. The decision is important, but unless you follow that decision with plans and action, nothing will happen. You will never get in shape unless you intentionally make plans and give action to those plans.

In vv. 5-7, the Apostle Peter is giving us exercises to get us into spiritual shape. These seven graces are what I am calling grace-driven exercises. When we practice these exercises, we will get into shape.

The first grace-driven exercise is virtue. The Greek word virtue may also be translated goodness. This word means moral excellence. It is by the trait of virtue all other grace-driven exercises are developed. Virtue is the depth of godly character that motivates you to live a life worthy of praise. The heart of a virtuous person desires to live a life of faith that is brave, heroic, and generous. He/she acts honorably at all times regardless of the outcome or personal cost.

The second grace-driven exercise is knowledge. Peter exhorts us six times in his letter to grow in our knowledge of Jesus. It is not just any knowledge but the correct knowledge of God. Here is what I mean. Many people say they believe the Bible is inerrant, infallible, and is God's authoritative word, but they do not believe right doctrines taught in the Bible. It is not enough to say those things unless you plan to grow in true and correct knowledge of God's word. We must grow in our knowledge so we may develop accurate, orthodox doctrine. This means we must diligently study God's word. The only way to grow in virtue is to grow in the correct knowledge of God through His word.

The third and fourth grace-driven exercises are self-control and perseverance. These two grace-driven exercises go together.

Self-control is an athletic term used to describe athletes who practiced self-restraint and self-discipline. It means to manage well the internal working of our desires in order to reach our goal. Often the reason we give up living for Jesus is because the desires of our hearts have overcome us. We say, "What's the use? I am not gaining anything from all this effort." When we give in to this kind of thing, we are not managing the opposition of our internal desires. We have lost self-control.

Perseverance is the strength to keep going and never give up. It is the practice of managing external opposition to achieve a goal. We need to develop perseverance because external opposition can be so strong sometimes that we want to quit. When suffering, trials, afflictions, and persecution just keep coming at us, we want to simply throw up their hands and say, "What's the use the suffering will simply not end. I quit."

Wanting to quit is not always a bad place to be. For it is when we come to the end of our strength that we can truly ask Jesus to give us His strength so that we can get out of the ditch in which we are stuck.

It is critical that we learn to manage our internal struggles with self-control and the external pressures to quit with perseverance.

Stay with me as I try to illustrate this with a contemporary example. I especially want our children, youth, college students, and our younger adults to listen closely. This current cultural problem affects them most profoundly unless they are prepared to stand firm.

Here is what I am saying. Sadly, the culture, educational system, and modern psychology are trying to create a psychological trauma for every bad experience you will ever have in life. Before long, they will have some kind of diagnosis of PTSD for every painful experience.

Don't hear what I am not saying. PTSD is real for men and women who have been in war or experienced physical and sexual abuse. I am not discounting these experiences. PTSD is a real experience.

However, the seriousness of PTSD is minimized when modern psychologists and educators develop a diagnosis of PTSD for every bad experience in life. I just learned that now there is a PTSD from having COVID. Really? What is next, PTSD from having the flu or a cold or a stomach ache?

What's my point? My point is that if you buy into the current culture's mindset of trauma, then you will never develop self-control. You will always believe the solution is out there instead of a grace-driven effort of self-control. You will never add the grace of perseverance because a diagnosis will allow you to give up.

I am going to say this, and you may not like it; even if you have PTSD from war or abuse, that is no reason for lacking self-control or perseverance. I say this because God's word is powerful. There is power in God's word to overcome, and this is true because Jesus paid the price through His trauma to heal your trauma. This gives us hope as we persevere.

The fifth grace-driven exercise is godliness. When Peter connects godliness to self-control and perseverance, he is calling us to a Christ-like life. It is almost like Peter is painting a picture, and with each stroke of the brush, the picture is becoming clear. These attributes are a picture of Jesus Christ and the Christ-like life He calls us to live.

The sixth grace-driven exercise is brotherly affection. If we only have the first five attributes, we can come off aloof and uncaring. We must add brotherly affection to our exercises. Peter knows Jesus' brotherly affection all too well. It was on the beach after Jesus' resurrection that Jesus came to Peter and restored him. Peter hurt Jesus three times with his denials. Yet, Jesus came to Peter and shared a meal with Peter in order to restore his relationship with him and call him to ministry.

Now we are called to do the same thing. The fact is brothers and sisters in Christ will fail us. We will sin against one another, and it will hurt. The question is, will we run away from them, or will we seek restoration? Will we forgive? Will we give the benefit of

the doubt and believe the best about a brother and sister in Christ? If we genuinely disagree, perhaps we need to agree to disagree. There may not be any sin involved but a simple disagreement.

The fact is our brotherly affections for others can only be warmed by the experience of Christ's love for us in spite of our sin against Him. We can and must forgive others because Jesus has forgiven us. Failure to forgive and love others means the gospel has been short-circuited in your life.

The final grace-driven exercise is love. Love is not the least attribute. Instead, it is the pinnacle.

Peter uses the word *agape* for love. It is God's unconditional love for His fallen people that He displayed for us when Jesus paid our debt of sin by dying on the cross for us. Dr. John MacArthur says, "Agape is the love that gives. There's no taking involved. It is completely unselfish. It seeks the highest good for another no matter what the cost, [it was] demonstrated supremely by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf."² Pastor David Helm sums *agape* love up well, "Here we stand at the threshold of heaven. We have arrived at the Gate. For God is love."³

Jesus is the supreme example of these attributes of grace. Also, Jesus' atonement on the cross bought these attributes of grace for us. We must look to Him as we exert our grace-driven effort. Also, we must forgive others who fail at them and repent when we fail to live them out.

II. The Evidence of A Grace-Driven Effort (vv. 8-9)

Peter wraps up in vv. 8-9 by laying out the evidence of these graces in our lives. In v. 8, we see the diligent life, and in v. 9, we find the distracted life.

In v. 8 is the diligent life.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or
unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Catch what he said. "These graces are yours!" The diligent Christian will daily drill down into God's word and drink deeply from the well of God's sanctifying graces. This well of this grace is refreshing and nourishing. It never runs dry. Your soul may be parched, but when you drink from the well of God's grace, you bear fruit in season, and out of season, your leaf does not wither nor dry up.

In v. 9, Peter lays out the opposite of the diligent life. This is what I am calling the distracted life.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was
cleansed from his former sins.

The distracted life is the Christian who has forgotten the gospel. He may be a Christian, but he has forgotten the person and work of Christ.

The distracted life is the lazy Christian. He doesn't spend time in God's word. He has forgotten the glory of his salvation in Christ.

The distracted Christian assumes that since he has said a prayer of repentance, been baptized, and is a member of a church, that is enough. He forgets to pray. He no longer marvels at God's word. He has become ineffective and unfruitful in his/her life.

Dr. John Piper says of v. 9, "The problem with the person who does not strive toward all the fruit of faith is that he is blind in two directions. When he looks to the future, it's all a haze, and the promises of God are swallowed up in a blur of worldly longings . . . And when he looks to the past, the forgiveness that made him so excited at first is [almost] forgotten, and all he sees is an empty prayer and a meaningless ritual of baptism."⁴

When we become blind to the past work of God through the gospel in our lives and to the hope for the future grace of God to work in our lives, the power of God is blocked. We have become dead in the water and are drifting with the current of culture, and we also become vulnerable to the false doctrine of false teachers. So, instead of repenting of his sin of laziness, the lazy Christian will cling to any piece of theological driftwood that floats by and offers him the possibility of staying afloat and not changing.

² John MacArthur, *Saved Without A Doubt*, Wheaton, Ill.: May, 2006, Victor Books.

³ David R. Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 199.

⁴ John Piper, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/confirm-your-election>.

Brothers and sisters let me close by circling back to where we started. Our lives of faith are built on an eternal reservoir of grace. It is an overflowing well, and all we need to do is tap into it through a grace-driven effort and enjoy the riches of grace.