

Know the Effort

2 Peter 1:5-7

Not long ago, Jessica Vincent walked into a Virginia Goodwill Store to see if she could find anything interesting. Her eyes fell upon a multi-colored vase that she liked and so she bought it for \$3.99. When she took it home, she researched some of the markings etched on the vase and discovered that it was crafted by the Venetian architect Carlos Scarpa back in the 1940s. She then asked a Facebook group if they knew anything about it. One person said that this is an extremely rare find and that she should take it to an auction house to find out how much it is worth. When she pulled it out of the box, the glass experts at the auction house faces radiated with amazement. Six months later, the vase went up for bids at the auction house . . . \$70,000 then 75 then 80 . . . finally the vase was sold for \$100,000 dollars!



What is Jessica's part in this windfall and what is the part of others? How much credit should Jessica take? Think of all that others had to do in order for Jessica to receive her \$100,000 reward. First, Carlos Scarpi had to have an idea for a vase and then take the time to make it. Then people who originally owned the vase had to care for it so that it would not break. Then someone had to

package it and donate it to the Goodwill Store. Then Goodwill had to put it on their shelf. Then some experts had to tell Jessica what she had. Then an auction house had to do the work of selling to interested buyers. And then someone had to lay down \$100,000 for this vase.

POINT: The vast majority part of the credit for Jessica's blessing goes to people other than Jessica. YET if Jessica had not driven to the Goodwill that day and IF her eye did not rest on this specific vase and IF Jessica did not buy it for \$3.99 and IF Jessica did not do some research **then Jessica would not have received the windfall either.**

Is this not true of every good blessing in our lives? The majority supplier of our blessings comes from Another. But we are not completely passive in receiving them.

The foundational spiritual blessing in our lives is the forgiveness that God gives to us through faith in Jesus. Of this blessing, we have NO PART in bringing it to our souls. The work of justification is 100% wholly of the LORD.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9 [ESV](#))

YET the part of our salvation that has to do with our spiritual growth in godliness is NOT without our labor . . . our fighting . . . our striving. We are not passive in the sanctifying work of God's Spirit.

Definition: Sanctification is that inward work of God where His redeemed are practically transformed to think, speak, relate, labor and behave like Jesus.

Sanctification is the doctrine that Peter leans into in the first part of his second letter. Peter teaches us that there are no believers who receive the gift of forgiveness who do not also receive the gift of sanctification.

Truth: If you believe in Jesus, your life will be conformed to Him. The Holy Spirit who is now in us will drive sin from us. Our sanctification is the key evidence that we really are children of God.

Illustration: Many in our church family over the years who have had children who prayed a prayer to receive Jesus as Savior when they were 8 or 9 years old. But who now that they are adults live completely contrary to the Lordship of Jesus. Often I have had older parents with tears in their eyes say, "Well, I know that my

son will be in heaven because he prayed to receive Jesus when he was a boy.” I tell you that I understand the sentiment, but that the theology of that hope is not rooted in the truth of the Gospel. Many Christian parents find themselves in this very position. It cuts you to the depths of your soul. No sadness is more painful than this one. What are you to do? I urge you not to trust in the false hope of a prayer prayed long ago. Far better to use biblical glasses to measure the state of your child’s soul.

And if your child’s life does not align with the biblical evidences of Gospel redemption, then it is far better to align your conclusion with God’s truth than with your wishes. If your child is not truly redeemed, then it is . . .

Far better to pray for your child to be convicted of their eternal guilt before God.

Far better to pray for your child to be saved from eternal death.

Far better to share your spiritual concern with your son about his eternal future.

Far better to ask the LORD to help you bear this greater burden upon your heart.

Far better to ask others in your church family to pray for your child’s salvation.

Main Idea: Our salvation is a gift of God’s grace. Yet our sanctification requires that we cooperate with God’s Spirit to grow in godliness. Let us make every effort to live for the glory of God!

God’s Part in our Growth toward Godliness

We consider God’s part briefly this week. What does God do to provide eternal life to our soul? Four provisions of God that Peter brings to our attention.

--God’s Son: God gives His Son so that we might have life.

“To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:” (2 Peter 1:1 [ESV](#))

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2 [ESV](#))

Peter emphasizes that God provides salvation through His Son over and over and over in his first letter. Let us consider two passages:

“knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18-19 [ESV](#))

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God," (1 Peter 3:18 [ESV](#))

Question: Jesus is God's provision for you. Have you reached out to the Father by faith and said, "Lord, I need your Son Jesus!" This is where life begins!

--God's Calling: God sets His love upon His the redeemed before the foundation of the world.

"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall." (2 Peter 1:10 [ESV](#))

I know that for many this doctrine is deeply troubling and very confusing. But God has revealed that He calls His own to Himself. And that everyone whom the Father calls comes to Jesus.

--God's New Life: God places His life in our soul.

*"by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become **partakers of the divine nature**," (2 Peter 1:4 [ESV](#))*

Prior to Jesus, every person is spiritually dead. But through faith in Jesus, the life of God flows through us . . . this new life is from God and reflects God. **In Peter's first letter, he uses the same language that Jesus used to describe the gift of new life:**

*"he has caused us to **be born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:3 [ESV](#))*

--God's Promises

"by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature," (2 Peter 1:4 [ESV](#))

So much to say about God's part in our salvation! But let us turn to our part.

Our part is so small that we can never take credit for any good outcome. But our part is NOT insignificant. When God gives us life in His Spirit, He calls us to use

the strength of this new life to participate in His ongoing work of making us to become more like Jesus.

So what is our part?

Our Part in our Growth toward Godliness

Where there is life, there must be growth. Something is terribly amiss if a baby who is born January has not grown by summer. God give us life to grow us!

Point: If we are not growing in our spiritual life right now, the problem is NOT that God is failing to do His part.

Let us consider our fight, our investment and our vision . . . each of which influences our spiritual growth.

--Our Fight: We must battle against strong enemies if we are to grow.

Who are these enemies? The world, the flesh and the devil . . . each of these enemies oppose the work of God to conform us into the image of Jesus.

And right here he warns us about the world and the flesh:

“having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” (2 Peter 1:4 [ESV](#))

In Peter’s first letter, he warns about the devil:

“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, . . .” (1 Peter 5:8-9a [ESV](#))

These three enemies oppose our spiritual growth by . . .

- pushing false ideas about God into our hearts
- tempting us with “better” life plans
- luring us into dark pleasures
- pressuring us through threats
- promoting the “self” over everything
- endorsing a confidence in our own rightness

- distracting us from the beauty of Christ
- hindering us from loving the church of Christ
- lulling us into spiritual sleep and passivity
- erasing the truth of God's judgment from our thoughts.
- feeding our own pride, anger and self-pity.

Peter knows the effort that this fight will require of us so he writes:

"For this very reason, **make every effort** to supplement your faith with virtue," (2 Peter 1:5 [ESV](#))

Peter begins by writing, "For this very reason" . . . Because God is working to fashion us into people who are spiritually flourishing now and forever . . . make every effort! **This word for "make every effort" is translated as "applying all diligence" in the NASB. The Message reads, "So do not lose a minute in building on what you've been given."** The idea is "with haste" . . . do not wait to begin this effort!

How do we make every effort to fight against the enemies of God?

1. **We must acknowledge the spiritual war every day.** We must not think that this world is hard for us simply because it is a hard place. We have spiritual enemies that labor to undo our worship of God. Live as though they bring the greatest danger to your life . . . because they do. Your greatest danger is not the next president . . . nor an economic disaster . . . nor a health scare . . . nor an international cyberattack. All of these are serious potential problems. But please Christian friends, do not give these problems more attention than you do to these three spiritual enemies.
2. **We must pray that the Holy Spirit will alert us to the deceptions that we tend to believe.** We need the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts through God's Word and with God's people.
3. **We must receive the benefit of God's provisions.** We must by faith put on all that God has given us . . . His love, His promises, His Word, His Spirit, His salvation, His righteousness.
4. **We must suffer.** No fight is easy. We will have to stand up against the enemies of God and experience the pain of standing up against them.

Truth: Our spiritual progress will require our spiritual effort!

--Our Investment

“For this very reason, make every effort **to supplement** your faith with virtue,” (2 Peter 1:5 [ESV](#))

This word translated “supplement” has an interesting history. Originally, this Greek word “*epichoreægeō*” was a term used for someone who invested money for the staging a theatrical production. The word eventually came to used of any public benefactor who invested money in community projects. **By Peter’s day, the term simply referred to an extremely generous giver.**

If you look down at verse 11, you will see this same word used again by Peter.

*“For in this way there will be **richly provided for you** an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:11 [ESV](#))*

In verse 5, this word calls every believer to “supplement” or “generously invest” in one’s progress in Christlikeness. Then in verse 11, Peter brings us back to God’s part . . . God is the One who “richly provides” or “generously invests” to secure our joyful entrance into heaven.

Question: How did you invest this past month in your spiritual growth? Did you invest at all? Did you invest only a small amount? Did you invest a large amount?

Illustration: Friend in seminary from Louisiana. One day he told me the story that he was in high school in the early 1980s, he invested some of his savings in a brand new stock. Now eight years after his investment, he told me how much money he had in his account because of that investment. I was shocked. Are you surprised that “Wal-mart” stock purchased in 1980 brought jaw dropping returns by 1992? I do not often feel envy knocking upon my heart, but as a financially struggling new husband and dad, I thought, *“Man, I wish I had done that!!”*

If for the next week, you were allowed to buy Walmart stock at the 1980 prices, what would you do over the next seven days? You would empty your bank account and take a second mortgage on your house to buy as much of the stock as possible. We are wise to invest in a sure deal.

Problem: There are no sure deals in front us in the stock market. But do you know where there is a sure deal? In God’s Kingdom. And the return is much,

much more lasting and more securing than Walmart stock or any physical treasure.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21 [ESV](#))

How do we invest in our spiritual growth?

1. We invest by spending time with Jesus.
2. We invest by confessing our sins daily.
3. We invest by committing to God’s new community.
4. We invest by encouraging our brothers and our sisters
5. We invest by finding ways to serve Jesus in His church.
6. We invest by placing all our time and treasures before the LORD.
7. We invest by loving God and submitting our lives to Him daily.

--Our Vision

Question: When you look to the future of your life, what do you see?

This is a REALLY REALLY important question. Obviously, I am encouraging a spiritual answer because I am asking this question in the middle of a sermon.

But what if the **guidance counselor** at school ask you this question this past Thursday? What if your **supervisor at work** asked you this question this past Thursday? What if your **spouse** asked you this question this past Thursday?

What would your answer on Thursday have been?

If we answer, “By God’s grace I want my future to be filled with growth in godliness.” **Then our next question will be, “What does that kind of growth look like?”** Peter helps us to understand what growth in godliness practically looks like. He gives us specific qualities that shape a vision for what God would want to be.

Vision for spiritual growth in Christlikeness.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.” (2 Peter 1:5-7 [ESV](#))

Peter helps us to gain a clearer vision for the qualities that we fight to pursue and invest to possess. Peter lists 8 qualities. I do not think this list is exhaustive so much as it is practically descriptive. Peter gives us these eight lenses so that we can know what we are pursuing and also measure if we are growing.

I do think that placing **faith at the beginning** and **love at the end** of the list is intentional and significant. Also, the fact that Peter repeats each virtue before moving to the next instructs us that these qualities are linked together as a whole. We cannot say, “Well, I am pretty good on 7 of them.” They are a whole cloth. Any tear in the fabric will ruin the garment. Let us look at each of these eight qualities. The important thing is that we take some time with each of them.

FAITH: The quality of trusting the LORD and not leaning on our own understanding.

Peter begins with faith because every work of God in our life begins with faith. We must grow in believing that God is right and that we are wrong when our thoughts do not align with His. We must grow in the kind of faith that submits to the LORD as King over our lives. **Faith believes not only that God’s ways are true and right, but that God’s ways are good and beautiful.** Faith teaches us that God’s path is the only path to a life of beauty . . . a life that yields goodness.

VIRTUE: The quality of goodness that leads us as a moral compass in a world of moral chaos.

This moral excellence gives us clarity to make good decisions even when we are pressed with ungodly counsel. Virtue feeds a healthy conscience so that the accusations of the evil one have no power to doubt God’s love.

KNOWLEDGE: The quality of knowing the mind of Christ.

This knowledge helps us to accurately reflect the priorities of Jesus, the wisdom of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus, the grace of Jesus in all kinds of practical

situations. Many in our world claim to know what Jesus would do or say. But only those growing in godliness possess true knowledge. This knowledge is gained through meditation upon and obedience to the revelation of Jesus given by the Spirit in God's Book. We immerse ourselves in Jesus' teachings and works to obtain this knowledge. We sit at Jesus feet like Mary and listening to Jesus teach us about everything in life.

SELF-CONTROL: The quality of restraining our flesh's sinful impulses and pursuing God's good commands. This kind of restraint leads a life on God's timetable . . . waiting upon the LORD instead of scheming to get our way right now. Self-control keeps our appetites from running away from us . . . appetites for food, drink, sex, money, and worldly pleasures. Without self-control, we become people that we wish we were not.

STEADFASTNESS: The quality of persevering through hardship in the hope of God's promises. This kind of perseverance refuses to quit on God, on His work or on His people. Though discouragement after discouragement flow to the godly person's life, they keep on moving forward in faith and love. They do not break away from fellowship with God or His people. Following Jesus is a very long walk in the same direction. Such perseverance is gained through thinking often of Jesus' return and the glories that will follow this life.

GODLINESS: The quality of being conscious of God's presence in your life every moment and imitating Him. This godliness is conscious of God's presence as much on the soccer field as in the sanctuary. God's person and presence shapes our responses to both big and small things . . . to whom we marry and to what we eat for dinner. Such godliness grows as we pray and fellowship with the LORD.

BROTHERLY AFFECTION: The quality of caring as much for our spiritual family as we do for our natural family. We are loyal, kind, patient, forgiving, forbearing, and gracious to one another. We do not forsake our brothers, even if they have wronged us. Godliness binds the church family together in genuine affection for each other.

LOVE: The quality of pursuing God's best for others through a willing sacrifice of one's own resources, comfort, agenda and opinion. Love is the apex of all Christian virtues. The source of our love is God. His love flows to us and then

through us. We take time to experience His love so that we can then love one another. Love becomes the motivation behind our conversations, attitudes, actions and values.

*“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”
(Colossians 3:14 [ESV](#))*

So what are we to do with this list?

First, use this list to praise God for His part in your salvation. None of these qualities are within anyone’s reach if we are without Christ.

Second, use this list as a measure for how you have grown this past year. Ask, “Have I grown in each of these qualities? What proof do I have?”

Third, use this list as a guide for how you pray for growth in this coming year. Ask, “Do I have room to grow? How do I “supplement” or “invest” in growing in these qualities?

Application: Will you put a check mark on your note page if you commit to taking time this week to pray through these eight qualities? A double check if you commit to talking through this list with spouse, family members or friend.

How important is it for us to grow in these qualities?

“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.” (2 Peter 1:8 [ESV](#))

Main Idea: Our salvation is a gift of God’s grace. Yet our sanctification requires that we cooperate with God’s Spirit to grow in godliness. Let us make every effort to live for the glory of God!

I have a friend in our church who often says, “I love the indicatives of the Gospel!” He shared how at one time all he heard where the imperatives of the Gospel. And that over time the central theme of imperatives really discouraged him because he felt like he had to do everything to change his own life and he saw he was failing! I thank God for the indicatives too! **I try to emphasize them far more than the imperatives in my ministry because I believe the Bible emphasizes them.**

Yet in our enthusiasm for the indicatives, let us not lose our grip upon the imperatives.

Truth: The indicatives turn the imperatives into our joyful friends. The imperatives polish the indicatives so that we attractively shine as lights to God's glory.