

Good Faith Effort

2 Peter 1:5-9 January 25, 2026

The beginning of the year is a time when many people give increased attention to their health. You start or re-start that gym membership. You download that food tracker app. You schedule your annual with your doctor.

If we were talking health and I said, "How are your numbers looking?" Certain metrics might come mind. Maybe your weight. Maybe your cholesterol. Maybe you're paying attention to your A1C, or your blood pressure. Cancer survivors watch their white count, and some of you fellows are taking a look at your PSA. There are levels we pay careful attention to.

But then there are numbers we don't really think much about. When I was last in for blood work, I asked how my numbers looked. In the list, my doctor said my kidney function looked good - I had a good eGFR. And I realized, number 1, that I don't even *think* about kidney function and, number 2, I had no idea what eGFR was, what the range is, or whether it should be high or low.

Blood tests provide all sorts of markers showing what's going on inside us. They uncover how well or how poorly the systems of our bodies are functioning. And we often use those measurements to set targets or goals for ourselves. We want to get our weight to a certain number. We want to keep our blood sugar in a certain range. We compare the *good* cholesterol and the *bad* cholesterol.

In our text today, Peter shows us how we can assess our *spiritual* health. Chapter 1 is all about the character and nature of a healthy Christian life - what it *really* means to be a Christian. And these verses are like a blood test where we can look for the presence - *or absence* - of certain virtues to evaluate whether our Christianity is thriving or whether it is languishing.

2 Peter 1:5a - 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith...

Peter has been explaining how God, out of His lavish generosity, has given us this life-transforming, world-changing faith, full of grace and peace and many other good gifts - in fact *everything we could possibly require* for life and Godliness so *that* we can share in the Divine nature.

Ok, so *because of that*, for *that* very reason, here's what Christians should be and do. God *gives* you these gifts to be activated, exercised, experienced, and applied in your life.

If someone bought you a car as a gift, what would they want you to do with it? Drive it! Enjoy it. Go somewhere with it.

A Christian's faith is meant to grow and thrive. You're meant to be like a tree plant beside flowing streams that bears fruit season after season, whose leaf does not wither.¹

¹ Psalm 1:3

So, *because* God wants us to *actively* share in the Divine nature - here's how we do it. Here's our part. Peter says, make every effort to supplement your faith, and he's going to tell us what with in just a moment. But first let's talk about what he means.

He does *not* mean that you're going to go out and make Christ-likeness happen on your own. That you sort of dead-lift Godliness through your own drive or ability. No, remember: You already have what you need to be Godly. All the things he's going to list in these verses *already belong to you!*

He means that, in our day-to-day experience, we use what God has given us. We exercise the faith by implementing the virtues of Christianity. We get to participate and cooperate with what He's given, what He's doing. He gave you the car, you drive it. Or in Biblical terms, we *walk* with Him. Peter's word is *supplement*. Your version may say "add."

That's a Greek word from which we get the English words "chorus" and "choreography." The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* writes, "In ancient Greece the state established a chorus but the director paid the expenses for training the chorus."²

Our Director has lavishly furnished us with *everything* we need for life and Godliness. And now we get to furnish our lives, our activities, the scenes we're in, with what He's provided and join His supernatural choreography. Peter says we should make every effort to do so.

Sometimes actors go to shocking lengths for a part they've been cast to play. All these superhero actors talk about how they only eat chicken breast morning, noon, and night and how they're at the gym 10 hours a day, they're taking HGH, and doing all this crazy stuff so they can *embody* that part.

Or those playing real, historical figures will say, "I grew my hair out," or, "I learned to play piano," or whatever else so that they could conform to the image of the part they've been cast to play.

Peter says, "Make every effort to cultivate the growing gifts God has given you as a part of your Christian faith." It means we are to have a "watchful interest" in these things. Zeal, diligence, haste.³

Do you ever ask your kids to go find something and they come back like 5 seconds later and say they can't find it? Imagine for a moment you're at home and you *had* to come up with \$5 in the next 10 minutes. Your wallet is empty, so then you go to the change jar, then you check the pants pockets in the laundry, then you pull up the couch cushions, you go out to the garage and check the car ashtray. You make every effort. Peter says we should devote our efforts to:

**2 Peter 1:5b-7 - ...supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge,
6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness,
7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.**

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

³ *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old And New Testament Words*

This isn't a step-by-step list. Peter isn't saying start at goodness *then* move to knowledge, *then and only then* can you tackle self-control. The order is random.⁴ There are certain pursuits that you take in order. AA's 12 Step program is designed to flow from 1 to 2, 2 to 3, and so on. In higher education, you don't start with a PhD and then move to a bachelors.

But Peter's list isn't sequential. "I'm sorry, I can't do self-control yet, I'm still working on goodness." Goodness, by the way, is the same term Peter used to describe Jesus' character. So, we could say, "Supplement your faith with *the character of Jesus.*" We might be stuck on that one a long time!

Rather, Peter is describing markers of a growing Christian life. It's a *soup*, not a sequence. These are the ingredients of healthy Christianity. It *starts* with faith - I believe that God's Word and His ways are true - I believe in His choreography for life, and so I live out these things accordingly. I use my life, my mind, my time, my efforts to *cultivate* these things that God says He wants to grow in me.

Goodness in a larger sense refers to the character of Christ. In a day-to-day sense it can also refer to moral courage.⁵ That we hold to the heading the Lord has given us, even when all the world around us it screaming for us to turn to the right or the left.

Peter has been using the term "knowledge" a bunch - growing in our knowledge of Christ has been the focus of our last two studies. But here he's using it in a new sense. *This* knowledge refers to the discernment of God's will and purposes.⁶ That I look at the situation I'm in and endeavor to understand what God wants *for* me and *from* me in *this* particular circumstance.

Self-control is straightforward. But let's remind ourselves that self-control isn't only about, say, lust. It *is* about that, but Christians are called to bear the fruit of self-control in all aspects of life. What we eat. What we say to others. What we say to others *online*. Our spending habits. Our driving habits. Like all the fruits of the Spirit, it's not confined to *one* area, but permeates all areas.

Endurance is also translated perseverance, patience, steadfastness. As Christians, we're called to faithful steadfastness in the face of evil. In the face of suffering. Endurance in our service to Jesus. Not growing weary in our service to Him. That we faithfully continue, not only when it's easy, but as long as the Lord asks. Continuing not with grumbling or resentment, but with grace and peace.

Godliness we talked a lot about last time. Brotherly affection refers to our active care and kindness for fellow believers. That we not only cultivate care for them, but work on rooting out hostility toward other Christians. Not always easy.

And then finally, love. This is agape love - the way God loves. Love "by deliberate choice."⁷

⁴ Richard Bauckham *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 50: Jude, 2 Peter*

⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert *Second Peter And Jude*

⁶ J.N.D. Kelly *The Epistles Of Peter And Of Jude*

⁷ Archibald Robertson *Word Pictures In The New Testament*

I don't know about you, but this list makes me feel pretty convicted. You get those blood work results and you see, "Ok, got some numbers in the green. Few more reds than I was expecting."

Peter does not give us this list to *condemn* us. He's *reminding* us that this is who Christians are. This is what Christianity is about. You don't have to go out and *make* yourself more agape - you can't on your own - but you have what you need. Our part is to join the choreography. Our part is to *cultivate* growth by walking with God and by *pursuing* these characteristics He's put in our lives.

So, don't be condemned. *But*, at the same time, we must take this seriously. Peter certainly does. Listen to what happens if we *don't* make an effort to cultivate these markers in our faith.

2 Peter 1:8 - ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you have had to hear some very hard diagnoses from your doctor. We *really* don't want our Great Physician to have to come in and say, "The results are in: You're useless and unfruitful."

God says your Christian life is like a fruit tree. Fruit trees bear fruit. If they *don't*, something is very wrong. More importantly, if they don't, the Master Gardener sometimes has to take serious action.

John 15:1-2 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

Now, we'd be making a mistake if we read 2 Peter 1:8 and just assume the apostle is talking about unsaved people. "Oh, they're not really Christians, *that's* why they're not producing fruit." But verse 9 contradicts that argument. These are people that *have* been saved. And, the fact of the matter is, there are a variety of places in the New Testament that describe Christians who have stalled out in their growth, become stunted, or never really developed at all.

Both 1 Corinthians and Hebrews talks about Christians who were still *babies* in their faith. They couldn't handle solid food, they could only take in milk. They were immature and unproductive.

A Christian can live in such a way that they are *useless* and *unfruitful*. Your version may say "barren." The term "useless" can mean, "out of work."⁸

We see throughout the New Testament all the things that are supposed to *overflow* from our lives - streams of living water flowing from deep within us⁹ - but if we don't *exercise* our faith, if we don't *live it out*, well the diagnosis isn't good.

⁸ Kelly

⁹ John 7:38

Peter says we can have all these things in verses 5-7 in increasing measure. In human endeavor, there will be certain thresholds you cannot beat. You'll have a mile time that can't improve, a bench press weight you can't increase. But *Christian* growth can *always* increase. None of us are done.

The verb Peter uses here suggests an increase to the point of excess.¹⁰ It's an estate agent's word, which refers to property which one fully possesses and is fully at your disposal.¹¹

2 Peter 1:9 - ⁹ The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.

Let's be clear: If verses 5-7 don't describe our Christian life, it's *not* just that we're underperforming. It's not just that we're missing the cream in our coffee. It's indicating serious trouble - serious spiritual disease. Peter says it shows that we're blind, short-sighted, and have amnesia!

How can you be blind *and* shortsighted? Well the terms can mean a person becomes blind because they've shut their eyes.¹² But the words he uses also refer to a disease. It's not something a new eye-glasses prescription will fix.¹³

When we become spiritually blind, we not only won't bear the wonderful fruit God wants for us, but we also won't be able to distinguish between good and evil.¹⁴

To close our eyes to the reality of what it means to be a Christian means we've forgotten that we've been cleansed. Why do you clean things? I know there are *some* things you clean just so they look nice on a shelf, but why do you wash dishes? Why do you wash clothes? Why do you wash your car? We clean them to *use* them. We clean them so that they don't sully or contaminate things.

Christians have been *cleansed* from sins. We're *purified* from them. But false teachers were coming into the church convincing people to go back to old, sinful things. It was *putrefying* them.

So, imagine going into your doctor and he says, "your blood shows you've got almost no platelets, no hemoglobin, your ferritin is non-existent, and you're way under-oxygenated." Your response would *not* be, "Actually, I'm doing great. I have higher knowledge than you do, doc. So I'm going to go on my merry way."

I hope you wouldn't do that. And Peter hopes we won't neglect these markers of a growing Christian life. These are gifts God has given us. They're ours to enjoy and exercise so that we can be full of His powerful energy and effectiveness. Let's make it our business to join the chorus, learn the choreography and continue to have God's work increase in our lives.

¹⁰ G. Green

¹¹ Dick Lucas & Christopher Green *The Message Of 2 Peter & Jude*

¹² Douglas Moo *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter, Jude*

¹³ G. Green

¹⁴ Hebrews 5:12-14