

# Ministry of Grace Church

## 2 Peter 1:5-9 - Speaker Notes



### Background

Before we continue on with 2 Peter, let me share some personal reflections. First of all, as your pastor, I am an under-shepherd. That doesn't make me any better than you, I just have a different responsibility within the church. I am supposed to care for the flock. It is my responsibility to feed you and warn you about the spiritual dangers around us. To that end, my greatest desire is to see each one of you mature in your faith and develop a close walk with God.

No matter where we are in our Christian experience today, we all need to be growing and maturing in our relationship with God. Growth is a fundamental principle of life whether we are talking about physical life or spiritual life.

One conclusion that I've come to in my 50 years as a Christian is that the spiritual realm has different rules than the physical realm. In many ways they are the same, but in some ways they are different. For instance, in both realms if you are not born, you do not have life. However, you can't pretend to be alive in the physical world unless you have been born, but in the spiritual realm, you can pretend to be spiritually alive without having been born again.

In both the physical and the spiritual realm, one of the evidences of having life is showing growth. And in both realms, we can grow strong and healthy, or we can grow weak, fat, and unhealthy. In the physical realm, the primary difference between being strong and healthy and being a weak, fat, and unhealthy is based on what we eat and how much we exercise. If we don't eat enough, we become skinny, weak, and lazy. If we eat too much of the wrong food, we grow fat, weak, and lazy. But, if we eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly, we will become strong. We recognize this in the physical realm, although we don't always do it. Frequently, that's because we don't know what kind of exercise we should be doing. And often that becomes our excuse. We don't know what to do, so we don't do anything. The same is true in the spiritual realm. We want to grow, but we don't want to put a whole lot of effort into it.

The two biggest problems I see in the spiritual realm are that we either eat too much spiritual junk food that causes us to be fat and lazy, or we don't consume enough spiritual food at all and we become weak and lazy. In either case, it becomes very difficult to exercise, so we just don't do it. You see, just like in the physical realm, it's all about developing the right habits.

The first habit we need to develop as a Christians is to read our Bible regularly. That means “daily.” Not occasionally. We all know this, but we all seem very adept at finding excuses. Enough with the excuses, already! In the physical realm, if we only eat once a week, we will be very weak and probably die. Likewise, if we only eat spiritual food once a week, we become very weak Christians, but we won’t die. That’s one of the differences between the spiritual realm and the physical realm. Like I said, the rules are different.

But what about exercise? One way for us to exercise spiritually is to pray. In fact, the stronger we get as a Christian, the more we will pray. Conversely, the more we pray, the stronger we *may* get spiritually. Notice that I said “may get stronger spiritually.” If all of our prayers are to the “great and powerful genie upstairs,” we won’t grow. It’s sort of like saying, “I get up every morning and drive to the gym where I do a couple of exercises.” That’s not going to get you to your goal. When you read your Bible, do you ask God to open up His word to you and speak to you? After you read your Bible, do you ask God to show you how to apply what you learned from your reading?

Another way to get spiritual exercise is to witness to those around you. We don’t have to pound people over the head with the gospel, but we need to spread the “good news.” Just because you don’t have the gift of evangelism, doesn’t mean that you’re not supposed to witness. One of the best ways of witnessing is by living your faith before others. If we do that consistently, eventually people will want to know how we do it. That’s an open door for witnessing.

Remember what the 2 greatest commandments are? Number one is to love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength. That’s where Bible reading, witnessing, and prayer come in. But the second is like it, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That means spending your time and effort helping others. But – we will never get there if we don’t accomplish the first. Listen, if we could weigh our thoughts and then put all of our thoughts about what we can do to help others on one side of the scale while we put all of our thoughts about ourselves on the other side of the scale ... well, you get the picture.

The bottom line is this, the more we exercise spiritually, the stronger Christian we will become. We all need to grow spiritually. “But I don’t know how!” you may say. Well, this message from Peter may just help you out with that.

Let’s listen to what he has to say.

## **2 Peter 1:5-7**

**Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply 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.**

“For this very reason” is a connective phrase so we need to see what it is referring to. In this case, the reference is to the preceding two verses. Because God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, because of His exceedingly great and precious promises, because one day we will be partakers of His divine nature .... Because of all these blessings from God, we need to do some things so that we can grow, and Peter is going to tell us what they are. He starts by telling us how to do it. He tells us that we need to apply all diligence.

“All” is translated from *pas* which means “all” or “every,” but it includes the idea of oneness, a totality or the whole. And *diligence* is from the Greek word *spoudē*, which refers to “speed, earnestness, diligence, or zeal.” Therefore, we see that Peter is telling us to apply all of our diligence to doing the things he is about to tell us. Today we might say “we are to use every ounce of effort.”

So, what are we supposed to use every ounce of effort for? We are to use every ounce of effort to grow in our faith-walk with God. In other words, don’t take these promises and the saving faith that you have for granted, and don’t just meander through life knowing you now have your “ticket” into heaven. Rather, apply yourself with every ounce of effort to grow in your faith. Regarding the growth of our faith, don’t just let it happen, make it happen!

Peter uses words of force here to communicate to the Christians of his day, and to us, the need to work long and hard at growing as a Christian. Simply being a committed Christian by itself is a difficult assignment for anyone, but Peter is saying that we need to work hard at developing our Christianity. We need to be growing!

He says that there are several areas where we need to apply that effort. The first is developing moral excellence (some translations say “goodness.”) In other words, Peter is telling us in addition to growing our faith, we need to grow in our morality (something that is rapidly slipping away in the world today). And along with this, Peter tells us that we need to use every ounce of effort to increase our knowledge of God and His promises. That doesn’t simply mean listening to a sermon once a week. We need to be doing **a lot more!** We need to be reading our Bibles regularly, attending Bible studies or studying on our own, and applying the things we learn to our relationship with God.

Peter then adds three more things that we are to use every ounce of effort to develop in ourselves. Let’s look at these three things. The first of these is self-control (“temperance” in some translations), which is translated from the Greek word *engkratia*. This is a compound word made up of *en*, meaning “in” and a form of *kratos*, meaning “power or strength.” We could refer to this as “inner strength.” Since it is often translated as “temperance,” some people equate this with refraining from the use of alcoholic beverages. That is not specifically what this word means. It refers to the ability to have “inward control.” In other words, controlling ourselves in whatever we allow ourselves to do in the sight of God. Here’s how Adam Clarke described this word:

It is a proper and limited use of all earthly enjoyments, keeping every sense under proper restraints, and never permitting the animal part *of us* to subjugate the rational.

The next thing we are told to develop is perseverance. Perseverance is translated from the Greek word *hupomonē*. We’ve looked at this word before. It is made up of *hupo* (or hypo), meaning “under” and *meno*, which means “to abide” or “to remain.” This is a picture of a beast of burden that remains under a load in spite of the weight and the distance travelled. As we develop self-control, the temptation and pressure last longer and longer. As they do, we need to continue to endure them, to persevere. Like a beast of burden, we are to remain under whatever load God has placed on us without complaining.

The next thing Peter tells us to develop is godliness. This comes from the Greek word *eusebeia*, which is another compound word made up of *eu* meaning “good” and a form of *sebomai*, which means “to worship” or “to revere.” Hence, *eusebeia* refers to a person who is devout, pious, and

fully committed to God. As we learn to persevere, we experience more of the unfaltering love that God has for us. From this personal experience we become more devout and committed to Him. This godliness refers not just to the outward show of piety, but loving and magnifying God in our hearts. This godliness begins on the inside with a deepened, total commitment to God and then evidences itself on the outside by all of our deeds and actions.

Self-control, perseverance, and godliness are three essential parts of any Christian's character. And they come not by simply letting them happen, but by diligent, hard work.

Peter now adds two final items to his list of character qualities that we are to work at developing. These are brotherly kindness and love. Brotherly kindness is the type of affection that we have for close friends. It is a desire to do good things for them, making their comfort and needs equal to or greater than our own. Agape love, however, describes a type of love that displays the utmost in concern and care for the object of the love. It is a self-sacrificing love that endures pain and hardship for the sake of the loved one. The ultimate demonstration of agape love was when God the Father gave His Son to be sacrificed as payment for our sins, even though we didn't ask for it (or even know that we needed it). There is no greater love than this. Jesus explained it to His disciples this way:

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)

The Apostle John says that this is how we know what agape love is:

By this we have known love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (1 John 3:16)

It is also the love of the Son to the Father that even though He didn't want to go through with it, Jesus was willing to do so because it was what the Father wanted.

My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will. (Matthew 26:39b)

This is not the kind of love that comes naturally. It is not a feeling but an action. It's evidenced not by what we say, but by what we do. And it only comes as we build up our Christian character and allow God to love others through us.

Neither brotherly kindness nor agape love is focused on self. They are both focused on others and on God. We cannot be focused on ourselves and focused on God at the same time. Our love of God is demonstrated by our submission to Him and His will.

## **2 Peter 1:8-9**

**For if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For in whom these things are not present, that one is blind, being nearsighted, having forgotten the purification from his former sins.**

Okay, so why is it so important that we develop these Christian qualities that Peter is talking about? Why should we work hard at developing faith, morality, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and agape love? Peter says that if these qualities are constantly growing in us then we will neither be idle nor unfruitful.

He says that developing these Christian qualities in abundance will result in consistently successful efforts in the service of the King, *resulting in a more complete understanding of Him.*

This was the Apostle Paul's desire in **Philippians 3:8-10** where he expressed disdain for the things of this world in favor of knowing Christ,

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of **knowing Christ Jesus** my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God upon faith, **that I may know Him** and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (**Philippians 3:7-10**)

Is that your desire, to disdain worldly accomplishments, to know God better, and to serve Him more faithfully?

Peter has been talking about the Christian character qualities that we all need to be working hard to develop in ourselves. Now he looks at the other side of the coin, so to speak. He talks about what happens to us if we don't apply ourselves to developing these qualities.

Peter says that if we are not earnestly trying to grow in our Christian experience, then we are blind. Let's look at that word for a minute. The Greek word is *tuphlos*. It refers to being enveloped in smoke and unable to see clearly, or at all. So, in effect, Peter is telling us that if we are not growing in our faithwalk and our relationship to God, then we are walking into smoke and our vision (that is our spiritual vision) is greatly hampered, perhaps even cut off. Peter then tells us that the next step in our wandering through this life is that we forget what our gracious God has done for us in cleansing us from our sins.

This sounds like what used to be referred to as "backsliding." Let's not take it lightly, though! It is a serious condition for a Christian. Remember that we have an enemy who walks around "like a roaring lion seeking those whom He might devour." Not only that, but he wants to take away our joy and our peace. He knows that all he has to do is help us to become lazy Christians and we will gradually go spiritually blind, and we will forget what our real reason for living really is.

Jesus' death on the cross and the shedding of His blood has cleansed us from our sins. He has given His all for us, we need to show Him how thankful we are by giving our all for Him. If we aren't living for Him and growing in our faith, then we're just being selfish. One of the greatest oxymorons, in fact it's probably one of the saddest as well, is "selfish Christian."

### **So What?**

I heard a preacher once say that in our Christian life we are never standing still, we're either moving forward or we're moving back. Which direction is your Christian life going today?

Do you feel like God is not listening to your prayers? Have you lost the joy of your salvation? Do you find it hard to see, or understand what God is trying to tell you? If so, re-read the first nine verses in this chapter slowly and carefully and put yourself to work developing the Christian character qualities that we have been talking about.

Have you ever seen a body builder? He (or she) has a lot more muscle than the average person. Do you think that happened just by chance? No way! It took a lot of time and effort. He didn't just go to the gym and watch other people working out. He didn't just lift a little bit of weight one time. He worked over and over, using heavier and heavier weights, each time repeating the exercise until his muscles were worn out. And he didn't just do arm exercises. He worked on his arms, his legs, his upper body and his core. And his muscles didn't suddenly show up one morning. The building process was slow, and he worked hard to develop every part of the body that he has.

Well, it's the same with the qualities that Peter has been talking about. Developing a close walk with the Father and developing the traits that show us to be a mature Christian requires diligence and persistence. It starts out with regular church attendance. Unfortunately, for many Christians it also ends there. And they wonder why they're not growing in their faith. Next comes Bible reading. It's imperative for each one of us to have regular, consistent Bible reading. As I said earlier, enough with the excuses, already! Read your Bible every day, and let God speak to your heart as you do. The next thing is to pray. I would say pray daily, but that would be grossly insufficient. Maintain a communication channel with God constantly each and every day.

I'm reminded of a character in the movie Ladyhawke, played by Matthew Broderick. He plays a character named Philippe Gaston who is constantly talking to God (out loud). His faith is small and undeveloped, but his prayer life is huge!

Also, we need to get involved in a Bible study, either with others or on our own.

Finally, there is one more character quality that it is imperative for each of us to develop and that is humility. Peter referred to this several times in his first letter. In closing 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, he said:

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

And James in his letter said:

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

I like to refer to this as "submit and commit." Submit to God as your Lord and Master, and commit to doing His will.

In closing, I have a couple of questions for you, questions that I heard as a young Christian. These have stuck with me and God has used them a number of times to prod me when I have become spiritually lazy.

The first question is:

**Does God seem far away?**

And the other is:

**Who do you think moved?**

Let's pray.