

2Pet 1:5-6

5 But also for this very reason,

The words that Peter has chosen here and the order in unnecessary he placed them in Greek has led to differences in translations as they grappled with the extra words that Peter used that are not needed in English. Clearly there is some difficulty because there are some big divergences in the translations, especially in the ASV:

And beside this,	giving	all diligence,	add to	your faith (KJV)
But also for this very reason,	giving	all diligence,	add to	your faith (NKJ)
Now for this very reason also	applying	all diligence,	supply	in your faith (NASB)
Yea, and for this very cause	adding on your part	all diligence,	supply	in your faith (ASV)
For this very reason,	effort	make every	to supplement	your faith (ESV)
For this very reason,	effort	make every	to add to	your faith (NIV)
For this very reason,	adding	your diligence/employ every effort	in exercising	your faith (AMP)

Looking at the first column although the differences are slight, it will take just a moment to look at the Greek terms, and then see what the translators had to deal with.

<i>kai</i> “and” “also”	<i>auto</i> “self” “very” “same”	<i>touto</i> “this” “that”	<i>de</i> “and” “but”
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The conjunction “*ka*” is generally used to join two thoughts, things or people together. When it is used with another conjunction (*de*), it often takes on the nature of an adverb.

“*kai*... a conj., and the most fre. by far of all the particles in the N. T. ... It **marks something added to what has already been said**, or that of which something already said holds good; accordingly it **takes on the nature of an adverb, also**... 1. used simply, a. **also, likewise** ... *de kai*, and *de ... kai*, but also, and also: ... (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, NT:2532)

Thus Peter was joining (*kai*) and emphasizing (*de*) what had previously been said was now being used to make an application. Peter then added “*autos*” which makes what has just been said precisely and comprehensively the focus.

“*autos*... In itself it signifies nothing more than again, applied to what has either been previously mentioned or, when the whole discourse is looked at, must necessarily be supplied.” ... **it answer to our very, just, exactly**... *eis auto touto for this very purpose, on this very account*... and in the same sense [for this very thing] the simply accus. ... *touto auto*, ... and *auto touto*, **2Pet 1:5... this very** ...” (Thayer, NT: 846)

autos ... (occurring with the article): **pertaining to that which is identical to something - ‘same.’** ‘he prayed, saying the same thing’ Mark 14:39; ‘do not even the tax collectors do the same thing?’ Matt 5:46. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:846).

“*houtos, haute, touto*, 1. this one, visibly present here... 2. The neuter *touto* a. **refers to what precedes...auto touto for this very cause**... *ek touto for this reason*... *from this*, i.e. *hereby, by this* note... **it refers to the substance of the preceding discourse**... b. **it prepares the reader or hearer and renders him attentive to what follows**, which thus gets special weight... c. *kai touto, and this, and that too, and indeed, especially*... d. *tauta, of this sort, such*, spoken contemptuously of men, ...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 467, 3778)

After assessing these definitions we could translate “*but also, for precisely this reason / cause*.”

<p><i>His divine power has granted all things that pertain to life and godliness, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.</i></p>	<p><i>but ... also</i> <i>precisely</i> <i>for this</i> <i>very reason</i> <i>very cause</i></p>	<p>????</p>
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The next set of Greek terms have also been translated in a variety of ways.

<i>spouden</i> "haste diligence"	<i>pasan</i> all every	<i>pareisenegkantes</i> bringing in on the side	<i>epichoregesate</i> supply
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<i>His divine power has granted all things that pertain to life and godliness by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.</i>	<i>but ... also precisely for this very reason cause</i>	<i>all / comprehensive haste / diligence bring in / on your side give / supply</i>	<i>Faith Virtue Knowledge Self-control Perseverance Godliness Brotherly Kindness Love</i>
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Only the ASV truly captures the full meaning of each of these four terms:

- (1) adding on your part (2) all (3) diligence, in your faith (4) supply (asv)

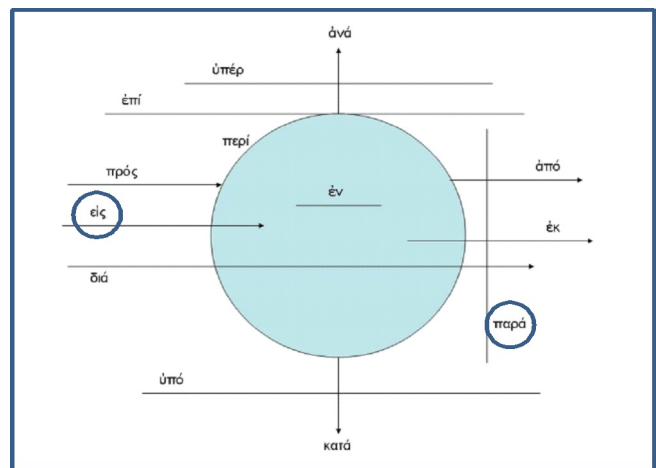
adding on your part

While the English translation takes four words, the Greek only has one. But since this is the only time in the NT this word is used and because there is so much divergence of opinion on the meaning of the term, it is important to assess its meaning from a variety of Greek Lexicons and dictionaries. We will first look at the triple compound word (*para - eis - phero*) then look at the compound word (*eis-phero*) it is derived from.

"*par-eis-phero*... a. **to bring in besides**... b. **to contribute besides to something**... [R.V. adding on your part]" (Thayer p 487;3923)

pareisphero... **to bring in besides (para, besides, eis, in phero, to bring)**, means "to add," II Pet 1:5, "adding on your part" (R.V.); the words "on your part" represent the intensive force of the verb; the A.V., "giving" does not provide an adequate meaning. (Vine Vol I p 30d; NMT: 3923)

par-eisphero, **to bring in beside, to propose a new law to amend another**, Lat. subrogare, Dem. II. to apply besides, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:3923)



pareisphéræ; from *pará* (3844), alongside or beside, and *eisphéræ* (n.f.), to bring into, which is from *eis* (1519), into, and *phéræ* (5342), to bring. To bring forth something additional, to contribute in addition to, yield more, add to (2 Peter 1:5). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:3923)

eis-phero... 1. The word is found in secular literature for "to carry or bring in" either things, or persons, It is also used for the "conveying" of messages ... In the NT the literal sense is the most common with reference to things: "We "brought nothing into" this world" (1Tim. 6:7), persons: The sick man is "brought into" the house (Lk. 5:18) ... (Kittel, 1533).

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eisphéræ; from *eis* (1519), in or to, and *phéræ* (5342), to bring, bear. To bear or bring into, followed by *eis* and the acc. of place (1 Tim 6:7, "we brought nothing into this world"; Heb 13:11). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:1533)

eisphero ... **to carry into or to**, Od., Hdt.; 2. **to bring in, contribute**, Plat., Xen., etc.: -at Athens, to pay the property-tax ... 3. to bring (suffering) in or upon, 4. **to introduce, bring forward**, propose, II. Middle **to carry with one**, sweep along, 2. **to bring in for oneself, to import**, ... 3. to bring in with one, introduce, Hdt., Eur. III. Passive to be brought in, introduced, Hdt. 2. to rush in, ... (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:1533)

eisphero ... b: to **carry or bring something into an area or structure - 'to bring in, to carry in.'** 'the Jewish High Priest **brings the blood of the animals into the Most Holy Place** to offer it as a sacrifice for sins' Heb 13:11. ... 'having received (the tabernacle), **our fathers under Joshua brought it in (with them)**' Acts 7:45. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based NT 1533)

After looking at all the different uses of these two terms in secular Greek and in the Scriptures, there really is no doubt that the root *phero* means to bring and carry, when the positions *eis* (*into*) and *para* (*beside or on the side*), it must mean bringing in (*the following 7 things*) beside or on the side of what God had done with His divine power, precious and exceeding great promises bring about the possibility of becoming a partaker of the divine nature, not just by grace, but by adding on our part. As Vine noted: **“giving” does not provide an adequate meaning.**”

Another important consideration is the grammar. Peter placed this as an aorist active participle and the verb supply in the imperative mode as a command.

The **Greek marks the subsidiary action by the use of a participle**; the English, which is less precise, would use two imperatives. By “bringing along in all diligence” the readers are to furnish or supply all that Peter states. **The aorist participle, like the aorist imperative, is effective, decisive. Present tenses would be descriptive and milder. Peter wants a peremptory, strong command: “Bring along in” no less than “all diligence” and not only some! “Furnish!” with no “if or “but” about it.** (R. C. H. Lenski, 2 Peter)

What exactly are we to bring in on the side and add on our part? Consider our own use of power in other applications. As man discovers new power sources and the means to access them, it requires that those who use them *“add on their part.”* The electricity and natural gas that are brought right into our home are worthless if we don't know how to use them.

The more complicated the application, the greater the benefit if we can *“add on our part,”* to make them useful. On a simple level, it is the ability to flip a switch, plug in an appliance or electronic device. But then on a more advanced level, it requires us to learn how to use a computer or cell-phone. How to use a remote for our entertainment. So there are two sides of this. If the electricity is not brought to the home, no efforts will be successful. But if the electricity is brought to the home and those inside it don't know how to use it, the same lack of success will occur.

This reveals the of grace and works. Eph 2:8-9 and Phil 2:12:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. Eph 2:8-10

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; Phil 2:12

In Ephesians Paul speaks of the power of God that made salvation possible and in Philippians, about the efforts God expects of us to make it possible. This is exactly what Peter has just described here. So *“adding on your part,”* essentially captures all that God expected of men when He devised the gospel. Exactly as He did in the material creation, so also in the spiritual creation, with His divine power, God did the massive, mighty and impossible things. He made the plans for mans salvation, did all the preparatory work, paid the price for sins, set the plan of salvation in order so that anyone who desired to serve God could then with their own effort and toil reach the goal.

The perfect illustration that Jesus used so often in His parables is the farmer. God created the sun, soil, seed, water and nutrients. But man must plan, and execute His part. Without his effort and diligence there will be no harvest in spite of all that God has done. No one can deny this system in the material creation, and after studying the Scriptures no one can deny it in the spiritual creation.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Gal. 6:7-9

Each Christian must “*add on his part,*” and “*bring in on the side*” to all that God has made possible. Salvation, grace and peace, happiness and contentment are gained by trusting God’s ways and adding on our part. This is why not all Christians are blessed to the same degree. This is the reason that a relatively new convert can sometimes have a greater grasp on the peace and serenity of Christ than a member twice that age.

When we are having problems dealing with life, if these feelings of peace and blessedness are eluding us, the problem lies here. It isn’t that our problems are greater than others. It is that our efforts are not as great as others. Paul’s problems far exceed anything we could even imagine, yet there was enough power in the word to keep him content and joyous even when he wept.

Until one makes up their mind to add on their part, the gospel will not have the power to help. Not because it is powerless, but because God has decreed and ordained the gospel to work in this way. It has the power, but only individual effort to add on their part will unlock that power. Until we make a personal commitment to add on your part, all the power of the gospel remains lost to us.

We all have access to the mighty divine power of God. but just like the use of a dimmer switch in a home raises and lowers the power to the light bulb, so also our own efforts raise and lower the power of God which will work in our lives.

In grace and mercy God has offered us all things that pertain to life and godliness as a gift. He added to this gift the precious and exceeding great promises which offer great motivation. With both of these now ours, we can now become partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption in the world through lust. This is the gift of God that no one can boast of. But though we cannot boast for the use that we make of them, we can give God great glory, and bring great blessings into our lives.

To the urgency of all the above, the Holy Spirit added diligence.

Diligence

This term reveals the intensity and effort God expected from us after His Divine Power has granted all things that pertain to godliness and His precious and exceeding great promises. Because through the gospel we are now partakers of the divine nature, God wants us to approach our part of this fellowship with the same intensity and zeal that He did.

This passage explodes the notion that God wants His people to hold a comfortable attitude of full reliance upon God. Some are simply waiting for Him to complete His work. Some have not taken these obligations and duties seriously. But this passage demands “*diligence.*” When used in a sentence, this term will take whatever is commanded and fully strengthen it. Think of “*speed, haste, earnestness, diligence and zeal*” because this term takes in all of this. It also describes “*zeal, pains, exertion, trouble,*” that one is expected to put into something. It adds “*urgency,*” approaching it “*seriously, urgently, very busily.*”

spoude noun from *speúdoe* (4692), **to speed, urge, hasten**, press. **Speed, haste, earnestness, diligence, zeal.** ... (II) Diligence, earnest effort (Rom 12:8,11; 2 Cor 7:11; 8:7,8; 2 Peter 1:5; Jude 3). On behalf of someone (2 Cor 7:12; 8:16). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:4710)

spoude (*spoude*,) **haste, speed, ll. zeal, pains, exertion, trouble, c inf., to take pains to do a thing,** ... with great attention to the arms, ... plural, zealous exertions, III. **zeal, earnestness, seriousness,** Eur., etc. 2. an object of attention, a serious engagement, IV. *spoude*, as Adv. in haste, hastily, Od., Hdt., Att. 2. with great exertion, with difficulty, hardly, scarcely, 3. **earnestly, seriously, urgently, very busily,** II.; (Liddell and Scott, Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:4710)

spoude ... *spouden pasan pareisphero*: (an idiom, literally ‘to bring every effort to’) to do one’s very best in attempting to do something - ‘to do one’s best, to make every effort to, to try as hard as possible.’ (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT:4710)

We see this displayed throughout the NT. Diligence is the use of all our faculties and abilities to their utmost capacity to achieve the goal that is placed before us. Paul's earnestness and urgency were illustrated with athletes and expressed in clear terms.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1Cor 9:24-27

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ... I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ... Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:7-9; 12-14

Jesus spoke on this at the end of one of His parables.

So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt wisely/prudently. For the sons of this world are more wise/prudent in their generation than the sons of light. Lk. 16:8

When Christians (sons of light) compare their own efforts and goals with those of this world, Jesus reveals that all too often the sons of this world act much more prudently to reach their own goals than the children of light do toward theirs.

As Paul noted above, professional athletes train for their sport with urgency and haste. After his comparison, how do disciples today measure up? If they train more diligently than disciples do for their eternal crown, then Jesus words have become true again.

As we look at how this world sets up curriculum and training for important occupations such as becoming a doctor, nurse, engineer, teacher, etc. how do disciples compare. Can we truly say that our efforts to be zealous exceed or even equal theirs.

If we want the comparison to be favorable then we must approach "*adding on our part*" with even more zeal, earnestness, seriousness and as busily as these illustrations. We must be making systematic efforts to gain an exact knowledge of each of the terms Peter uses here. Without a precise and clear idea of what each of them are, they would become impossible to gain and our efforts would be useless. Just as schools require memorization of key truths and then the ability to make applications based on that knowledge Christians should be seeking the same.

Are we as intense as Abraham? When God asked him to be circumcised, he did it the same day (Gen. 17:23). When asked to offer Isaac, he began early the next morning (Gen. 22:3). Whenever God wanted something done it was more important to Abraham than anything else in his life. That is the type of earnestness and zeal God wants to see in all His servants! When he added "*all*" He made it clear that we must "*always*" "*perpetually*," "*in every condition*" "*in every way*" "*on every side*" and "*in every particular*" "*add on our part*."

"pas,... I. adjectivally,... a. any, every one (namely, of the class denoted by the noun annexed to pas);... all or any of the class indicated... b. any and every, of every kind, ... 2. everything, (anything) whatsoever;... always, perpetually,... in every condition, or in every matter, ... in everything, in every way, on every side, in every particular or relation,..." (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).

We are to bring limitless zeal and enthusiasm to these things. All day and every day, under all circumstances and at all times we are to be zealous, earnest and in haste. But to what is this zeal to be directed? We are to earnestly and zealously "*add on our part*."

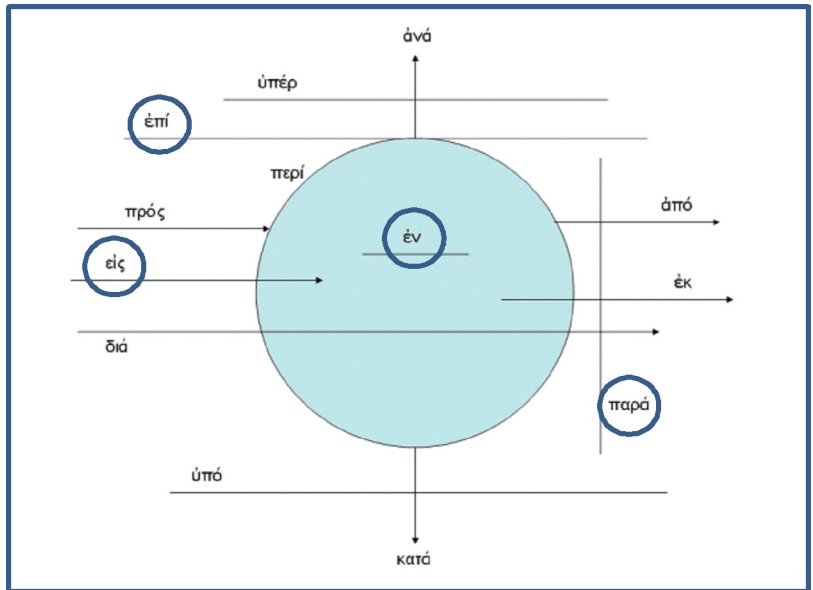
Although God did everything man could not do, He will not do what we can do for ourselves. God expected us to take the means and motivation and work as hard as we can for as long as we can! It is very similar to Noah and the ark. God gave Noah grace in sparing him from the flood, but He told Noah to build the ark. God saved Noah, but expected Noah to "*add on his part*" by building the ark. He expected Abraham to "*add on his part*" by leaving his country. All God's servants have been

called by grace to “add on his part.” Some of those who by faith added on their part are listed in Hebrew 11. The line between being faithful and unfaithful had nothing to do with God’s grace, gifts, or promises. These are fixed and constant for everyone. For God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”(1Tim. 2:4-5).

Our success or failure in our own hands. It is up to us to use His power and promises. If we use these tools to restore His image within ourselves, not simply by grace but also supplemented by our own effort and toil, we can please Him in our generation just as Noah or Abraham did in theirs. So in order to add on our part, using our faith, we must “supply” and “add to”

add to

In order to fully and urgently “add on our part” and “bring in on the side,” we are commanded (*imperative mode*) to supply and add to what God has done for us. Once again, by placing *epi* as a prefix to the term supply or furnish here, as he did to knowledge (*epignosis*), above, it leads to the idea of fully and abundantly.



epichoregéœ; from **ἐπί (1909)**, upon, and **choregéœ (5524)**, to furnish, give. To furnish upon, i.e., besides, in addition, to supply further, to add more unto. With the acc., to supply, furnish, or furnish abundantly (2 Cor 9:10; Gal 3:5 [cf. Isa 55:10]) (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:2023).

epichoregeo, **grant; offer; support** (verb) *epichoregia*, **support** (noun) ... The noun, which appears twice in the NT, is formed from the verb, which appears 5 times. **The verb, intensified by the ἐπί, is formed from choregeo, which itself appears twice in the NT.** In the Hellenistic age the Attic meaning of *choregeo*, “to defray the cost for a chorus,” fades into the early figurative meaning, “bring forth money for something,” then “deliver something, grant; furnish” (Exegetical Dictionary NT:2023)

We see both words used by Paul to describe the manner in which God supplies the seed to the sower of material see, will also supply the seed they have sown in giving to the needy saints in Jerusalem.

Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, ... 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ... 10 Now may He who supplies (epichoregeo) seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply (choregeo) and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 2Cor. 9:1-12

Peter’s use of it here is also very powerful as he compares our efforts to His. When we “abundantly supply adding on our part with haste urgency and diligence, He will abundantly supply our entrance into the eternal kingdom.

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add (epichoregeo) to your faith ... 10 for so an entrance will be supplied (epichoregeo) to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Pet. 1:5, 11

The manner in which we are to to supply, furnish, present, furnish abundantly, and procure all these things is very similar to the advice for all things under the sun.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

In your faith, virtue

The preposition “en” as seen in the chart always indicates something that is within or in the midst of something else. In this case everything in 2Pet. 1:1-5 points toward faith and everything flows and originates within that sphere. Without faith, nothing in this section has any meaning because nothing God has done with all His power and promises can be opened or entered without it.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Heb 11:6

Nothing Peter will say in 2Pet. 1:6-8 will have any meaning if it does not all stem from “in the midst of your faith.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” Rom 1:16-17

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. 1Th. 2:13-14

While faith without works is dead, works without faith is equally dead.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. Eph. 2:8-9

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. Pr. 3:5-7

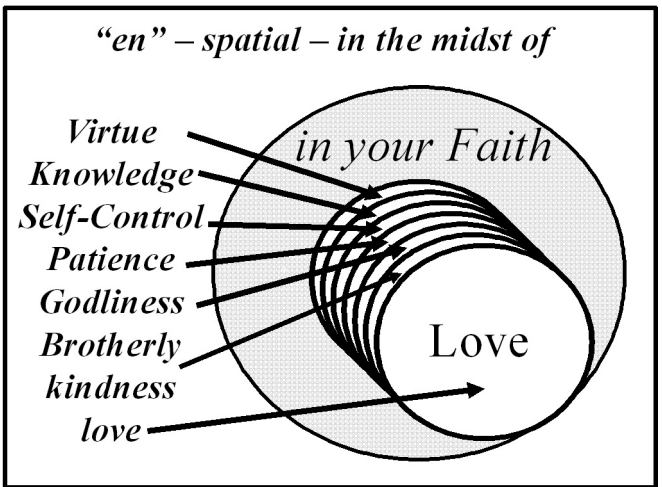
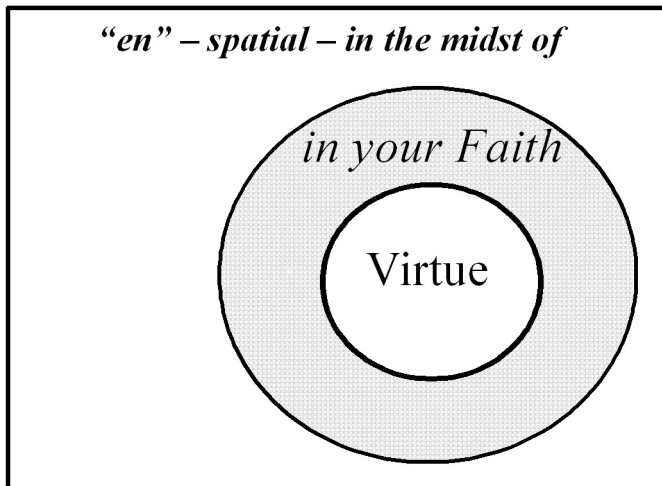
Anyone who works with all their might to add on their part and supply with haste and urgency an abundance of these seven things will find that they have no intrinsic value at all. Just as everyone else in Hebrews 11, it was that faith that prompted the act that led to God’s being pleased with it. If it is being done on our own and without faith, it can have no value or benefit to us.

The construction of this passage is both interesting and important. In the Greek language it is worded:

*and in the midst of virtue the knowledge
and in the midst of knowledge the self-control
and in the midst of self-control the perseverance
and in the midst of perseverance the godliness
and in the midst of godliness the brotherly kindness
and in the midst of brotherly kindness the love*

Each repeats “en,” and each repeats the direct article “the” each flowing from the midst of the previous one and each added on as our part and abundantly supplied with haste, urgency, speed and earnestness.

If we can visualize this, it would look like the chart. It all begins with faith, for that is what all of God’s divine power and precious promises are directed



to nurture and create.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 10:17

In your faith, virtue

There is a big difference between the way we use the word “*virtue*” today and the way the Greeks used it. After carefully reviewing the definitions, we see that it is a word that would be hard to capture with a single English word.

arete... can refer **to excellence of achievement, to mastery in a specific field, on the one side, or to endowment with higher power on the other, or often to both together.** ... **The subject of achievement may be lands, animals, objects, parts of the body, but mostly it is man....**” (Kittel, TDWNT Vol. 1 p. 457)

“*arete*,...**a word of very wide signification in Grk. writ.; any excellence of a person (in body or mind) or of a thing, an eminent endowment, property or quality.** Used of the human mind and in an ethical sense it denotes 1. *a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action; virtue, moral goodness...*” (Thayer, p. 73; 703).

arete... : **a manifestation of power characterized by excellence - ‘wonderful act, powerful deed, wonderful deed.’** ... **‘so that you may proclaim the wonderful deeds (of God)’** 1 Peter 2:9. (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT:703)

arete ... **properly denotes whatever procures preeminent estimation for a person or thing; hence, “intrinsic eminence, moral goodness, virtue,”** (a) of God, 1 Peter 2:9, “excellencies” (KJV, “praises”); here the original and general sense seems to be blended with the impression made on others, i. e., **renown, excellence or praise** (Hort); (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:703)

arete... **The limitation of this word to four occurrences in NT—and two of them in 2 Pet—may possibly be connected with the very width of its significance in non-Christian ethics: it had not precision enough for large use in Christian language.** ... **Our “virtue” is too narrow for a word which had nearly all the forces of our adjective “good”:** ... Some *Koine* instances may be quoted. ... (a rhetorical exercise, about B.C. 280-40): **the younger men are exhorted to employ their bodies ... “in a timely display of their prowess (*arete*)” ... “to take the richest (*arete*) Crown land from the cultivators by fraud or cultivate it at choice.”** ([Moulton-Milligan], Vocabulary of the Greek NT:703)

“*Virtue*” describes the effort people put forth to achieve “*excellence*” or “*mastery*” in any field of endeavor. Our culture may use different words to describe it, but it certainly has the same attitude toward such things. A trip to the county fair shows that people still use “*animals*” and “*objects*” to gain “*mastery in a specific field*” or “*excellence of achievement.*” They offer a blue ribbon for animals (bulls, lambs, pigs), cooking (pies, pickles) produce (grapes, apples) or skills (knitting, needlepoint, painting) etc. A walk down the magazine aisle in a grocery store also stresses this point. There are magazines for the best computer, car, boat, etc. There are tips for running better, swimming faster, building up the body, and books on achieving and gaining mastery. This reveals that multitudes of people love striving “*virtue*” today. They want “*excellence of achievement*” and “*mastery in a specific field.*”

So what about us? Where does our *virtue* lie. We can identify our most important interests by what we talk about; how we use our time and money, what we read and the reasons we choose our friends. Most of us have known the joy and excitement of finding a new hobby or activity we completely fell in love with. At that point, we began to buy whatever was necessary and to read and study the important things to become as good as we can at it. For some it is a sport like golf, tennis, or bicycle riding. Others find their niche in cooking, computers, or cars. Still others gain their self-esteem and enjoyment from video games or politics. God want us to add it to our faith!

One thing remains constant, to be *virtue*, it must captivate our heart so we give it our all. There is an inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm and interest for things we enjoy. It is the intensity of this interest that leads us to spend time, money and effort to “master” and become excellent.

... sell all that he has...

In the parable of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price (Mt. 13:44-46), Jesus described the dynamics of *virtue* in His disciples. For these two merchants, it made perfect sense to sacrifice everything. The treasure and the pearl had greater worth than they had to sell to gain them. This represented those who recognize the kingdom of God is so precious and valuable it is worth every sacrifice. When we are fully convinced that what Jesus left heaven to die for is that important to us, we are prepared to add *virtue*! It our one hope (Eph. 4:4) transcending all others and worthy of every sacrifice (Rom. 8:18; 12:1-2). Once we understand and accept this, *virtue* will follow naturally.

Once we make this our goal, *virtue* will take over and bring us to it. Those who prepare for the Olympics use *virtue* to make the necessary sacrifices to compete. Once a goal is set, *virtue* brings the determination to bring it to completion. It is *virtue* that creates heroes, gold medalists, and champions! Paul sought to convey this image to the Corinthians and gave a classic example of *virtue*.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. 1Cor. 9:24-27

While the Olympian sought a perishable wreath (or gold medal today), our prize is imperishable glory! Their effort, enthusiasm and energy should pale in comparison to ours! When those striving for material things have more *virtue* than the children of God, we set ourselves up for the rebuke from the Lord. He can see if it is happening.

For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. Lk. 16:8

We only manifest unfaithfulness/lukewarmness when we put more effort into a hobby or job, than we do for our service for God. Jesus sees such service as being lukewarm.

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Rev. 3:15-17

Virtue makes us hot, full of zeal, determination and ambition. We want to be the best we can be. When we have *virtue* it makes perfect sense to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt. 6:33).

Although every person has different degrees of ability, intensity, enthusiasm, time or money, God expects our first fruits, and when *virtue* is diligently added to our faith, whatever those best efforts are, they will be given for God first!

The degree of intensity we have shifted from this world to the next manifests how much *virtue* we have added. It always takes sacrifice and effort to become excellent. Paul led the way in *virtue*. After conversion, he shook himself free from all former pursuits and put it all into being a Christian.

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Phil. 3:7-8

After leaving them behind, he never looked back with longing. They were still rubbish years later. True *virtue* will never look back at sacrifices as mistakes. It never looks back with longing. As Jesus said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9:62.), so we too must “remember Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:32)!

After Paul sold all that he had to buy that field, he put his energy into faith. He wanted “excellence of achievement” in service to God and “mastery” in his quest for maturity.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus Phil. 3:12-14

This is what *virtue* added to *faith* looks like. Do we “*have this mind*” in us? Do we “*walk by the same rule*” Paul set for himself? Have we searched through the congregation for those with these qualities of *virtue* and desire for excellence making them an example to pattern our lives after?

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. Phil. 3:15-17

It takes firm commitment and a powerful desire for excellence to reach the “*goal for the prize of the upward call of God.*” It will take all the energy, enthusiasm and desire to sacrifice we can muster. The top of this mountain is higher than we can ever imagine. But those who climb with *earnest zeal, diligence* and *virtue*, will climb high with God’s grace and the wonderful power of the gospel!

Hebrews Eleven lists God’s servants who added *virtue* to their faith, took hold of whatever task God gave them and did the best they could to complete it. The Spirit encouraged us to follow their example.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” Heb. 12:1

We all have a race to run, and we must run it with endurance! Laying aside the weights required *virtue*. Day by day, denial, sacrifice and adding more created greater speed and accuracy. Moses exemplified this *virtue*.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. Heb. 11:24-26

Moses looked at the reward, not the sacrifices. This is what *virtue* always does. When one looks at the benefits they do not feel the sacrifices. When they look at the sacrifices, they lose sight of the benefits. Living the life of Christ requires sacrifice, becoming a mature Christian requires a pressing on toward the goal.

Day by day by day *virtue* leads us to deny self, make every sacrifice to grow. In time it leads to the very things listed in the definition: ‘*excellence of achievement, mastery in a specific field... endowment with higher power.*’ When God sees this type of effort and accomplishment He takes notice.

Then the LORD said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? Job 1:8

Job stood out! He was the best in all the earth! He was blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil. This had begun in his early youth when he added *virtue* to his faith and decided he wanted to master and be the best he could be (Job 31). Job should be an example to all of us. Without that, we are always at risk of the word being choked and becoming unfruitful.

the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, Mt. 13:22 ...

those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. Lk. 8:14

Examples of Virtue:

The ten and five talent men when compared to the one talent man. (Mt. 25:14-30)
The five wise virgins when compared to the five foolish virgins. (Mt. 25:1-13)
The good Samaritan when compared to the priest and Levite. (Lk. 10:30-37)
Moses when compared to the children of Israel.
David before Goliath when compared to the others in Israel.

Each was given the opportunity. Those who saw the opportunity with virtue(wanting to master and achieve excellence) excelled while those who had no virtue felt no need to buy up the opportunity and failed.

and in the midst of virtue, the knowledge

The Holy Spirit now substitutes *gnosis* for *epignosis*. No one can start with full and expert knowledge. When faith is in its infancy with just enough knowledge to create the faith necessary to obey the gospel, and the desire for excellence and preeminence is forming within the heart, the first thing desired is to gain all the knowledge possible as quickly as possible.

