

## GIFT AND GRIT

(in that order)

### *Thoughts on Human Effort and Divine Enabling*

*Question:* If God is the one who gives our varied measures of faith, should we pursue greater faith?

*Answer:* Yes! With all our might! Through prayer, word, fellowship, an obedience.

Faith is a gift of God. Romans 12:3 says, “Think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned to him” (RSV). God measures to each believer a measure of faith. Ephesians 2:8 says, “By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God” (RSV). The word “this” refers to the whole act of God, including the accomplishment of salvation on the cross and the application of salvation through faith. Philippians 1:29 says, “To you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Believing and suffering are both gifts from God. Similarly repentance (the flip side of faith) is called a gift of God (2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 11:18). The revelation of Christ to the heart that makes faith possible is also a gift (Matthew 16:17; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6).

This does not mean faith is static or that we should not pursue it more and more. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul says, “Your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another.” In 2 Corinthians 10:15, Paul says that he hopes their faith will “increase.”

Therefore it is clear that faith should grow and not remain static. The fact that God gave you yesterday’s level of faith does not mean that his will for you today is the same measure of faith. His purpose for you today may be far greater faith. His command is to “trust in him at all times” (Psalm 62:8, RSV) and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, RSV).

God commands what he wills and grants in measure what he commands, but we should always pursue what he commands. He says, “Work out your salvation...for it is God who *is* at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). God does not say, “Since I work, you shouldn’t.” He says, “Because I do, you can.” God’s gift does not replace our effort; it enables and carries it.

We say with Paul, “[God’s] grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked...” (1 Corinthians 15:10, RSV). The gift of grace produced the grit of hard work. It is not the other way around. He goes on, “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.” Even Paul’s working is a gift of grace. Yes, it feels like our effort. It is an effort! But that is not all it is. That is not what it is at root. If it is virtuous, it is God’s “working in us to will and to do his good pleasure.” God “fulfill[s] every good resolve and work of faith by his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:11, RSV). He equips us “with everything good that [we] may do his will, working in [us] that which is pleasing in his sight” (Hebrews 13:21, RSV).

Therefore let us press on to the greatest faith possible with all the means of grace God has given. Let us be like Paul and strive “with all the energy which he mightily inspires within [us]” (Colossians 1:29, RSV). And when we have labored, let us not think more highly of ourselves than is necessary but say with Paul, “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me...by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:18-19, RSV). There is a place for grit in the Christian life (“I worked hard”), but it is preceded by and enabled by gift (“It was the grace of God”). Therefore all grit is living by faith in future grace.

*From A Godward Life: Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life by John Piper.*

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