

Make Every Effort

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[0 : 00] Amen. Well, thank you very much to Fiona and the band and to Katie for reading that passage. Let's turn to God in prayer before we begin. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege it is to be able to openly and freely read your word. Lord, now as we come to meditate on it, we pray that the meditations of all of our hearts and that the words of my mouth would be pleasing to you.

Father, would I decrease and would you increase? And we pray that everything that is done in this service would be for your glory and fame. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In the 1940s, there was a 65-year-old man living in Kentucky. He drove a beat-up car and was living on minimal benefits.

Now, he'd known success in his life. He had previously owned a restaurant but had lost it all. But he hadn't given up yet. He wasn't done. See, he decided to make a change in his life.

[1 : 05] So at the ripe young age of 65, this man looked at his life and asked himself, what would he have to offer others? And his answer was fried chicken.

He took to the road with his fried chicken recipe that all of his family and friends loved. He drove for miles and miles all over the US trying to sell his recipe to different restaurants.

He was so desperate that he was basically giving it away, simply asking for a little bit of the profit. But still, many, in fact most, restaurants declined.

1,009 restaurants rejected this man. But he kept on going. He made every effort to achieve what he wanted.

And eventually, restaurant number 1,010 said yes. Now, do you know who I'm talking about? Kentucky Fried Chicken.

[2 : 08] Colonel Harland Sanders, the founder and face of KFC. He made every effort to achieve his goal despite over 1,000 setbacks.

He kept on fighting and eventually achieved what he wanted and more. KFC is now third in the world's top 25 most lucrative restaurant chains.

Colonel Sanders made every effort. Now, we've seen that language of making every effort in 2 Peter already, haven't we? Look back at chapter 1, verse 10.

Peter says, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. Meaning that a Christian's life should be a living example of the calling they have received, which is to live godly lives.

And then Peter says of himself in chapter 1, verse 15, Meaning that as Peter knew his death was imminent, he would diligently work to make sure that the Christians he was writing to would always remember what growth in godliness, which is rooted in the gospel, looks like.

[3 : 31] And this letter is part of that reminder. And then this evening, at the very end of the letter, we get the final make every effort in verse 14.

Read it with me. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.

This is the main point of our passage tonight. So if you're looking for a sentence that summarizes exactly what Peter wants you to walk away with, that is it.

If you're a Christian here this evening, Peter is speaking directly to you, and he is saying, Now, if 2 Peter were to end there, it would be great, wouldn't it?

But we'd still have questions. We would want to know, well, how exactly do we make every effort? Peter isn't holding up a sign that says, Jesus is coming back soon, look busy.

[4 : 43] He isn't saying, do more or work harder. He isn't saying, be better. But instead, he's giving us two practical things in these verses that we can do in our daily lives to make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.

Peter says, Christians, bear in mind and be on God. So the first thing we see in this passage is bear in mind.

In verses 14 to 16, bear in mind. See, the goal of our diligence, of our making every effort, is that on that final day when Jesus returns, as we thought about last week, we will be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.

The Christian, the person who trusts in Jesus, is made spotless and blameless and is at peace with God. But we are called to become more like Jesus. We're called to grow in moral purity.

We're called to grow in our identity as people who are spotless and blameless. That's what verse 14 says. So that on that final day when all of our actions are laid bare before God, as verse 10 says, we will be found without fault.

[6 : 04] Now that is impossible by ourselves. Maybe you're here and you're not a Christian. Maybe you think that you're good enough. You're a good enough person to get into heaven, that you do good things.

You don't hurt people. So surely you must be in God's good books. Well, the Bible is clear that every person is naturally an enemy of God. Naturally at odds with him.

Naturally deserving of his wrath. Unable to be good enough or to do enough to be right with him on our own. So what hope is there for anyone who stands before God on that final day on their own merit?

To put it bluntly, there is no hope. Nobody can stand before the almighty creator and judge of the world based on their own works and be accepted into the presence of God forever.

Because the only hope to be found on that day is that when you stand before God, and everyone will, as your thoughts, your actions, your attitudes and imagination are all put on display, your only hope is that Jesus stands beside you and says, I have paid for that person.

[7 : 18] The only hope that exists when it comes to someone spending eternity in the presence of God and the peace and not under judgment, is the already completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross, where he died in our place, bearing God's wrath, and securing salvation and a perfect relationship with God for all those who trust in him.

He died so that you can live. Jesus died so that we can be spotless, blameless, and at peace with God.

Now those two descriptions put together, blameless and spotless, should make us think of Jesus, the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And it is through Jesus' sacrifice that we're able to have that relationship with God. Naturally, we are born enemies of God, dead in our sin, slaves to the passions of our sin-stained hearts, living in darkness.

But when we put our trust in Jesus, when we come before him in repentance and believe, we are transformed. We become children of light.

[8 : 31] We are given power to live the life that we are called to live, that we were created to live, no longer enemies of God, but children of God. We are at peace with him.

And Peter says, brothers and sisters, bear your salvation in mind. Remember that you are saved, not by what you do, but by what Jesus has already done.

And then in verse 15, he says, read it with me. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation. Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort as they do other scriptures to their own destruction.

Peter says, remember that Jesus hasn't come back yet because God is patient, allowing time for others to come to faith. And we thought about that a little bit last week in verse nine.

[9 : 44] And Peter brings in Paul at this point, I think to bolster his argument. He mentions Paul's other letters in verse 15 as a way of saying, look, I'm not the only one teaching this.

Another apostle is teaching the same thing. And then Peter goes even further in verse 16 and mentions Paul's letters alongside scripture, putting them both on the same level of authority.

Peter is saying what Paul writes is also the authoritative word of God. Now at this point, most of Paul's letters were written and some of them would have been circulating quite widely.

So Peter's using Paul's letters to bolster his own argument, using them as evidence, maybe because the false teachers and scoffers were twisting Peter's words to support their own evil

desires and schemes.

Peter says, not a chance. Me and Paul are on the same page. And it's comforting to know, at least I think it is, that I'm not the only one who has struggled at times to understand Paul's letters.

[10:53] Peter says in verse 16, referring to Paul, that his letters contain some things that are hard to understand. But the issue was that these false teachers were distorting Paul's words and the rest of the Old Testament to their own destruction, showing their ignorance and instability.

So Peter says, bear that in mind. Remember the gospel. Remember the salvation that you have in Jesus. Remember truth. And do not let yourself be distracted by distorted lies and unstable people. But instead, verse 14, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

J.C. Ryle, a minister and bishop from many years ago, put it this way in his great book on holiness, which I highly recommend you grab a copy of.

He says, the child of God has two great marks about him. He may be known for his inward warfare as well as his inward peace.

As a Christian, you are a soldier who is constantly at war because a battle is raging and you are to make every effort in it.

[12:11] We can't sit back and relax if we are to be found spotless and blameless. Yes, we have been made those things by Jesus, but we are called to continue to grow in them every single day.

We are to grow in our moral purity for the glory of God. So ask yourselves, what are the sins that you are struggling with? What are the temptations that you face every day that you need to wage war against?

See, we're called to be like Jesus, who is spotless and blameless. He is untainted in character and without defect. He is perfect. We cannot do that whilst lust has any part to play in our lives.

We cannot let pride, adultery, lying, coveting, gossip, anger, boastfulness, be part of our lives if we are to make every effort to be found spotless and blameless on that day.

Christians are made at peace with Christ and so we are to wage war against our sinful nature. As John Owen, a theologian from years ago, famously said, be killing sin or sin will be killing you.

[13:33] Bear in mind, Peter says, remember the salvation that you have in Jesus and live it out. Remember that God's patience means salvation.

So how should these, remembering these two things help us? Well, by remembering the gospel, we remember the price that was paid to make peace between us and God possible.

We remember the sacrifice that Jesus was to make us spotless and blameless before God and so out of a thankfulness and love for him, we should live holy lives.

The lives we were created to live. How do we do that? We gather with the Lord's people on a Sunday. We celebrate communion as we remember Jesus' sacrifice.

We study the Bible together, both corporately, in smaller groups together and individually. And we die to ourselves and we live for him.

[14:33] Rejecting our old nature and sin and instead living lives of holiness. And we remember that God's patience means salvation and that should impact how we live because we're called to go into this world and share the message of hope.

The only message that can give true hope and true life, the message of Jesus. That's what we're to take into the world. Friends, we cannot simply have an intellectual understanding of these things. All theology should lead to changed lives. We need to know and live out the truth. Peter says, bear in mind, remember the salvation that you have in Jesus and remember that God's patience means salvation.

And the second thing we see in this passage is be on God. In verses 17 to 18, be on God. Now I don't know about you but growing up I loved watching movies with my grandparents.

With my gran it was always cowboy and Indian movies and with my grandpa it was normally World War II movies. Two completely different times but one consistent thing happened and still happens in almost every movie where there's something to do with a war or a battle.

[15:58] When night time comes there is always someone who watches God. Read verse 17 with me. Peter says this, therefore dear friends since you have been forewarned be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.

Now in any war movie or in any real life situation if you receive a warning you watch for it don't you? You're not going to see a warning sign on a beach about a particularly dangerous undercurrent and decide that now's the time to go for a swim.

You aren't going to hear warnings of a shark in the water and decide to paddle around for fun in the hot summer's day. No. You've been warned and so you stay alert you are on God.

The same is true for the Christian life. If you want to do what verse 14 says to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with God then we need to be on God.

Peter has warned us throughout this letter hasn't he? Of the dangers associated with false teaching and false teachers. So out of love for these Christians Peter is saying be careful don't be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall.

[17 : 25] Now the word translated as fall means apostasy walking away from the faith renouncing what you believe and following a different path. That happens when someone lets their God down.

they get caught and when they get caught up in false teaching they get swept away by error. Peter is using the imagery of a river that carries someone downstream and they can do nothing about it. I wonder if you've seen videos of a flood and you see these massive cars that weigh a ton being thrown around by the rushing water like they were a little toy car in a bathtub. That's the kind of thing we should be imagining here.

You see false teaching isn't harmless it is not something to be messed with. So often I hear Christians who are listening to and reading material from well-known false teachers and they say things like well I just take the good and I leave the bad.

I eat the meat and I spit out the bones that kind of thing. But do you see how unwise it is? Because if you know you had a life threatening disease you would go to a good doctor.

[18 : 41] You'd get the treatment that you need. You would seek out the truth. You wouldn't go to a doctor who will just reassure you with a smile that everything will be fine. It may be comforting initially.

It may be what you want to hear. But it won't last long and it will only bring damage. and in terms of faith and theology that has eternal consequences.

So often Christians are tempted to listen to voices that only offer encouragement. People who think and say that the Christian life should only be one of goodness and happiness.

That's not what the Bible tells us. The diagnosis that the Bible gives us that we were thinking about this morning is that every single day in the Christian life is a battle.

Don't go to the teacher who will tickle your ears. Go to those who faithfully and consistently point you to Jesus and who preach the Bible. Not personal opinion.

[19 : 47] The New Testament warns us again and again do not play with false teaching and Peter is warning you. Whilst at the minute that false teaching may seem like a nice little stream to dip your toe into, it will become a raging river that will carry you off and away from Christ.

You have been warned, Peter says. So be on guard. Do not be carried away by error. But simply avoiding false teaching isn't enough, is it?

It is absolutely a wise and necessary thing to do but by avoiding false teaching are we really making every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with God? Peter doesn't think so.

And he gives us one final aspect of this command to be on God in verse 18 where he says, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

See this is where we come full circle in the book of 2 Peter. Because this book opens in chapter 1 verse 2 with Peter's prayer that grace would grow in abundance in these Christians lives through the knowledge of Jesus.

[21 : 07] And he ends this letter with a call to grow in that grace. And throughout this whole letter Peter has been building an argument of the necessity of every single Christian to know and live out the truth.

That is only possible if we are rooted in Christ. If we find our salvation in him and then make every effort to grow in him. To have a faithful, healthy, established, vibrant faith.

faith. We need to do what Peter said right at the beginning of this letter in chapter 1 verses 3 to 11. We need to depend on God's power and on God's promises which requires us to properly know him.

In 2019 a survey was done in the UK which showed that most Christian millennials, 51% in the UK, engage with the Bible a few times a year or less.

Only 9% of Christian millennials read the Bible every day and about 13% look at the Bible a few times a week. Now these studies are never super accurate but it shows a decline in the reading of God's word and I don't think it is only a problem for millennials.

[22 : 28] In fact I know it's not. See friends if we want to take our faith seriously. If we want to be able to stand spotless and blameless and at peace with God on that final day then we need to know the truth and live it out.

We must be on our guard. We must be careful of the teaching we take in and be diligent in growing and becoming more and more like Jesus. Read your Bibles.

Get to know the promises of God. Memorise Bible verses. Pray regularly. Gather with God's people. Start reading the Bible with other people. If you're older here please invest in the younger generation.

We want to learn from you. If you're younger sit under the teaching of these older saints who have journeyed with Jesus for years and learn.

It was said of John Bunyan the author of The Pilgrim's Progress that if you would have cut him he would have bled scripture. That should be our desire.

[23 : 35] To be so submerged in God's word that it becomes so dear to us that we keep returning to it every day because that is how we grow in the knowledge of Jesus and the more we know him the more we will become like him.

Be on guard Peter says do not get carried away by false teaching but grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus. Jesus. And all of this Jesus says all of this Peter says is for Jesus.

Do you see that at the end of verse 18? To him be glory both now and forevermore. Amen. The ultimate goal of a Christian who knows and lives out the truth the ultimate goal of making every effort is for the display of God's glory his power his majesty his beauty.

We glorify God by being grounded in the gospel by understanding the grace that God has shown us through the death and resurrection of Jesus and from that we make every effort to grow in him and to and to be like him whilst giving him all the glory and honor.

The KFC is arguably a restaurant empire that was started by one man in a beat up truck who loved fried chicken. He made every attempt every effort to achieve his goal and the kingdom of God is far far far bigger than anything that could be built by human hands in this life and the kingdom of God will last forever and Jesus will get all of the glory that is the goal that we should be striving to make every effort to achieve.

[25 : 25] So then dear friends since you are looking forward to the second coming of Jesus make every effort to be found spotless and blameless and at peace with him.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we thank you for your word and the warnings that it gives us. we thank you for the challenge that it brings us of the necessity to know the truth and to have that truth impact the way we live our lives.

Father forgive us for the times where we have flirted with false teaching, where we flirted with the things of this world and thought that it would be harmless. And Lord by your spirit we ask that you would give us strength love and the ability to discern what is true and what is false.

Help us to follow you with all of our hearts, with our minds, with our souls and to depend on you for our everything. And Jesus we pray that as we live this life as individuals, as we live this life as a church here at Brunfield Evangelical Church, we pray that you would get all the glory as we eagerly await the second coming of Jesus.

In his holy and precious name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.