

An Authentic Christian

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- [0 : 00] Amen. Well, folks do have that Bible passage open in front of you as we study it this evening and as we dive into this wonderful book of 2 Peter.
- Now, we live in a world with an ever-increasing desire for authenticity. People are fed up of the fakeness that's become part of life in the rise of social media platforms.
- So Twitter has become the place for people to argue. Instagram has become a platform of edited photos and filters that make you look as if you're living your best life.
- Facebook is full of everyone pretending they're happy until they come across a post that they don't like and everyone joins in in the angry comments. In a world that previously looked for perfection, Gen Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, are on the hunt for authenticity.
- So here's what one article said that I read this week. At its most basic level, authenticity means being true to yourself. And perhaps no generation has got a knack for this as much as Gen Zs.
- [1 : 14] From their social media to the values that shape their actions, Gen Zs are not ones to be caught pretending. And so in the last few years, there's been a rise of models and fitness personalities showing what they really look like without all the lighting and the studio, without the filters and without Photoshop.
- People are opening up about their pain and about their struggles because we want more authenticity. Now, as it comes to the Christian faith, I found myself asking, the question I found myself asking in light of our passage for this evening is, what does an authentic Christian look like?
- Well, the main message of our sermon tonight as we dive into our new series in 2 Peter is this. Because God has given us everything we need for a godly life, we must make every effort to live a godly life in order to confirm our calling and election.
- So that is the sentence. If you're taking notes, that's the one you need to keep in your mind this evening. But before we dive into the first 11 verses, let's have a brief look at the whole of 2 Peter.
- So when it comes to looking at any book of the Bible, we need to ask ourselves three questions. Who wrote it? Who was it written to? And why was it written?
- [2 : 47] Answering these questions helps us know how to read and apply the Bible properly. Because every passage was written with a purpose in mind.
- So to read the Bible well, we need to discern what that is. And so read 2 Peter 1, verse 1 with me. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.
- Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. So who wrote this? Well, the author is Peter.
- The same Peter who lived and traveled with Jesus through his public ministry. The same Peter who denied Jesus, denied knowing Jesus three times in Luke chapter 22.

And the same Peter who gave the first sermon in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. In verse 1, he calls himself a servant and an apostle of Jesus.

[3 : 52] He's a servant because he is under the authority of and submitted to Jesus. And he's an apostle, meaning that Peter is one of Jesus' authoritative leaders of the early church.

And he's writing his letter as someone who has authority and who is under authority. And we don't really know the answer to our second question, who was it written to?

But we do get a hint in chapter 3, verse 1, if you flick over the page. It says, So whilst we can't be absolutely sure who the audience are, it is likely that this letter was written to the same people as 1 Peter, which was written to Christians who were scattered across what is modern day Turkey.

So maybe 2 Peter had a bigger audience as more people had come to know Jesus and more churches were formed. So the final question to help us grasp the context of this book, why was 2 Peter written?

Well, the main idea of this entire book is that Peter has written to remind these Christians to know and live out the truth. Because there were false teachers all around, spreading lies, deceiving people left, right and centre, into thinking that there was no such thing as judgment.

[5 : 28] That Jesus wasn't going to be coming back. And so you didn't really need to take the whole Christianity thing too seriously. And so Peter knows what's going on.

And just before he is about to be executed for his faith in Jesus, he picks up his pen and pens this letter saying, Christians, you need to remember the truth of the gospel.

And it must be lived out in your lives day to day. Now over the last couple of years, as we've, some of us for a while, have watched church from home, false teaching has become even more accessible than it was before, hasn't it?

YouTube, Facebook, Instagram are full of false teachers who want to push their own message, not what the Bible actually says. But it's also very easy for us to have all the right head knowledge, to have our nice, neat understanding of doctrine, but for us to continue to sit on the couch and do nothing with it.

This letter is a wake-up call saying, Christian, you must know the truth of the gospel, of what the Bible teaches, but you also need to put it into practice.

[6 : 42] Your understanding of God should push you into action for the kingdom of God. You must know and live out the truth. And so tonight, as we turn to the first 11 verses of 2 Peter, we basically get a summary of this whole book.

Peter says, as it says on the screen, because God has given us everything we need for a godly life, we must make every effort to live a godly life in order to confirm our calling and election.

Now that's going to be our outline for tonight. We'll break that sentence up into three parts. And so the first part of our sentence that I want us to look at this evening is because God has given us everything we need for a godly life in verses 3 to 4.

So the call in this passage is to live a godly life. But if we try to do that on our own, it can very quickly and very easily become a whip that we beat ourselves with.

This passage isn't calling us to moralism, to just do more or to be better. If we come away with that message, then we've completely missed the point. Because religious moralism says that you do things so that you will be found favorable in God's sight.

[8 : 04] But Christianity says you do things out of thankfulness and obedience because of what God has already done. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians are forgiven of their sins, as verse 9 reminds us.

Jesus needed to be the sacrifice who would take the sins of the world upon himself. Because a holy and perfect God cannot dwell with an unholy, sinful people.

That's one of the key themes that runs through the entire Bible. That the whole of creation is broken and needs to be restored, to be made right with God again. That's the precious promises that Peter is speaking about in verse 4.

The whole Old Testament has been pointing to humanity's need to be made right with God that is personified in Jesus Christ as he makes it possible.

The death and resurrection of Jesus isn't just a get-out-of-free hell card. It is a completely new life. A completely new identity.

[9 : 16] We are called to be holy because God, the one who calls us, is holy. And so we live in this now and not yet. Now we have the status of being holy before God as we journey through this life.

As we mature in the faith, as we grow in our understanding and knowledge of God, we are being made more into the likeness of Jesus. We are participating in our divine nature, as verse 4 says.

We're living the life we were created to live. But there's also the not yet element. Because we aren't completely there yet, are we? We're still in this imperfect state.

And until that final day comes when Jesus returns or we go to be in his presence, we are called to live a godly life. But how? How can we live a godly life?

Well, the answer, the glorious answer is there in verse 3. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness.

[10 : 30] So through God's glory and goodness, he has made himself known to us. And from that knowledge, and because of what God has revealed in the Bible, we know that he has called us to true life, to godly living.

But we are not alone. Because we do this through his divine power. Verse 3. See, as Christians, we have been freed from the chains of sin that previously bound us tightly.

We are no longer slaves to sin, but we are able to live the life that we were created to live. God has given us power through his spirit for us to live out that new identity.

And Christians shouldn't get caught up with the evil desires of this world or the corruption going on around us because we are different. We are living for something else, for someone else.

But that's still hard, isn't it? It's difficult to live that life because this process isn't yet complete. Yes, we have absolutely been made new in Christ.

[11 : 45] We have a new life, a new identity. Our priorities are different from what they were before. But we still live in sinful bodies. We still live in a sinful world surrounded by sinful people, and our hearts are constantly drawn back to sin.

And the call to live a godly life is to rest in the knowledge of God, to remember his great promises of old that he has given us through Jesus, and to live them out by his power.

That same power that spoke this very world into being, that same power that rose Jesus from the dead, that same power that has worked miracles throughout human history, is the very same power that is at work in your life.

As through the Holy Spirit, you live a godly life as you've been called to by Jesus. And so, because God has given us everything we need for a godly life.

In the second part of our summary sentence, we get a little bit more of an idea of what that looks like. We must make every effort to live a godly life in verses 5 to 9.

[13 : 01] So because of God's provision of everything we need in Jesus, Peter now encourages us to build on that foundation of faith, and to grow in maturity.

Think of it a little bit like a tree. See, the gospel, the promises of God, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the foundation of the Christian life.

They are the roots. Without them, there is no life. Without them, there is nothing. But once you are rooted in Jesus, once you have faith in him, you desire to live for him, and like a good plant, you will grow.

That's why Peter says in verse 5, For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection, and to mutual affection love.

What does it look like to make every effort? For a student, preparing for exams, it probably means hauling yourself up in the library for hours on end.

[14 : 17] Getting your head into the books, revising, not going out socializing. You're roping in friends and family members to help you prepare for that exam. You have a goal in mind, and so you go to quiet places to study.

Your desire to succeed in the exam shapes your day. That student is making every effort. Or if you want to get fit, you change your lifestyle, don't you?

You eat differently. You prep your meals. You maybe even start a gym membership, or speak to a fitness instructor. You invest time, money, on research to get to know the things that your body needs to achieve the goal of fitness you want.

You make every effort. Now, if that's what it means to make every effort in the everyday things of life, and how dedicated we are to those, think honestly about how often we really make every effort to live a godly life.

Because spiritual growth doesn't just happen to us. We need to actively be trying to grow. We need to be pursuing holiness and godliness, investing our time, resources, and energy to live the life that we've been called to live.

[15 : 41] And so Peter outlines the attributes of an authentic godly life. We need to remember that word, authentic. Because Peter doesn't say all of this just so that we can put on a mask as we walk through the doors on a Sunday and fake it.

He is saying these things that we should be making every effort to grow in through the power of God as we are living out our identity in Christ. Because that is the call to godliness that is on the life of every Christian.

Now when we see a list, we're tempted to think that these things are independent from each other. That you can kind of pick and choose which attribute you want to work on and which one you don't.

But the repetition of each word, and the way that it's structured, Peter wants us to see that these are kind of like building blocks. Each attribute or characteristic is linked to the previous one.

And those are the things we should be striving for. Making every effort to work out in our lives. It's a bit like a cake recipe. You wouldn't dream of baking a cake without putting flour in it.

[16 : 54] The recipe would be incomplete and the cake wouldn't taste very nice. Trust me, I've done it before. Every year I've been married to Sabina, I make her a birthday cake. It's the same, it's a very specific birthday cake that she's had since growing up as a child.

But for the first few years I needed help. Because, if you don't know this already, I'm terrible in the kitchen. But now, after sitting under her guidance for a few years, I understand the importance of each ingredient.

And the order that they go in to make a nice cake. And so the attributes of verses 5 to 7, they're the ingredients of the Christian life that will produce a believer who is faithful and fruitful for the glory of God.

The list begins with faith and it ends with love. And that's important. Because if you do not have faith in Christ, these attributes are meaningless for you in regards to your spiritual well-being.

And if they are not put into practice out of love, then they're worthless. These fruits of faith reflect the character of God. And these are the key applications of what it means to live a godly life.

[18 : 13] So follow along with me in verse 5. We should add goodness or virtue to our faith. That means to live a life worthy of praise.

To be brave, generous, to treat others well, and to be a person known for acting appropriately at all times. Do the people in your life know, based on how you live day to day, how you interact with others, that you're a Christian.

And that your faith is the reason that you're a good person. The next thing is knowledge. And that's not merely intellectual ability, but it includes discerning the false teaching, false gospel that was being spread by the false teachers.

It means knowing Jesus. And having that knowledge played out in your life, as you want to live the life he called you to. See friends, there is a massive difference between knowing God and knowing about God.

Knowing about God means that we can have some kind of vague understanding of who he is, but very little more. Knowing God. That means that we are in a relationship with him, to see him for who he is, and to live our lives in light of that.

[19 : 40] The next attribute in verse 6 is self-control. And that means that a Christian is to restrain their emotions, their impulses, and their desires.

This is so difficult to do in a world that tells you to live as you see fit. To do whatever you want, as long as it's not hurting anyone. The Bible tells us a different story.

It says that you were created to live a certain way, but because that has been broken by sin, we are to live under the authority of God, not under the authority of our sinful desires.

The world says freedom is found in letting yourself go, in succumbing to whatever you desire, but the Bible says true freedom, lasting freedom, is living the life you were created to live.

That is self-control. Next is perseverance. Or a better translation of that word is steadfastness. Meaning that in the face of difficulties, you are able to stand your ground for Jesus.

[20 : 51] This steadfastness produces endurance. Now the Christian life is not a hundred meter sprint that can be over quickly, depending on how fast you run.

It is a marathon. That is full of obstacles and things that would try to distract you from Jesus. But do not divert your path. Remain steadfast in the Lord and continue to show that consistent strength as you live out your faith in him.

Then in verse 6, Godliness, which is that God-orientated life shaped by him. It means that our thoughts, our feelings, our attitudes, our words, and the way we act every single day should be shaped by him, our creator, and our desire to honor him.

Not just on Sundays. Not just in small groups. Not just in the public eye. But everywhere we go. Should be shaped by our desire to live a godly life for God.

And the next attribute that we should make every effort to add to our faith in verse 7 is mutual affection. Now this is affection amongst fellow Christians.

[22 : 11] Peter knows this brotherly love better than most people. Because what was it that Jesus did after Peter denied him three times?

He had breakfast with him. And he called him to be part of the church and to feed them. That is true love. This means that as a church family, we should be looking out for one another.

Living life together. Not just on Sundays, but actually properly investing in relationships with one another every single day. Building deep friendships that are built on the gospel of Jesus Christ that lead us to being a church family that is welcoming, that is forgiving, that is a place where people can feel open and able to share their struggles.

And it should be a joy to be in for all people. And then the final attribute is love in verse 7.

But this isn't about a feeling that is brought on by the beauty of a person or an object. Biblical love is the consistent commitment of your heart, mind and soul to pursue what is best for the one you love.

[23 : 35] Ultimately it means loving others with the same love that God has for them. Now maybe you look at that list as I did and you want to gulp.

And you want to run away. Because you know that you don't measure up to it. But remember verses 3 and 4. God has given you everything you need by his divine power.

See the promise to live this life is not that it will be easy. Or that you'll measure up to this all the time. Realistically I don't think we can.

Because we're fallen broken people. But the promise is that God is with us. And that by his power, through the Holy Spirit, he is helping us work out these things in our lives.

And so treat this list like the goal. We will not be able to reach it. We will never be able to be all of these things perfectly. But that's what we should be striving to reach.

[24 : 40] Why? Why should we invest our time and effort into living this way if we're never really going to achieve it properly? Verse 8. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Living this kind of whole life discipleship from verses 5 to 7 and continuing to grow in these attributes will prevent us from being ineffective or idle, lazy and unproductive.

It will help us be disciple-making disciples who constantly point people to Jesus. That is the life we are called to. There's also a warning to those who aren't striving to live this verse 5 to 7 life.

Look at verse 9 with me. But whoever does not have them, that's those attributes, is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

So those who do not strive to live this kind of life are spiritually blind and have forgotten who God is and how great the forgiveness that He offers is.

[26 : 01] Not living a life of godliness makes you forget all that Jesus has done for you. It makes you forget the new creation that He has made you into. To think that we can be in Christ and not strive for and continue to grow in the attributes of verses 5 to 7 is foolish.

It is unwise and it is blind towards the work of God in the life of His people. Are you making every effort to live a godly life?

Are you seeking accountability? Are you being honest with trusted Christians around you, bringing Christian friends in to help you live a godly life? Are you thinking about what your biggest temptations and struggles are so that you can be killing sin before it kills you?

Friends, we need to make every effort to live a godly life. And we see why in our final part of the summary sentence for tonight.

We should be striving to live a godly life in order to confirm our calling and election in verses 10 to 11. Read those verses with me.

[27 : 24] Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So Peter says that Christians should make every effort to confirm their calling and election. He's basically saying that the Christian life should be a living example of the calling that they have received, which the calling is to live godly lives and the election means those who have been chosen to salvation.

But notice that he says brothers and sisters. He is showing that shared identity that all Christians have and that common calling for all to live a godly life through the power of God as we saw in verses 3 to 9.

Living this godly life not only makes you fruitful as verse 8 says, but it will also mean that you never stumble. Now that doesn't mean that you won't fall into sin.

Now on this side of eternity, we will always struggle with temptation and sin. We will fail time and time again, but God's grace is deeper than our failings and his forgiveness is greater.

[28 : 50] But Peter is saying living the Christian life of verses 5 to 9 will mean that you're growing in your faith and it will stop you from embracing false doctrine that is being taught that leads to eternal destruction.

So, live out your faith until the day that Jesus returns or you are called into his presence. that is what it means to confirm your calling and election in this life as we wait for the perfect new creation.

And so as we look at a world that wants authenticity, wouldn't it be wonderful? Wouldn't it be a wonderful witness if every single Christian took our identity in Jesus as new creation seriously?

If every single Christian took the time to think about what it would mean and what it would look for us to make every effort to live a godly life through the immense power of the Holy Spirit, an authentic Christian is a godly Christian who is living out there a new identity in Jesus for the glory of God.

And so, because God has given us everything we need for a godly life, we must make every effort to live a godly life in order to confirm our calling and election.

[30 : 16] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, as we look at passages like this, it sometimes can be so daunting. We feel out of our depth.

We feel like failures because we know that we don't live up to the standards you call us to. And yet, Father, we thank you that you have given us this calling and that it was penned by Peter, someone who denied you three times and yet who you used mightily for your kingdom.

Father, we ask that by your power you would help us live the godly life that you have called us to. Help us be witnesses to those around us as we confirm our calling and election to live for you.

Help us persevere until that glorious day when you return or you call us into your presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

let's try it around