

Make Every Effort – Part 2

2 Peter 1:5-11

Series: *Growing in the Knowledge of God – 2 Peter*

Introduction: Take your Bible and join me in 2 Peter 1.

Certainty is hard to come by in our uncertain world. Lots of people are very certain about things which are not so sure – like a confidence that their team is going to win it all in football this year. And lots of people are uncertain about things which they should be certain about – like whether or not a baby in the womb is a true living human being just like a baby outside the womb is. And this is what deception always does – it always gives us certainty about wrong things and uncertainty about settled things. This work of the Master Deceiver has infected our world and dominates the worldview of those who don't know God. But it has also infected the church and threatens her ability to be the light in this dark world we ought to be. So, we come to a text this morning in which we are called to be all the more diligent to be certain about that which we can be certain about.

The churches that Peter is writing to were facing the unsettling threat of outside persecution and opposition. But on top of that they were facing the internal threat of false teachers. These false teachers were undermining the gospel by claiming to be orthodox and more spiritual than others while living lives of immorality and Christian license. Their lack of concern for holiness was flaunted before other believers as evidence that they had obviously unlocked some great spiritual key which gave them forgiveness of sins and freedom to continue on in sin, as though it wasn't really sinful. They promised freedom and liberty and happiness, and the true believers in these churches were uncertain and unsteady. So, Peter writes this whole letter to shore up their faith. To help them be certain about the most important things. He has begun the letter by reminding them of what they know about their calling and election to salvation from their sins. He will move on in chapter 1 to remind them of the certainty of the Word of God and then in chapter 2 of the holiness of God as opposed to the debauchery of the false teachers who claim to speak for him, and then in chapter 3 of the certainty of God's promises. As we have already seen in chapter 1, Peter presents his argument for certainty in a most logical and impeccable way. He points us to the settled and sufficient work of God that now produces results in those who are His. As he reminds us of what is most certain, he also calls us to how we should respond so as to grow all the more in this certainty.

That is what Peter started in verses 5-7, which we considered last week. He called us to make every effort to supplement our faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with perseverance, and perseverance with godliness, and

godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. If we know the sufficiency and surety of divine power in verses 3-4, then we are to respond with the zealous pursuit of verses 5-7. And the text we come to this morning is a further explanation of that same idea. So, verses 5-11 are one unit of thought. Last week we saw in verse 5 that the cornerstone of this pursuit of a growing faith was the settled work of God's grace and the sufficiency of divine power. Then we saw that the character of this pursuit was to be a zealous, all-in, every muscle of the racehorse kind of pursuit. And then we looked at the content of this pursuit – what qualities we are seeking to add to our faith. Now, in verses 8-11 we have this pursuit further explained. In verses 8-9 we see the concern of this pursuit, and then in verses 10-11 we have the certainty of this pursuit. Let's read, starting in verse 8.

I. The Concern of Our Pursuit – vs. 8-9

- a. You understand, don't you, that it is possible for someone to think they are a Christian, and to not really be one. It is also possible for us to think that someone is a Christian, and for them to not really be one. And it is also possible for someone to be a Christian, and for them to be uncertain that they are truly a Christian. The way to be a Christian is settled by Christ. He is our only hope. His work on the Cross is sufficient and complete. Only He can save us. And we must turn from all other trusts, all other hopes, all other beliefs – and we must confess our inability to save ourselves from the condemnation of our sin, and we must believe completely and only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grounds of salvation are settled and certain. But the confidence in the individual about this salvation is not always settled. But it is possible for a Christian to be saved by Christ and to be completely confident and assured of this fact.
- b. And this is the kind of Christian we all want to be, and should strive to be. One that is truly in Christ and one who is assured that they are in Christ. These are the Christians who are indeed the most useful and the most glorifying to God. These are the Christians who are experiencing the most joy in Christ and who are working the hardest in this life for Christ – the ones who are completely assured in the forgiveness of their sins. So, that is the concern of this pursuit to supplement these qualities to our faith. We want to be assured of our settled standing before God. And so, as it relates to these qualities and to our pursuit of adding these qualities to our faith, we have two options. The one is a positive option in verse 8, and the other a negative option in verse 9.
- c. *Fruitfulness*
 - i. In verse 8 we have the option of fruitfulness in these qualities. So, Peter says that if we have these qualities and if they are increasing in us, then we are kept from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that this is the issue of our text – the true knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is where we have multiplied grace and peace in verse 2 – in the knowledge of God and of

Jesus our Lord. And this is how we access the sufficiency of divine power for life and godliness in verse 3 – through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. If we have this true knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, then this knowledge must change us. Specifically, this knowledge must compel us into action which is spiritually fruitful.

- ii. Peter presents this option with two present active verbs – they are yours and are increasing. This is possession and progression. For the true Christian these qualities of verses 5-7 are already in their spiritual DNA and simply need nurtured and grown through grace-driven effort. The word for increase here has the idea of overflowing in abundance or excess. So, the first option for the Christian who truly possesses knowledge of God through Christ is to pursue the nurturing of these qualities of spiritual maturity. And the increase continues and continues for all of life on this earth to great abundance. You can never have too much of any of these things, you can only ever add more. This is the logic of the New Testament. We have been shown abundant grace by God as He has brought us from sin to salvation – from darkness to light – from death to life – from trust in self to trust in Christ. And this abundant grace from God means that we ought not abound in sin, but rather we ought to abound in true life and godliness – in spiritual growth and maturity.
- iii. If we do abound in these qualities then we will not be ineffective or unfruitful. This ineffectiveness is idleness. It describes the one who simply is not working. It is the men in the parable of the vineyard owner in Matthew 20 who comes at different times throughout the day and finds men who are not working in the marketplace and then hires them to work in his vineyard. It's the description of the Cretans in Titus 1 – that they are idle and gluttonous. It's the faith in James 2 that does no work, and therefore makes known it is not true faith. And to be unfruitful is to be the branch that is not producing fruit in John 15:2 which is then cut off and thrown into the fire. So, the first option for the professing Christian is the option in which they will not be idle nor unfruitful because they possess and are super-abounding in these qualities of a maturing faith. In other words, these qualities put them to work and produce the fruit of the Spirit. This is the concern of this pursuit – to be a Christian that is fruitful.

d. *Blindness*

- i. This is contrasted with the other option in verse 9, and that is to be blind. So Peter says that if we lack these qualities we are so nearsighted and blind, having forgotten that we have been cleansed from former sins. It's difficult to know exactly what Peter means by combining blindness and

nearsightedness and forgetfulness. The ESV interprets that for you a bit and says that it is a spiritual nearsightedness which leads to blindness, but the Greek isn't quite that clear at face value. In fact, in the Greek, the word for being blind comes before being nearsighted. So, it is certainly possible to read it the way the ESV translates it – that he is so nearsighted that he is blind. But the key for understanding is in the last phrase – he has forgotten his past cleansing from former sins. He is blinded to his current standing before God and he is short-sighted in where he is going, and he is forgetful about his past – what God has done for him in forgiving him from sin. And the evidence of this spiritual blindness and spiritual shortsightedness and spiritual forgetfulness is that these qualities are not present in him. They are not super-abounding like they are in verse 8. So, this Christian of verse 9 is idle and unfruitful. And verse 9 goes to the root cause – he has forgotten his redemption. He is unproductive and idle and unfruitful in these spiritual graces because he has moved past his cleansing from sin. In other words, his lack of sanctification has made him unsure of his justification. His lack of growth in spiritual maturity has made him unsure and uncertain and forgetful and shortsighted and blind about his true standing. It may be that he is a true Christian and needs to fan into flame the grace of God in his life. The answer for this Christian is to return to the Cross and remember his forgiveness and by this to fan into flame his effort to supplement faith with these qualities of godliness.

- ii. But it is also possible that the Christian of verse 9 is not a true Christian at all. They may have had a conversion experience and may think they are saved, but the absence of these qualities, and a total lack of pursuit to add them to their faith – are evidence that they may not truly be a Christian at all. The end game of that is found in chapter 2 and verses 20-22. Peter describes these professing Christians who are now entangled in the defilements of the world and so their present state has become worse for them than the first. They are like the professing believers of Hebrews 6 who have turned back from Christ and have returned to their old ways. It would have been better for them to not know or profess faith in the gospel at all. They have not lost a salvation they once possessed, but rather they have professed a salvation they never truly possessed. And their return to slavery under the defilements of sin have proven their true nature as unregenerate before God.
- iii. So, these are your two options in this conversation about the pursuit of these qualities in your life. This is the concern of this pursuit. If you possess them and are progressing in them, then you will not be idle nor unfruitful. But if you lack them, then you show your disconnect from the grace of the Gospel. This option puts you in a state of absolute

uncertainty and confusion about your standing before God. You have chosen in some way to forget the glorious forgiveness of your sins in Christ. But the first option puts you in a position of ever increasing certainty. Your possession and progression in these qualities makes you useful to God and fruitful for God – and this brings the great certainty described in verses 10-11. So, the obvious choice here is option one.

II. The Certainty of Our Pursuit – vs. 10-11

- a. And because option one is the obvious choice, Peter commands a diligent effort in verse 10 to make our calling and election sure. So, he says, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” This is the certainty of this pursuit. So, follow Peter’s logic here. If we know the saving grace of God which gives us the faith of verse 1, then we have the divine sufficiency for all things pertaining to life and godliness, knowing that we have escaped from the corruption of sin and now share in the divine nature. We should then earnestly pursue these qualities of godliness to add them to this faith we have been given by the grace of God. And as we diligently pursue these qualities and see them flourishing in our lives, the more confirmed we will be in the faith we have been given and we will never fall away into the apostasy of the false teachers. We will know the certainty of our eternal standing before God in Christ.
- b. It’s a glorious certainty which is offered here. And it is one that is to be pursued by every true believer. This is the culmination of the argument of Peter’s letter to this point. He has explained the glories of God’s sovereign grace in salvation and our response to bring us to this point of certainty. We can indeed know that we have been forgiven of our sins, are right with God, and will spend eternity with Him in His Kingdom!
- c. The story is told of the great preacher, George Whitefield, whose preaching was the impetus for the Great Awakening in England and America. Upon meeting one of the premier leaders of one of the Welsh churches he asked him, “Mr. Harris, do you *know* that your sins are forgiven?”¹ Ah beloved – that is the issue for us as well. This certainty is at the heart of every great revival and reformation of the church. It is a certainty rooted in the Scriptures and dependent singularly upon the grace of God in salvation. And it is a certainty which compels this earnest pursuit of the life of God in the soul of man. Being made a partaker of the divine nature through the saving grace of God, the true Christian now pursues the putting on of Divine qualities, and this all combines together to make the Christian all the more certain that he will never fall.

¹ D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Expository Sermons on 2 Peter*, pg. 35.

- d. The command in verse 10 is to be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. This effort we are called to is the same effort Peter is exerting to remind us of these truths in verse 15, so that after he is gone we will be able to recall them. It is a zealous and eager exertion to secure something of vital importance. It's the word used in 2 Timothy 2:15 to call us to make every effort to be a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed because we rightly handle the word of truth. It's the word used in Hebrews 4:11 to command us to make every effort to make sure we enter the rest offered us in Christ by fighting against a wicked heart of unbelief. It is the effort Peter is going to call us to at the end of this book, in 3:14, to be diligent to be found by Christ without spot or blemish when he returns.
- e. So, we are to put forth this diligent effort to make sure of our calling and election. These are descriptive terms of our salvation. God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world – this is our election. And then he has worked out that call in the course of human events as he has brought the Gospel to bear upon our hearts and through the preaching of the Gospel he has called us to saving faith in Christ – this is our calling. These are terms of divine initiative. This calling is generated by and sourced in and dependent upon God alone. This calling and election are not self-generated. In verse 3 we learned that this calling comes from Christ as his divine power calls us to his own glory and excellence. This calling is not self-sourced – it is not something that depends upon us. In verse 1 we learned that we are given this faith by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. And we learned in verses 3-4 that this calling and election are not self-sustained – we have been given everything we need for life and godliness and we have been given the great and precious promises of eternal salvation. This is not a promise dependent upon us nor secured by us. This calling and election are God's work.
- f. We do not make this happen, but we are to make sure of it. In other words, if we have been elected by God and called to saving faith in Christ, then we ought to be radically changed and this ought to make itself known in the context of everyday life. This really is the most extraordinary claim that any human can ever make isn't it? That they have been forgiven by God and know that they have eternal life! Is there any more astonishing claim known to man than that? So, if it is true then there should be obvious evidence of that in the life of the one making the claim.
- g. And this is what we do with physical life isn't it? We make every effort to make physical life flourish and to increase its vitality. We fight against disease and we nurture and nourish our physical life. We don't do that with a dead physical body. We don't pretend to give it life, nor to bring it back to life once the physical life has left the body. When the vital signs of physical life have ceased then we start mourning and saying goodbye. Well, the same is true here of spiritual life. We do not make every effort to bring life where there isn't life. We don't attend

to a dead spiritual man so as to give it life that it doesn't have. No, the life has been given to us by the sovereign grace of God and the command here is to make every effort to help that life flourish. So, we are to pursue the qualities of this spiritual life which are listed in verses 5-7. Making every effort to do so, so that we can then have certainty about our standing before God. Our certainty is not guaranteed by our effort, but our understanding of our certainty is more sure as we walk more and more in these things.

- h. The promise at the end of verse 10 is that we will never fall if we apply this diligent effort. This is not a promise to never sin, but a promise to never apostatize. Apostates do not thrive in spiritual virtue. They do not make diligent effort to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brother affection, and to brotherly affection love. They don't have true spiritual life and so they don't foster that life with diligent effort. They may put on these virtues for the showmanship of the moment, but they are not rooted in a heart of true belief in the Gospel. Peter's call is not the diligent effort to make everyone think you are a Christian, but the diligent effort to live out this new life in Christ in every moment. To super-abound in these qualities in every moment, not just when others are watching. This will keep us from apostasy.
- i. Then in verse 11 we are given another aspect of this certainty – that we will be richly provided with an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This rich provision is a passive verb which points us once again to the divine initiative of God. God begins this work of grace in us and he will complete this work of grace in us when he brings us fully and finally into the eternal kingdom. This is the great hope of the believer. This is the future grace that we are to set our hope fully on from 1 Peter 1:13. This is a yet future entrance into the eternal kingdom. Christians have been given Kingdom blessings in that we have been given new hearts and we know the benefits of the new covenant Christ will make with His chosen people. Christians are taken from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Our citizenship is changed from one kingdom to the other. But the Kingdom is not fully entered into. God will bring his wrath upon the world in the Great Tribulation which will lead into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ where he will sit on the Davidic Throne and rule over the Jewish People and all the nations of the Earth. And this Millennial Kingdom of Revelation 19-20 will then lead into and give way to the Eternal Kingdom of Revelation 21-22 where the New Heavens and the New Earth will be forever inhabited by God's redeemed people. Where he will dwell with men and men with Him.
- j. This is provided for those who are truly in Christ by grace through faith. We enter in through the Door who is Christ, based upon the blood of the Lamb of God who is Christ, and made righteous before God as we are clothed in the

Righteous One who is Christ. And we enter into the eternal Kingdom which is the domain of Christ! It is an incredibly glorious promise, and it fuels our diligent pursuit. Being promised this eternal destiny we are fueled in our pursuit for the purity of Christ in this life. As John says in 1 John 3:2-3 – “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

- k. And when we do pursue this purity we are all the more certain of our standing in Christ. And this provides for a confident entrance into the life which comes after this life. Instead of being barely saved as one snatched from the fire of Hell, we can confidently enter as a mature and maturing Christian. This is what Paul so well expresses in 2 Timothy. He says in 4:7 – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” This diligent effort to make your calling and election sure makes that moment of death a moment of victorious faith. In other words, it helps you to die well – confident in Christ and certain of your eternal destiny.

Conclusion: So, do you know this certainty? Which option have you chosen to define your pursuit – the one of fruitfulness or the one of blindness? Do you know the forgiveness of your sins? Are you absolutely certain about it? Would an examination of your life turn up the proof of these qualities that are in your possession and are super-abounding as this life and godliness are growing in you?

Points of Application:

- It is expected that you need to grow, so don’t wallow in guilt
- It is expected that we will be uncertain, and will need confirmation of our faith
- It is expected that we can confirm our calling & election, and thereby be sure of our eternal destiny