

Make Every Effort

2 Peter 1:5

Sermon Handout

Key Reality:

- Positionally, you are already righteous in Christ by faith.
- Potentially, you will become righteous like Christ through faith.

The beauty of salvation is that Christ has paid our penalty for sin not to leave us in sin but to lead us out of it.

Remember: Christ transforms. Sin deforms.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

The question that we need to consider is: Am I growing in increasing measure into the likeness of Christ? How do I do that as a consistent part of my life?

I. Make Every Effort: Intentionally Prioritize and Pursue Your Personal Spiritual Growth. 2 Peter 1:5a

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge..." 2 Peter 1:5 (ESV)

What does it mean to "make every effort"?

- a. Foster a Sense of Urgency:** "Making every effort" means not only trying to grow but actually having a sense of urgency or priority.

"The first element, then in Christian diligence is economy of time as a precious treasure, and the avoidance, as of a pestilence, of all procrastination. 'Tomorrow and tomorrow' is the opiate with which sluggards and cowards set conscience asleep, and as each tomorrow becomes today it proves as empty of effort as its predecessors." Andrew MacLaren

"Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Romans 13:11-12

- **Godly Growing Friends:**

Make it a group effort to push and to prod one another to stay spiritually alert and engaged.

"The pursuit of holiness is thus no mere private hobby, nor merely a path for a select few, but a vital element in Christian mission strategy today. The world's greatest need is the personal holiness of Christian people." J.I. Packer

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

- **Growth Oriented Fasting:**

Get rid of the spiritually dulling and distracting things that consume your life.

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." Matthew 4:1-2 (ESV)

- **Faithfulness to Consistent Corporate Worship:**

God's has ordained Lord's Day worship for the purpose of keeping God's people collectively focused on growing in godliness.

"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Hebrews 13:14-17 (ESV)

- b. **Purpose to Expend Energy:** "Making every effort" means to intentionally expend energy and effort.

"A godly character does not emerge from passivity or lassitude (apathy)." Tom Schreiner

“But as for you, o man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and are about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”
1 Timothy 6:11-12

"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14 (ESV)

II. Moral Excellence: Pursue Gospel Transformation at the Highest Level.

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue..." 2 Peter 1:5 (ESV)

The word for virtue means “moral excellence.”

"...who called us to his own glory and **excellence**," 2 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

You and I are called to pursue the highest possible character that we can have in and through Jesus Christ. Like an athlete who keeps working to achieve their personal best, we pursue increasing Christ-likeness.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

- **The Pursuit of Virtue/Moral Excellence:**

God has called us to share in his moral excellence and it is incumbent upon us to make that our priority and pursuit in our daily lives.

“God creates the moral excellence that He demands. Hence, it follows that the moral excellence of believers can be attributed to God’s grace. And yet, New Testament writers never polarize divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Those whom God has effectually called to virtue are also to practice virtue with energy and intensity.” Tom Schreiner

- **The Priority of Virtue/Moral Excellence:**

Discipleship is the growth of one’s character before it is the growth of one’s conduct.

"And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'" Mark 7:20-23 (ESV)

- **Regularly Pray Over the Condition of Your Heart.**

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

- **Learn to Respond to the Holy Spirit:** Resist Sinful Heart Attitudes and Replace Them With The Fruits of the Spirit.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Galatians 5:16

- **Fix Your Eyes on Christ and Ask God to Make You like Him.**

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29)

Are you intentionally seeking to grow more and more into the image of Christ? Is it a built-in primary focus of your life?

Group Study Questions:

1. Growing in Christ: The sermon reminds us that we are already righteous in Christ, yet God is continuing to make us more like Jesus. Where have you seen God helping you grow in your character or faith recently?
2. Making Growth a Priority: What are some things that tend to crowd out your spiritual growth? What is one practical way you could give your relationship with God greater priority this week?
3. Encouraging One Another: Hebrews 10:24–25 calls us to encourage one another toward love and good works. How could our small group do a better job of helping one another stay spiritually engaged and growing?
4. Removing Distractions: The sermon encourages us to set aside things that dull our spiritual lives. What is one habit, distraction, or activity you could reduce to make more room for God?
5. Intentional Effort: Philippians 3:13–14 describes pressing forward toward the goal of Christlikeness. What spiritual practice has helped you grow, and how could you become more consistent in it?
6. Pursuing Moral Excellence: Philippians 4:8 encourages us to focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. Which of these qualities would you especially like God to develop in you, and what might that look like in everyday life?
7. Examining the Heart: Mark 7:20–23 teaches that our outward actions flow from what is happening within us. How can we become more attentive to our heart attitudes before they shape our words and actions?
8. Responding to the Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:16 calls us to walk by the Spirit. When you recognize an unhelpful attitude such as impatience, envy, or pride rising within you, what could help you respond in a way that reflects Jesus?
9. Taking a Next Step: If becoming more like Christ were a more intentional focus of your life over the next month, what is one specific step you would like to take? How could the group pray for you or encourage you in that step?