

# Christians They Are Ineffective

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Date: 24 February 1991

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[ 0 : 00 ] The title of my sermon tonight is... Well, I won't...

You can see whether that works out or not. What I want you to look at is this. Once upon a time, I and all my family went up to the Peace River to work on a farm during the month vacation we had that year.

And I was supposed to drive a tractor on the vast fields of the Peace River. And I did the very first day I got there. And then it started to rain.

And a month later it was still raining. So I never got back on the field. And so we had to pull... We had to work on machinery in the machine shop on the farm most of the time.

And I am not much of a mechanic. But the farmer would give me a whole bench full of tools and give me some part of a machine or an engine and ask me to pull it apart, which I was happy to do.

[ 1 : 26 ] As long as he was there to put it back together again. Because I couldn't possibly do that. I feel what I'm going to do tonight is take 2 Peter 1, verses 1 to 11 and pull it all apart.

And trust you to put it all back together again in the circumstances of your life. So stand by to watch how it comes apart.

And then be prepared to spend the week trying to put it together in your own life. I'm not going to spend very much time on the first 2 verses, which are important.

And they are the introduction to the letter. And you can read them for yourself. But then I want you to notice something which happens beginning with verse 3. Verse 3 down to verse 11, which is the passage.

You look at it there. Has 5 sentences in it. You look for the periods. That's how you tell. And you'll see that verses 3 and 4, are one sentence.

[ 2 : 43 ] They begin with divine power and end with, at the end of verse 4, divine nature.

So, we become, by his divine power, we become partakers of the divine nature. So you move from divine power to divine nature the Christian man or the Christian community.

Then in verse 5, you look and see that, sorry, verses 5, 6, and 7 seem to be an appeal to a reasoned response.

You see how it begins? For this very reason, make every effort. And then he tells you what you are to make every effort doing.

So you have divine power to the divine nature. You have an appeal to a reasoned response to what God, by his divine power, has shown. And then you go to the next sentence, which is the whole of verse 8.

[ 4 : 00 ] And in verse 8, you have that for if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective.

You see, Christians, they are ineffective. That's where the title comes from, I bet you. But if you have these things, now, what things is he talking about?

Well, he's talking about way back to verse 3. His divine power has granted us all things. And then when you get to verse 8, if you have these things, that is, all the things that God has provided, then it tells you what happens.

And then in verse, the fourth sentence, which is the whole of verse 9, tells you what happens if you lack these things. Again, it's all the things that are provided in verse 3.

If you have them, in verse 8. If you lack them, in verse 9. And then the final sentence talks about, brings the passage to a conclusion.

[ 5 : 21 ] Now, those are, that's the first, we're taking the thing apart, you see, and we've got it down to five sentences. Now, in the verses that come 5, 6, and 7, there's one of those wonderful catalogs of words.

words. And in the catalog of words, do you see it there? Verse 5, 6, and 7. Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

Now, those are, in fact, not very useful words, because all of them are very stilted and very religious.

religious. And, what you need to do is to take those words, which by their familiarity to you have become highly caricatured, and to study them so that you can give expression to the realities which they point to in your own life.

What does it mean? We can get carried along in a kind of religious, pep rally atmosphere and get very worked up about faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

[ 6 : 56 ] Great. But, it's likely that if you stop, you don't know what they mean. You know, they're kind of slogan words or caricature words, but you don't know what they practically mean in your daily life.

that's where we run into trouble. Every time I come across the word grace, I have to look it up because it's not a word that I use in any other connection with any significance.

And so most of these words very much need to be looked up. And you will be glad to know that there are competent scholars and people who have spent a lot of time explaining to you exactly what these words mean.

So if you want to fit these words together into something that is coherent in your life, then you have to learn what those words mean for yourself.

Because otherwise you could, and I think quite justifiably, be fairly contemptuous of this catalog as being impractical and not really related to the realities of our everyday life.

[ 8 : 11 ] You know, the psycho jargon that we talk nowadays, it's not here. This is kind of religious jargon that we talk, and we have to get behind these words to figure out what it means.

things. But just notice about them that they are sort of like vitamins for the Christian life. Because if you just, if you look where it starts in verse 5 again, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith.

So there are kind of faith supplements that you have to build you up in your spiritual life. So they're very important. But in order for them to be important, you have to understand them.

So I commend that catalog to you and ask that you will do some work on it. The next thing that I have done in pulling this passage apart is to show you the portrait of the disastrous Christian that is given here.

And here he is. in verse 4 you discover that he has failed to escape the corruption that is in the world.

[ 9 : 32 ] This corruption just like you know a garbage bag that goes bad and begins to stink. So the corruption that is in the world infiltrates the life of the Christian and you begin to stink spiritually speaking you know that this corruption takes hold and it just goes and goes and goes and it infects everything around you.

So that the first thing we know about the disastrous Christian is that he's failed to escape the corruption that is in the world. Then if you want to know how that happened to such a nice fellow you'll see that how it happened was because of passions and lusts which we all have and which we all have to battle with and they become instead of being complimentary gifts they become things that corrupt us because they take over in our lives.

We become we are taken over by passion and lust and that generates the corruption which is in the world and that is something that that happened to us.

Now look just just be careful when you look at that to see this that it says that that God has provided very great and precious promises so that we may escape when you escape something you run away you don't quietly and casually drift off you put your head down and run and the promises are given so that you can escape you know that lovely verse in Corinthians which helped me for most of my life you know there has no temptation taken you but such as is common demand for God has with the temptation also made a way of escape so that it's not that lusts and passions aren't real and aren't terribly demanding and aren't tyrannous in the extreme but there is a way of escape that's all it says you gotta run away and so the disastrous

Christian is the fellow who fails to escape if you look in verse five you will see that he has failed to build the faith supplements into his life now building those faith supplements into one's life may seem to you to be an exercise in spiritual priggery but it isn't if you were ever to go into a hospital

and they wanted to do heart surgery on you you would wake up afterwards with a large tube down your throat and quite incapable of discussing anything because of it and what happens is that when your lung voluntarily starts to take a tiny breath this machinery takes over and fills your lung with fresh air air you just make a sort of impulsive take a little gasp and the machine kicks in and fills your lung with fresh air and and I think that you need to recognize what happens here when you are trying to build your life along you know to supplement your life with this catalog of things that it's not as though you were a stark outsider trying to do spiritual gymnastics which are way beyond your ability and again

[ 14 : 18 ] I just remind you of that list virtue knowledge self control steadfastness godliness brotherly affection and love those things which we're too busy for we haven't got the time for and we don't know that it would be good even to try and accomplish all those things but what they are and the way I think you need to understand them is that they are you taking a tiny breath and god filling your lungs you making a tiny effort and god doing it so that when you look at that catalog you may be surprised someday to find that god has accomplished in you what you have tried to do and not done very well in other words that those things become true of you because of the work of god in you but the attitude he demands of you is that you recognize the need to try this machine does not kick in until you try to breathe and then it fills your lung with fresh air these things do not become spiritual supplements in our life until we become conscious of them and make some at least faint gesture in that direction so that god can move in and fill you with the things which are according to his purpose and that's how he does it so that when you read this you may become aware that god is doing things in you which you weren't even aware that he was doing you know you become aware that god is changing your character and while you may become dimly aware of it some of your friends might be quite surprised i met a fellow the other day whom i consider to be on the borders of irreligious which may or may not be good but his friends think he's a religious nut you know they have a different perspective on him because they knew him before he became a christian i think he's having a struggle but they think he's just he's amazing because they have seen such a change in him that god has wrought in him so the christian the disastrous christian has this has the failure to do this to build this into his life then it goes on and says further about him and you see this in verse eight these things are yours and abound they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our lord jesus christ now you know you could ask yourself whether you are an effective or an ineffective christian you could ask yourself whether you are a fruitful or an unfruitful christian these are both marks that stem from the knowledge of our lord jesus christ now it's not knowledge in the scientific sense of knowledge it's knowledge i'm sorry about this cough but it'll get better it's it's not knowledge in the scientific sense it's knowledge in in the in the sense in which you relate to that which you know you are in relationship

to it it involves an intimacy it involves a love for it's it's not that that you have a kind of detached clinical knowledge of our lord jesus christ you know him but you also are in relationship to him and out of that knowledge and out of that relationship comes the failure you know the lack of that relationship means that you are ineffective and unfruitful and the presence of that relationship means that you will be effective and fruitful as a christian and it goes on and tells you some more things that can go wrong with the ineffective christian he says whoever lacks these things that is the things that god has provided by his divine power in verse three whoever lacks these things is blind short-sighted and has forgotten what he was cleansed from he's he's he's you see in the bible blindness belongs to people who think they can see that's those are the people that are blind the ones who can see because you say we see therefore you continue in your blindness jesus says so that if you want to know whether you are spiritually blind just contemplate the fact that you can see through this whole phony operation anyway and if you can see through it and know that it's pretty artificial and pretty insignificant there's a strong possibility that you're blind and and that's one of the dangers that can happen to people when they become arrogant and superior and sophisticated and all sorts of things happen to them they become blind and short-sighted and then they do something which is very important and very disastrous look again in in verse nine they're blind and they're short-sighted and they forget they forget that they were cleansed from their old sins we're having a service of holy communion tonight do you know why we're having a service of holy communion so that you will remember that you won't be blind you won't be short-sighted and you won't forget but you will remember that you were cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus

Christ from the old sins which had you in their grip but have by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ been forced to let go their claim on you so that's that's what it is you if you look further you'll see that the disastrous Christian is someone who is capable of falling and the only reason I suggest that to you is that it says at the end of verse 10 if you do this you will never fall if you do that which God in his divine power has provided which you in your right reason have submitted to and which God in his grace has granted then you will not fall well one more thing that I want to tear apart just for you from this passage is there's some what I would call superlatives that run all the way through it and I'll just give them to you quickly if you look at the texts the first thing that you have now this this belongs to you

I don't know if it belongs to you or not I mean I don't know who you are and I'm just assuming things about you which may not be true this is meant to belong to those who are Christians this is what Peter says belongs to you these superlatives the first is in verse 1 that you have a faith of equal standing with ours so the whole of the apostolic community and you have an equal faith you see it's not measured by who you are it's measured by who your faith is in and having a faith in Jesus Christ you are of equal standing with the apostles so that's a great thing that you may know you are and that is yours in in Christ the second thing is in verse three you are called to his own glory and excellence

God has a tremendous purpose for your life far beyond your very limited imagination perfection and I you know and I think that you know that one of the troubles we're in because of the Gulf War is that we have much too low a view of humankind and we still think that humankind responds to bombs and terror and guns and violence but human beings can respond to something infinitely more than that and God in his great patience is seeking I think to bring us to the place where we will respond to the glory and excellence which is revealed in Jesus Christ and not to the violence and treachery and strutting of war in verse four you see another superlative that has been provided for you by way of escape from the corruption that is in the world and that is precious and very great promises and one of the things you can take home with you tonight are the precious and very great promises that God has made and as you listen carefully to the words of the Holy

[ 25 : 22 ] Communion you will be able to make long lists of the precious and very great promises that God has made to you covenanted to you and sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ the next thing that is a Christian superlative is that you become a partaker of the divine nature that Christ is formed in you so that your nature is taken over by the nature the divine nature the nature of our Lord Jesus Christ and you are richly provided for and I didn't put down where you find that in the passage but somewhere if you read it carefully you'll find that you're richly provided for and so what I want to end with is this you you have escaped the corruption

I just remembered where the richly provided comes you have escaped the corruption and are richly provided with and look at it in verse 11 an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ there is a great celebration as you enter into the kingdom this has been richly provided for you so you see in this passage the corruption of the disastrous Christian life and the rich superlative provision that is made for and intended for those who enter in to the knowledge meaning loving relationship to as well as knowledge of

Jesus Christ richly provided escape from and entrance into richly provided into the eternal kingdom and that is something that you need to possess and to make your own so I've spread all the parts out on the table now and God bless you as you try to put them together in your own life Amen there for his lost his ■ foot room the group is Bill in time