

Make Every Effort

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 September 2016

Preacher: Steve Aiken

[0 : 00] So I don't know what you're going to get this morning, but I know before, whenever I'm preparing the Word, I always, I know that I have to embrace it myself.

I never go anywhere to preach at people. So if you feel I'm preaching at you, you can come up and tell me afterwards, but I'm not. I remember one time I was preaching something, and I like looking around at people, because I thought, you know, I know some, I may have mentioned this before, but some colleges, when they teach people how to preach, they will tell them to find a spot up the back over the heads of the people.

And I thought, and I've gone to churches like that, and I thought, it's really disconcerting, you know, this person staring up there at this spot. I like to look at people, and so I just look around, and I don't preach at people.

So if I know somebody's in a certain place, I will not prepare a sermon to aim at them. But I will preach what I feel God's put on my heart.

Now, if they get convicted, well, that's between them and God. But after one service, this lady came in and says, you were preaching at me. Well, I just, I probably happened to glance at her while I was looking at everybody else.

[1 : 23] You were preaching just at me. I said, no, I wasn't. No, you were. He says, well, if you got convicted, we'll do something about it. Anyway, that has nothing to do with my message.

Last Sunday morning, I spoke about 2 Peter chapter 1 regarding the promises. For the promise of a better life and being able to vote blacks in America and the suffragettes here sometimes lost their lives, at least were in difficult situations, terrible hardships, because they wanted something more. Peter, Paul, and millions of believers since have laid down their lives for these great and precious promises that are mentioned in 2 Peter chapter 1. They knew God had something more.

And there are people around the world, especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, and other places, believers imprisoned for their faith, because they want something more.

In his second letter, Peter sensed that his time was up, and he wanted the church to get ready for something better. He knew they already knew the truth, as I know you do.

[2 : 37] And to a degree, they were walking in it, but he wanted them to pursue more. And what was Peter's advice to them? In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises.

And my challenge today is the same. And so I think 2 Peter is going to come up now. And I'll read it from here if it comes on, because I have the New Living Translation, and I think the NIV is going to come up.

Or you can get your Bible. 2 Peter chapter 1, the first 13 verses. And from it, I want to speak about what we should make every effort for, how we should do it, and why we should.

It must have disappeared into the internet. I'll just read it from my notes. So this is a New Living Translation. This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.

I'm writing to you who share the same precious faith we have. This faith was given to you because of the justice and fairness of Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

[4 : 03] May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus, our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.

We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises.

These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all of this, make every effort to respond to God's

promises.

Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are short-sighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

[5 : 23] So dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those who God has called and chosen. Do these things and you will never fall away.

Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore, I always remind you about these things, even though you already know them, and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught, and it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live.

In a sense, this is benevolent nagging from Peter. He knows the believers know these things, but wants to make sure they're practicing them. His motivation is important here.

This isn't a demand just to follow the rules. It's not legalism. But Peter didn't want anyone to lose entrance into the kingdom of God for failing to live up to God's call.

This is important to remember as we consider the principles in these verses. These are to build us up, make us effective in our Christian life, and prepare us for eternity with Father God.

[6 : 39] They take discipline and perseverance, but they're for our well-being. And that's the thing, isn't it? The Word of God is for our well-being. And whatever God allows to happen in our lives, it can be used for our good.

One of the things that blessed me a number of years ago is when the Lord made Romans 8.28 real to me. It says that God causes all things to work together for the good of those that love Him.

And you know, for the believer, that is absolutely true, isn't it? No matter what happened to you, no matter what's happening now in your life, no matter what will happen in the days ahead, there is nothing that God will not cause for your benefit and well-being.

And when I heard that a number of years ago, and it became real to me, so I told God about all these rotten things that happened to me when I was growing up.

And you know, now there's no pain. No, I still remember them, but there's no pain there. There's no harm there. There's no bitterness. There's no resentment.

[7 : 50] There's no, it's not a bondage to me anymore because once I handed all of them over to God, He has turned every one of them around for my good. And what Peter is challenging us is he said, look, this is for your well-being.

I know this is going to take discipline and work. It's a process, but it's for your well-being. I want to read verses 5 to 13 from the Message Bible.

Now I know those of you that have read the Message Bible think, boy, this is a little off sometimes. And sometimes it's a little strange. It is a paraphrase. It's not a translation, okay? But sometimes it gives us a different aspect of the Scripture to make us think.

So verses 5 to 13 from the Message Bible. So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given. Completing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others.

With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet. No day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus.

[9 : 14] Without these qualities, you can't see what's right before you, oblivious to your old sinful life that has been wiped off the books. So friends, confirm God's invitation to you, His choice of you.

Don't put it off. Do it now. Do this and you'll have your life on firm footing, the streets paved and the way wide open into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Because the stakes are so high, even though you're up to date on all this truth and practice, inside and out, I'm not going to let you up for a minute in calling you to attention before it.

This is a post to which I've been assigned, keeping you alert with frequent reminders, and I'm sticking to it as long as I live. There's a poem called The Hound of Heaven.

I don't know if I've even read it once. I've heard bits of it. But in a sense, this is what Peter is saying and what the Bible and the Holy Spirit are challenging us, is God is going to be on our case until He comes for a perfect church without spot or wrinkle.

[10:29] Not to make us miserable, but to make us whole and happy. So what should we make every effort to do? And I have several things here.

One is respond to God's promises. In verse 5, knowing that God has given us great and precious promises is wonderful, but deliberately pursuing, responding to them is necessary. This requires discipline and perseverance. Faith, gifts, salvation. That we need to respond to the promises.

And the second thing is to employ every effort in exercising. And they mentioned their eight characteristics here. And I want to mention them again. And I was thinking of, when I came the other day, after not seeing Eric for a while, I thought, goodness, this guy's really fit. And I had to pull in my stomach a little bit. And that's why I'm wearing my coat today, their jacket. And I thought, and then he talked about going to the gym several times a week.

[11:37] The word gym puts me off. But what he was doing, he wanted something. So he wanted to exercise it.

And if we want the character of God, we need to exercise it, don't we? We need to exercise. And sometimes we can get upset like these faith preachers and others.

And sometimes they go off the wall, some of these, you know, televangelists and others. But sometimes they have something that we don't have. And that is, they are exercising, they want more than what they have.

And they want what the Bible says, greater works. And sometimes they will exercise something in order that they could come into something greater. So I'm not advocating we all follow televangelists, because some of them put me off.

Some of them are going to answer for God because they have the wrong motivation. But you see what I'm saying? If we want the promises of God, we have to exercise them.

[12:47] If you want more faith, you have to exercise it. You have to use what little you have, because every believer has a portion of faith. Are we using it? And what he says here is, add to your faith to develop virtue or moral excellence.

And exercise your virtue to develop knowledge. Exercise your knowledge to develop self-control. Exercise your self-control to develop steadfastness, patience, and endurance.

And then exercise your steadfastness to develop godliness. And then exercise your godliness to develop brotherly affection. And exercise brotherly affection to develop Christian love.

You know, if we don't have developed, you know, if we don't have brotherly affection for people, we're not going to have Christian love for people either, are we? And so as we, each one of these, as we exercise them, we grow in them, and we mature in them.

Peter doesn't list those in order necessarily of their importance or even how we should develop them. But he makes clear that this is a process, that they require action.

[14:00] Those words add, develop, and exercise. As we work on faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love, they mature and are perfected.

Does this make sense so far? How do we work this out? And I, I, you know, life is not all about three points or five points or eight points, but sometimes points come up, okay?

So I have five ways here, and there are many more. Two of them are mentioned in, in one Peter, or second Peter chapter one. And the first one, first one is by his divine power.

God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. Everything you need, God has already made available.

We, we just need to access it, don't we? Everything we need. If you need to overcome a bad habit, if you need to be healed of something from your childhood, abuse, or whatever, everything we need is already made available.

[15:21] We need to access it. So we, we work this out by his divine power. The second one is we have received all of this by coming to know him.

And that is the best one of all, I mentioned it last week, is that intimate, loving knowledge of God is the way we work things out.

Just getting to know God. Just coming to know him more and loving him more is, is the way that we work this out. The third thing is through his great and precious promises.

These promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. One of the things that have kept me in Scotland, all these, for over 36 years now, and some of them were really challenging times, is because of the promises that God gave me.

When I first came over here, I, I don't know what you believe about God giving prophetic words, but, in my church in, in Oregon, not only are there prophetic words in here for us, in the Bible, but God does give people prophetic words to, today.

[16:35] It didn't stop. You know, it still happens. You want to, you have to test them. But these people that didn't know me spoke all these things over my life, and they confirmed things that God had already spoken to me, and other things that I hadn't heard before.

But, when I came to Scotland, I had these five pages of these prophetic words, and, and went into Youth with a Mission, and people who, speakers from around the world who had come, just days after I got there, and they prophesied over some of the students and staff, and said exactly what was on those five pages, which they never even knew my name, never met me before.

So, I had these promises. I have the promises in the word, but then I had these other promises of how God was going to release me. Some of them, I'm doing now.

But then, for two and a half years, he wouldn't, God wouldn't let me do any of the things that he promised. I was scraping rust from underneath coaches that, these old beat up coaches that YWAM had, and digging potatoes in the field where you used to live.

And I thought, God, I didn't come here to scrape rust or dig potatoes, but I pursued the promises. I kept reminding him of the promises. It gave me hope to go on because I had promises that I could hang on to.

[18:03] The promises in the word, and these prophetic words. And because of the promises, I was, you know, through the promises, God began to work in my life. Say, okay, if you want to come into that, there's things you need to deal with.

And he began to work on my attitude because I had stinking attitude about things. And I thought I could just, you know, fly into Scotland and Scotland was mine.

You know, there's no, I'm sure you met Americans like that, right? So now when any Americans come over here thinking they're God's answer for Scotland, I warn them.

It takes time. You're not the answer. God is. God can use you. But because of the promise and through his great and precious promises, he began to work in me and prepare me so that I can embrace him.

But we have to pursue them, don't we? And then empowered by his Holy Spirit, we are led into all truth and then empowered to do his will.

[19:06] We need God's Holy Spirit. And the fifth one here is through daily practice. I know Eric, pick on him again, he would not look like he does unless he had gone, he had practiced at the gym.

I could go to the gym. I could buy a gym membership. And I can say, I go to the gym every day. But unless I practice something there that will work on this, then it won't do any good, will it?

So unless we're practicing the promises, unless we're practicing, you know, the faith and virtue and steadfastness and patience and all these other things, then we're not going to mature into what God wants for us.

So why should we make every effort and how am I doing? Okay. Why should we make every effort? One is to share in God's divine nature, to know him personally and intimately, is to escape the corruption of the world, to be more productive and useful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus so we would never stumble or fall and that God will give us a grand entrance to the eternal kingdom and that our witness to others would not cause them to stumble or reject Jesus.

You know, it's not just for us, is it? When we walk in these things and it's not just for us, that it's for the people that are watching our lives, for those people out there that don't yet know the Lord, for those in here that might be struggling and then when they see us practicing the reality of God, it gives them encouragement to keep going.

[20:49] Peter isn't suggesting salvation by works as this only comes by grace through faith in Jesus. He is challenging us to move on from our faith in Jesus to maturity in Him.

It is walking in and working out what God has given us so that it becomes life and not just knowledge. The Lord isn't expecting us to do something we can't manage, though it will take faith, commitment, and perseverance.

He has given us everything we need, His power, His Holy Spirit, and His authority, as well as His precious and exceedingly great promises. As we make every effort to respond to God's promises, the Lord will empower us by His Holy Spirit to accomplish greater things than we can imagine. Father God has more for those who will. Peter challenges in verse 9, whoever lacks these qualities is blind, spiritually short-sighted, seeing only what is near them and has become oblivious to the fact that they were cleansed from their old sins.

Unless we want to be spiritually blind, short-sighted, and missing out on the kingdom of God, let's work hard to prove that we really are among those God has called and chosen.

[22 : 13] As we remember that we are called and chosen, it's also important to remember just what it cost Jesus to make it happen. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks to God for it.

Then He broke it in pieces and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, He took the cup of wine after supper, calling, saying, This cup is a new covenant between God and His people, an agreement confirmed with my blood.

Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it. For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until He comes again.

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking this cup.

So while we sing the first verse of veiled and humaneness and those serving come forward, let the Holy Spirit examine your heart to see if there's anything displeasing to the Lord there.

[23 : 30] If there is any unconfessed sin, any unforgiveness or disobedience, ask the Lord to forgive and cleanse you so you may receive communion as life.

So let's, as we're singing this first verse, we'll just sing the first verse and then those that are serving if you come forward. But just stay where you are, just stay seated and let's sing this first verse but let's let the Holy Spirit examine us, okay?

Let's sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[25 : 58] And I'm always touched by the word that says, on the night that he was betrayed.