

Adding and Subtracting

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[0:00] Ineffective and unproductive. There are two words that are found in the passage that was read for us tonight. And they are words that you wouldn't want to hear in a number of settings.

Ineffective and unproductive. You don't want that to describe an employee of your company. You wouldn't want an ineffective and unproductive pitcher on your baseball team.

There are words that should not describe your child's teacher at school. There are words that you wouldn't want your teacher, your child's teacher, to use to describe your child.

He's ineffective and unproductive in the classroom. That's not the report that you want to get. You don't want to discover that your financial investment strategy has been ineffective and unproductive. And you certainly wouldn't want to be described that way yourself. And that should be most true with respect to our Christian life, to our walk with Christ, to our growing in the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ, whom we've so beautifully seen as we've worshipped tonight.

[1:08] We don't want to be ineffective and unproductive in growing in our knowledge of Him. We wouldn't ever want it said of us that we're a church full of ineffective and unproductive Christians.

So don't be ineffective and unproductive. Don't worry, we're going to say more than that tonight. We're going to see from 2 Peter how you can avoid being ineffective and unproductive in your Christian life.

But before we dive into verses 5-9, which is where our focus will be tonight, I want you to remember what we saw in verses 3-4. And that was way back in the beginning of August. Back on the first Sunday of August.

And I planned just to preach that one sermon on those two verses, but I got to looking at the rest and thought, well, there's more here for us that we can profit from. But don't forget verses 3-4.

Notice them again with me. Because if you forget verses 3-4, verses 5-9 might be a little bit overwhelming and even impossible if we don't keep in mind that His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us, by His own glory and goodness.

[2:17] Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

I'm going to say some hard things tonight. There's a lot of things that we need to be working on as Christians. A list of virtues and characteristics that we need to be adding and expending effort to add. And as we do that, remember that you don't do it in your own strength.

You can't do it in your own strength. You walk out of here tonight and say, I'm going to try really hard to add faith and love and knowledge and goodness and all of these things on my own, and you're going to fail.

But if you walk out of here tonight remembering that His divine power has given you everything that you need to add those things, then by God's grace you can draw closer to Him and prevent that ineffective and unproductive Christianity in your life.

And so he says in verse 5, for this very reason, because He's given us everything we need. We've got His very great and precious promises. Because of that, make every effort. So tonight in these verses before us, there's something to add.

[3:28] There's something for us to subtract, and then we'll see the outcome. When you do math, you add things up, and you subtract some things, and you see what the answer is, what the outcome is. I'm not good at math, but I know you add, you subtract, and then there's an answer.

So we're going to add some things, we're going to subtract, and then we'll see the outcome. What do we add? We start here, make every effort. And then it goes through this list of virtues.

And I'm not going to define each one tonight. We're not going to focus in on each one. That's not our goal. We could spend an entire sermon on each one if we wanted to. But that's not the point tonight.

I want us to focus on what we should be doing with all eight of these things collectively. And just for the record, I don't think they have to be taken as building on one another.

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness and goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control. You don't have to go in that order. It's just saying if you've attained a measure of self-control, don't just stop there and think, oh, I've got self-control, I'm good.

[4:27] No, there's other things to be working on. You need to work on goodness and godliness and perseverance too. These aren't necessarily building stones. This is like Peter's list of the fruit of the Spirit.

A little bit different than Paul's list in Galatians, but it's something similar to that. There's a collection of virtues here that we need to be working on. There are things that should mark everyone as we're described up in verse 1.

Everyone who, through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours. That's a description of Christians. You've received a faith as precious as Peter's.

Through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. That kind of person should be characterized by this list. He should be bearing this kind of fruit.

And we'll just notice them briefly together. They are faith, goodness or virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

[5:27] A people who have faith in Christ will have the same godliness or virtue. Remember, that's a mark of God Himself. We saw that back in verse 3, by His own glory and goodness or virtue.

People of faith will be virtuous. They will be good like God is. And what a blessing that God isn't calling us to something that He isn't Himself. You must be virtuous.

And God, in whose nature you partake, which is a remarkable thing, we're partakers of the divine nature, we're becoming more and more like God. We're joined to Christ in union with Him.

And He's enabling us to become godly, even like our God. Virtuous like He is. And so His people will know Him. They'll be self-controlled.

They'll persevere. They will be characterized by these things. Showing love to the brethren. And love to all men. So these are the virtues. But what do we do with them? What about this collection, this list of virtues should we be doing?

[6:25] What's He exhorting us to tonight? Well, make every effort to add them. Here are these things that should characterize you. And you. And you. And if I had time, I'd point to every one of you.

They should characterize you. What do you do with them? You need to make every effort to work really hard to add them to your life. Make every effort.

These things don't just fall into place. A Christian just doesn't put his trust in Christ and then sort of automatically, boom, hear of all these graces all of a sudden. Wow, I'm all of a sudden virtuous and have self-control that I never had before.

It's not just a snap and there you are. It takes effort. You must apply all. The word could be translated zeal or haste or diligence or effort.

And even that zeal itself should be a mark of the Christian. Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal. That's the word. Never be lacking in effort. Diligence. But keep your spiritual fervor.

[7:24] Serving the Lord. Our pursuit of holiness must be active. Zealous. It's hard work. It's not something where you just kick back and relax and expect it to come to you.

You've got to pursue it. Making every effort is not a sort of half-baked, half-hearted, lazy pursuit. It's war. So you can look at somebody's life and you can tell whether they're all about pursuing these characteristics of the Christian or whether they're not really concerned and sort of waiting for it to come to them.

Someone who occasionally makes it to sit under the preaching of God's Word. Which, by the way, is the means that God has ordained for us to be growing in these very graces. You want to grow in these graces?

You need to hear the Word. But you look at somebody's... Every now and then, he makes it to hear the Word preached. And when he's there, you can tell he'd rather be somewhere else. The only

time he really picks up his Bible is on those occasions he does come to church.

He only prays when he's in trouble. That person isn't making every effort. They might say, oh, I want to be virtuous. I want to be godly. I want to be holy. But their effort doesn't show it.

[8:31] As someone who says they want to be loving to all men, that's one of the things here.

There's brotherly love, brotherly kindness, and then there's just love. Love not just to the brothers, but to all men.

He says, oh, I want to love all men. I want to love my neighbors myself. And they've never once opened their mouth to tell their neighbor about Christ, which is the ultimate demonstration of love for someone, isn't it?

To tell them how their never-dying soul can be saved. They never once opened their mouth to speak of Christ. They're not really making an effort to add love to their life. What does someone that's making an effort look like?

Well, there's an athlete, and they want some more playing time. And the coach says, listen, you need to add a little muscle and a little strength. You're good. You're quick. You've got some talent. You've got some skill. But you're just not strong enough.

You need to bulk up a little bit. If that person really wants more playing time, they're going to make every effort. They're going to get in the weight room five, six days a week. They're going to talk to a trainer about strength conditioning. They're going to start watching what they take in, what they eat.

[9:32] They're going to eat high protein and low fat because they don't just want to get fat. They want to get muscle. They want to build strength. And they're going to work at that. And they're going to focus on it. And they're going to ask mom to adjust the diet accordingly.

Oh, I can't eat any more of this. I've got to build some strength. Right? They're going to make every effort. And you know what that looks like if you're an athlete. You've seen it. Maybe you've done it. You've pursued that. Now, the kid that doesn't really care, he might hit the weight room every now and then if he doesn't have anything better to do or if there's nothing on TV or whatever, drink a protein shake, but he doesn't quit on his diet of fast food and junk and all of this.

He's not making every effort. He doesn't care. And you can look at Christians and you can sort of tell and you can look, don't just look around tonight.

Oh, he's making every effort. Oh, she's not. He's not. Look at yourself tonight and say, am I really making, am I working hard to add these things?

Because this is what the Christian life is all about. This is what I should look like. Am I working at it?

What describes your effort? Not in building physical strength, but in adding to your spiritual muscle.

[10:48] Are you like that intense, focused athlete making every effort to soak up the Word, to be with God's people, to pray, training yourself to be alert for opportunities, for witness, and showing mercy?

And so growing in grace. He focused on those things. So you're making every effort. Your effort isn't just pointless. You're making every effort to add, to supply these things.

You don't run like a man running aimlessly or beat the air, but with Paul, you buffet your body.

You're making a point to add something. And again, this word add or supply, it's a generous, a lavish giving.

You're piling it on. You're heaping these virtues up. You're not just looking to add the bare minimum. You say, okay, I expressed concern for one of my brothers today, so I've got brotherly kindness.

I've added that one. Now I can move on. Check that one off and I'm going to move on to something else. No, you're going to heap up brotherly kindness. You want a whole bunch of it. You're not just going to show concern. You're going to do something about that brother's problem.

[11:50] And not just that one. You're going to show kindness and be good to your brothers to as many of them as possible. As humanly possible. You're going to make every effort to heap up those things. These characteristics.

How can you add these virtues generously? How do you direct that diligent zeal? It goes back, I think, to our intake. You want to be making every effort to add these things.

You should be making every effort to be diligent in attending upon God's Word. This is where you're going to learn about love and faith. Perseverance and self-control.

Godliness and virtue. If our aim is to be like God, then we should listen to God's Word. Listen to it in public worship. In our private worship. It's our meat. It's our drink.

It shows us how to be good and godly. So be diligent to guard the Lord's Day. The day when you can come and feast. Have it fed to you.

[12:49] Oh, we love to receive the Word of God. Guard that day so that you don't miss out on the chance to take in the right food like that athlete. He's not going to be filling himself with junk. He wants good stuff.

You want the good stuff if you're going to be growing in grace. Guard this day. Be zealous to set aside time each day to read God's Word and to seek His face in prayer. And remember, you're doing this in His divine power so you ask Him for the strength to put forward the effort to grow in grace.

The way to feed your faith, just like the athlete, it's not junk food, it's not garbage, that's just going to make him fat. The way to feed your faith is not to feed yourself with all of the garbage that the world has to offer you.

If you want to lavishly add these marks of true believers, the way to do it is not to gorge yourself on the sinful pleasures the world has to offer.

If you are filling your mind every day, if your food, your spiritual food every day, is countless hours of sinful music, television, movies, magazines, books, internet, and so on, and you're finding that you're not adding any virtues that Peter lists here, should you be surprised?

[14:10] Is it any wonder? Is it a shock to you that you don't have a greater love for all men and stronger faith when the trials come if all you're feeding yourself is garbage? It shouldn't be a surprise.

If you only eat a bunch of fattening junk food and you don't exercise, should you be surprised when you gain weight? No. No. You can expect that to happen. Same way you feed your mind not with God's Word, but with sin.

And then you look at your life and say, I'm not growing in grace. What's the problem? It shouldn't come as a surprise. Garbage in, garbage out. That's what people will see in your life instead of growth and grace.

The way to add these virtues is not to be immersed in the sinful aspects of the world in which we live. And notice that I've said sinful. There are movies and TV and music and so on that aren't explicitly Christian and they're not sinful.

And that's okay. But we have to be careful even there. If our only intake is things that aren't sinful but they're not Christian either, then our diet is weak. And our Christianity will be too.

[15:15] And so, when you feast on those things, is it any wonder that you struggle when it comes to your devotions? The stuff dulls your heart. It makes it cold.

You're making it twice as hard to profit from reading and listening to God's Word because you've just feasted your mind on things that are contrary to His Word. Do you see that? You're feeding yourself on sin and then you come to the Word and you go, I just can't get anything out of it.

Well, you're loving things that are contrary to it. Don't be surprised then when you're not growing in grace. Do you find it difficult? You save your Bible reading, a little prayer to the end of the day just before you go to bed and that follows a couple hours of mindless whatever that you've been doing, gossip, chatting, texting.

I don't text. I don't do that very well. A couple hours of TV with implicit or explicit sexuality and worldliness.

I've got to read my Bible before I go to bed. I didn't really get anything out. I'm tired. I'm falling asleep. You shouldn't be surprised at the struggle then. Instead, give your energy and effort to something greater.

[16:29] Give it to God's Word, to worshiping God, to prayer, to fellowshiping with God's people. Start your day with God and His Word. Fill your mind with His truth and with thoughts of Him.

And then there won't be room for all of this other garbage that instead of helping you to add these virtues, is going to militate against it. If you want to grow, if you want to add these things to your life, then you need to feed yourself the right food.

Let me give you an example. When we first moved to Bremen, my wife and I, we had this dream of wanting a bed of rose bushes along the fence in the side of our backyard.

We had had friends in California that had along their fence, and they had a nice wooden fence. We got a chain link fence. But anyway, we wanted roses along our fence. And they always had fresh roses on the table when we came for dinner.

And we thought, oh, we could have roses on the table. We could take them to people's homes, have beautiful rose bushes in our backyard and along the fence back there. Okay, so we got here and we started buying rose bushes.

[17 : 36] And so we had, I don't know, maybe seven or eight rose bushes, each one a different color, all these beautiful pictures on the side of the rose bushes, you know, on the package that they come in. And that first year, you know what, we wanted to add roses to our life.

And we made every effort to do it. Erin made every effort to do it. She watered those things. She put Miracle-Gro on them. And you know what, that first year, we had beautiful roses.

Beautiful. And we had them on our table. And they looked nice along that fence. They hid some of that chain link fence. And we had, because we fed them the right stuff.

We wanted to add roses. We fed them, watered them, and we had beautiful roses. And they grew in abundance. We were diligent. And then Ryan was born. And we started focusing more on feeding Ryan than the rose bushes.

Which if you're going to choose, is a good choice, I think. But we stopped feeding the roses. We didn't water them. Oh, the rain will water them. And I bet they don't really need Miracle-Gro.

[18 : 43] That's just advertising. And somebody sold us on that. And so we didn't feed the roses much that next year. And we didn't have as many roses. We had a few, and they were still pretty, the ones that we had, but there were less.

And then Andrew was born. And all care for the rose bushes just went to the wind. And you know, we didn't even have to poison those rose bushes. We didn't have to feed them garbage.

They just went. They stopped producing, and eventually we dug them all up. And maybe one day when we're done trying to feed four boys, maybe we can focus on feeding roses again.

But when we stopped feeding them, they quit growing. And like I said, we didn't have to poison them. And you don't even have to fill your mind with all the garbage that the world has.

You just have to stop taking in the Word. And you know what's going to happen? You're going to stop adding these graces. Perseverance is going to dry up. Self-control.

[19 : 45] Because you're not soaking in the Word that feeds those things. And so we've got these virtues here, and we're going to make every effort to add these things to our life.

But one other thing that should be true about them as a whole in our life. Look at verse 8. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they are to be ours and increasing.

Once you believe that you have a measure of these graces, you can at that point sit back and stop and relax and cease making every effort to add them.

That's what we did with our roses. We had lots of roses, and then we quit. And so did the roses.

This side of heaven, you'll never be able to say, oh, I'm godly enough.

I've got enough knowledge of God, His Son, and His Word, and so I don't really need to pursue that anymore. I've got sufficient expressions of love for the brothers and love for my neighbors, and so I'm not going to try to add any more of that to my life.

[20 : 47] And that sounds absurd to us to put it in those kinds of terms. Of course we need to be more godly. Nobody would say to the contrary, but what do our actions show? Do they show that we think we're good enough so we're really not making any more effort?

No, they're to be ours and they're to be increasing. And we think, I'm more godly than that guy over there. I wasn't pointing at any of you. I'm more godly than that guy over there.

I've got more self-control than he does. And so I think I'm okay. I'm content. If we want to stay out of that ineffective and unproductive category of Christians that we talked about at the beginning, then we can never stop increasing in these things.

It's why we call it growth in grace. It's why we need the means of grace so that we continue growing in grace. We don't call it leveling off in grace, do we? We call it growing in grace because we're adding, increasing these things in our lives.

And so it requires that diligent, steady, intense, zealous effort to be daily adding these things.

Sometimes you might be focusing on one of them more than another. The Lord has revealed to you your real weakness in this particular area.

[21 : 58] You've got a real struggle with self-control. The Lord has opened your eyes and you might focus on that one for a while, but we're to be adding and increasing in all of these things. One commentator says, the spirit of a lazy indifference to moral improvement and active well-doing is something that cannot be reconciled with the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You say you know Jesus, then you can't reconcile that with I'm going to be lazy in pursuing virtue and godliness. It's not optional. That's not the Christian life that's laid out for us in the Bible. Where it's something just at the edges that we don't really work on. And just a reminder before we move on, it's not done in your own strength. I'm overwhelmed when I look at this list.

And that I'm going to be making every effort and increasing. I can't do that. Not in my strength. But His divine power has given us everything for life and for godliness.

One of the things that's listed here is godliness. We need to add godliness to our faith. And His divine power has given us everything that we need for that godliness.

[23:09] That's encouraging to me. You've got everything you need for it. He tells us that. He encourages us. And then He says, make sure you're adding. Make sure you're becoming more godly. I'm glad He's given us all that we need for it.

So there's something to be adding to our life. And we've got to work to add it. But then there's also things that we need to get rid of. If we want to be effective and productive Christians, there's things that we've got to subtract.

Things that we've got to take out of our life. Things that can't be there. And we see them in verse 9. If anyone does not have them, these virtues we've talked about, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

These pitfalls, this blindness, this short-sightedness, this forgetfulness, or the flip side of pursuing godliness that we've just considered. And so, notice these things.

And when you see them in your life, eliminate them. Subtract them. You want no part of these.

There's problems with our sight. There's blindness. And Peter doesn't pull any punches here. The no-nonsense fisherman doesn't beat around the bush.

[24:15] He doesn't sort of coddle his readers. He says, if you're not adding these virtues, you're blind. You are blind. It's not that God hasn't made Himself clear. He has.

You're missing it. You're blind. You've chosen to close your eyes to the necessity of growth and grace. You're deceived that growth is reserved for the really zealous Christians.

Pastors, they need to be growing in grace. And probably deacons too. And those really excited Christians that think knowing all about God's Word is so important. They're all geared up. I just don't get that. Growing in grace is just for those kind of people.

No, if you're not growing in grace, you're blind. You've been deceived by that lie. And you need to have the blinders taken off. If you're in that position tonight, be honest with yourself.

You're not just stagnant. You're not a carnal Christian. There is no such thing. You're blind. And it's interesting here that Peter's writing to believers, to those who have professed faith in Christ.

[25:19] Now, there could be some false professors, but did you know that it's possible for you as a Christian to put blinders on and to not see your need for growth in grace?

Just be oblivious to it. Well, Peter wants to warn you, don't be blind. And what a blessing that Jesus, who restored the sight of physically blind people, also has the grace to take off the spiritual blinders, to show us our need for growing in grace, becoming more and more like Him.

Pray that He would do that for you if you've got blinders on. You'd be seeing. You must be adding these things to your life. And then there's this related problem of nearsightedness.

If anyone is nearsighted and blind, you can't really be both at the same time. Maybe he's just got these two related problems in mind here. But the short-sighted or the nearsighted person only sees what's close at hand.

He can only focus on what's right in front of him. And in the Christian life, the Scriptures show us that there's two things, I think, that we tend to focus on because they're close.

[26:28] They're near to us. And so it's easy for us to see this right here, but it's hard for us to see what's way out here. And one of those two things that we're really good at seeing up close, that we're good at focusing on, is our trouble, our difficulty, our suffering.

What Paul writes to the Corinthians and calls our light and momentary affliction. But to us, it doesn't look light and momentary. It's big. And it's all we can see.

And it's right here in front of us and we're good at focusing on it. We're like Elisha's servant. You remember they're in the city and he wakes up and he goes out and the city is surrounded by the army of the Arameans. And that's as far as he can see because he's short-sighted.

He only sees the problem. The Arameans. And for us, it's not an army. We're not surrounded by an army tonight. But you've got trouble tonight, don't you?

It might be different for each person. It might be sickness. It might be a small paycheck or no paycheck. Trouble in your family. An uncertain future. All sorts of things.

[27 : 30] But boy, those things get really big and they get really in focus, don't they? Because we're short-sighted. And our prayer should be like Elisha's for his servant, O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.

And the Lord opens his eyes and all of a sudden he's not just nearsighted anymore. He sees what's beyond that Aramean army. He sees the army of the Lord surrounding him. And we need to pray that the Lord would open our eyes, that we wouldn't be short-sighted just to see our trouble, what's right around us, and forget that there's a great God to bring us through the trouble.

There's brothers and sisters in Christ who, if they're adding brotherly love, are going to be there to help us, to sustain us along the way. So that's one thing that we tend to focus on are trouble, our difficulties.

The other thing that's so easy for us to focus on are the temporary pleasures that Satan dangles in front of us. There's the love of money, and sex, and popularity, and power.

And when we fill our eyes with those things, we lose sight of the eternal reward that's waiting for us in glory. We lose sight of our need for our own holiness.

[28 : 41] I am physically nearsighted. Spiritually, I'm that way sometimes too. This passage has shown me that. But I've got this physical nearsightedness. Short sight. I can only see what's right in front of me.

I've got contacts in tonight. And so I can see all of you. I can see your faces. I can see your expressions. And I can see my notes tonight in the Bible that's laying on the pulpit here.

But if I didn't have my contacts in, and I didn't have my glasses, then I would have to squint to even be able to read my notes. And I would look out there, and there would be this sort of blur.

I could probably make the bars out because I know they're always in the front. But that would be mostly because I know who's sitting there, not because if I squinted, I could probably make them out. The rest of you would be fuzzy.

And that's how it is all too often for us in the Christian life. If we very clearly, we can see what's right up and close. I could see the microphone if I didn't have my glasses on.

[29 : 40] We're good at that. We can see what's up close. And we see those troubles. And they're overwhelming. And we see the sinful pleasures of the world. And ooh, that seems like it's worth pursuing to us.

But you know what we need to do? We need to put in our contacts. We need to put on our glasses. We need to remember that we're looking with the eyes of faith and we need to look through the lens of God's Word at this world.

Not through our sinful minds. We need to have our vision corrected by God's Word so that our perspective is much better. And when we look at our problems through the lens of God's Word, all of a sudden, we begin to understand what Paul means when he says light and momentary trouble. Because compared to the glorious reward that's waiting us and the help that God has for us, that trouble really does begin to seem light and momentary in light of the eternal weight of glory.

And when the pleasures of sin and Satan look so attractive to us, but then we look at it through the lens of God's Word and we see that those things are sinful and that they're pulling us away from God.

[30 : 44] And it gives us the greater perspective that if we pursue those things, that we're going to be sinning against God and we're going to be bringing shame to His name and not honoring Him. That's what we see when we look at those things through God's Word.

Then we see, oh, they're not so attractive. And then we see that there's a far greater reward. Satan, the stuff he promises, it's temporary. If you're enamored with that tonight, it's going away.

It's fleeting. It's not going to last. I know that it's all you can see, but the Word of God says it's gone in a moment. But the reward that's waiting for us, that's worth latching onto.

And so we put on the spectacles, the corrective lenses of God's Word and we have our short-sightedness corrected. You see, if we're still short-sighted, then instead of making every effort to add all of these virtues here, we're going to be making every effort to alleviate our suffering and our sorrow.

We're going to be making every effort to pursue sin instead of pursuing godliness. Nearsightedness is deadly in the Christian life. But then there's another problem.

[31:57] So if you're blind tonight or you're short-sighted, get rid of that. Subtract it. Remove it from your life by God's grace. But there's another problem he talks about in his forgetfulness. If the others have to do with our vision, this has to do with our memory.

We've forgotten our cleansing. He's forgotten that he's been cleansed from his past sins. And here's the other danger for the Christian. Those who have professed faith in Christ.

They need to remember what Christ has done for them. That they've been cleansed. Hebrews 1.3 says of Christ, after He had provided purification, that's the word, cleansing for sin, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven.

And people who forget that don't see a need to pursue godliness and virtue. They don't think of how their sins have been washed away, how they've been purified, and that they're no longer to indulge those things.

And so instead of adding virtue, they continue in their sin. Forgetting that they've been cleansed from it. It's interesting, this word for cleansing or purification is used mostly in the New Testament to talk about Jewish ceremonial cleansing.

[33:10] And it calls to mind our ceremony that pictures cleansing. That of baptism. So tonight, Christian, remember your baptism.

Don't forget your cleansing. Not that your baptism cleansed you. Remember everything that it pictured. Everything that it meant. That you're a sinner saved by grace. That you've died to your sin. You've been buried with Christ and raised with Him to walk in newness of life. A life of faith.

Goodness. Knowledge. Self-control. Perseverance.

Godliness. Brotherly love. And love to all men. Don't forget who you are. Sinners, yes, but sinners who have been saved by grace and washed in the blood of Christ. And if you remember that, then how could you go back to that?

I've been cleansed in the blood of Christ. I'm not going to go back to that way of life. But if we forget, I'm a sinner saved by grace, then we have a tendency to go back and indulge in those things.

[34:12] Don't forget your cleansing. Just the other day, Aaron gave the boys baths one evening. We were going to have a couple of other kids over. Aaron was going to babysit.

And she wanted to have their baths done before they got there so that as soon as they left, they're just going to be there an hour. She could put them right to bed. So she gave them a bath. Got them clean. The other kids came. The other two kids.

They're playing and getting crazy in the house. And Aaron decided to let them go outside. Okay? And my kids had just had a bath.

They're even in their pajamas. All right? Go outside anyway. And guess what my boys did? They forgot that they had just been cleansed.

They forgot that they had just had a bath. They got short memories. Like we do all too often. And so you know what they did? If they had remembered they just had a bath, maybe they would have tried to stay clean.

[35:11] But they didn't. They forgot. And guess what they did? They're boys. And they went out. They got dirty. And they came in. And I looked at them. I was gone.

I came back. And they had, you know, they got shorts on. And from here to here, from the knees down to the ankles, there's grass stain and dirt. They forgot that they had just been cleansed.

And so what did they do? They went back to the dirt. And as Christians, we do that sometimes, don't we? We forgot our cleansing. That we've been bathed.

We've been washed clean. And we go back to the dirt of our sin. And indulge in those things. And you know what that does to us? It makes us ineffective and unproductive in our Christian life.

Instead of adding virtue, we're going back to our sin. May it not be so among us. See, short-sightedness is a failure to look forward and see what God has waiting for us. Forgetfulness is a failure to look back and remember what God has already done for us.

[36:12] May we be guilty of neither. Instead, rather, let us cling to Christ who's cleansed us and opened our eyes. We're in union with Him. We live by His strength.

He's our justification and our sanctification too. So let's cling to Him. Not forgetting what He's done. Not forgetting where He's taking us. So there's some things to add in our life.

We've got to work hard to add them. And there's things to subtract. We've got to be rid of this short-sighted, this blindness and this forgetfulness. What do you get when you do that? You add these virtues.

You subtract these foolish ways. And what do you get? Well, you get the kind of Christian that everyone here should strive to be. One who's not ineffective or unproductive in the knowledge of Christ.

And so we end tonight where we began. Such Christians are not ineffective. The word ineffective is idle. It's inactive. It describes workers who are capable of working, but they're not doing it.

[37:09] They're sitting around it. Jesus uses it in the parable where there's workers and the master of the field comes and he gets some workers and he takes them out. And then he comes back three hours later and he says, are you still ineffective?

Are you still idle? Are you still sitting here doing nothing? Come back to my field. That's the word here. You've got this ability to work, but you're not putting it to use.

You're not because you haven't been adding these things and you've forgotten who you are. And so your potential to be useful as a Christian is going to waste. It's the word that James uses.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? It's ineffective. And that's what we're saying here. A Christian who isn't adding these virtues, who has no works to show for his faith, is useless.

Ineffective. But that can be avoided by looking with the eyes of faith, remembering your cleansing from sin and making every effort to add and grow in godliness. What we've seen tonight.

[38:12] People of God, you have all sorts of potential. I look out here and I see just gobs of potential. And many of you living up to it. You're making every effort to add all of these virtues.

But can you imagine if all of us were really, surely every one of us has some need to be making a little bit more effort. I'm slacking here or there. If we were all making every effort, can you imagine our usefulness as Christians?

Just in the last two categories, brotherly kindness and love. There's love for the brother. Can you imagine? And you all do this so well. I don't want to tear you down tonight because you do show love for the brethren.

I praise God for it. When I see this brother over here or this sister ministering to this one over here, it does the hearts of your pastor good to see those things going on. I just want to encourage you to excel still more.

You've got this potential to be so useful, to be so effective, to be such a blessing to each other. But if you've forgotten who you are and you're consumed by your problems and the things of this world, you're not going to care about showing love to the brethren.

[39:19] And think about our potential usefulness in the world around us. We've got this world that we're to be salt and light in. And a world where we're to be a testimony for our Savior Christ.

We've got this great potential. We reflect the light of Christ. And we can show that light to the world or we can stick it under a basket and be ineffective.

And if you're not making every effort to add love, love for all men, if you're not working at that, then you're not going to really care too much about showing your life. And you're going to be ineffective in that area of your life.

And we don't want unproductive, ineffective Christians. And so make every effort to do these things. Then you won't be ineffective. You'll live up to that potential by God's grace.

An effective servant. A powerful witness. So you're not ineffective, but also you're not unproductive. Literally, the Word is unfruitful. It's like the fig tree that Jesus cursed.

[40:21] From a distance. It looks like a nice tree. It looks good. But you get closer and there's no fruit on it. There can be various causes of unfruitfulness in the Christian life.

The parable of the sower gives us a couple. Matthew 13. 22. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Unproductive. That's the Word here. And do you see that the two things that Jesus identifies as choking out the Word are the two things that short-sighted Christians look at too often. There's the worries of life.

Our problems. That chokes out people and makes them unfruitful. And the other thing is the deceitfulness of riches. The pleasure that Satan offers before it. Riches, other kinds of pleasure, whatever.

But Jesus holds those two things out and He says, those are going to choke you out. They're going to make you unproductive, unfruitful. And so Paul's word to Titus is helpful to us. Titus 3.14 Our

people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good.

[41 : 29] Got to be devoted to doing what is good in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives. Unfruitful lives. Got to be devoted to doing what's good.

Pursuing these virtues that we've talked about. We're to be exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit. But if we aren't adding and subtracting the right things to and from our lives, we won't be fruitful. We'll be unfruitful.

What do people see when they look at your tree? Is there any fruit to show for it? Or is it being choked out by other things that are more important to you?

This goes back, I guess, more to being ineffective but unproductive too. There was a kid on my high school soccer team and he had loads of talent.

Just a naturally gifted soccer player. Had feet like you wouldn't believe. And he was the laziest kid I think I've ever laid eyes on.

[42 : 29] Didn't want to work. Didn't want to run. And he wouldn't listen to the coach. If I'd had a quarter of his talent, I could have been a really great soccer player maybe. But instead, he wasn't nearly as effective or productive as he could have been.

If he had just added to his skill some hard work and willingness to listen to the coach and subtracted some of that laziness, some of that short-sightedness, if he could have just seen beyond his desire to just relax and get by or whatever his desire was, I don't know what it was.

And not been so short-sighted, he could have been really remarkable. And that's how it is for us as Christians. May we not be Christians who never reach our potential in effectiveness and fruitfulness because we weren't willing to make every effort to add these things and to be increasing in them.

And you see that too that it's it's prevent us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw back in verse 3 the necessity of knowing Christ and I think we take that here as sort of a composite for the Christian life.

Our Christian life is about knowing our Savior, becoming more like Him, trusting Him for our forgiveness of sins and for our growth in grace. And the better we get to know Him, the better we're able to put to death our sin, the closer we walk with Him.

[43 : 53] We want to have a fruitful knowledge of our Savior Christ. Do you know Him tonight? Do you have a saving knowledge of Him? Then you'll be adding something, subtracting others, and you'll be effective and productive.

This is a portrait of somebody who's serious about their godliness. It's not someone for whom these things are peripheral on the edges of their life, but it's central.

It's their focus. It's what they expend their energy on. Is that true of you? Or are you just sort of going through the motions? You're sort of doing religion to soothe your conscience because you'd sure rather go to heaven than to hell.

That's sort of a no-brainer. And you know that it's a good thing, so I'll do a little religion here and I feel better about it, but my real focus is everything else this life has to offer. That's not the picture that's being painted here.

Being serious about being effective, fruitful, and godly is how it should be for every Christian. Is it that way for you? And how could it not be that way?

[44 : 55] Did you see our Savior tonight as we looked at Psalm 45 and as we sang of Him and as we sang of the glorious feast that He spread and He's drawn us into it by His grace and His love and we cry with thankful tongues, Lord, why was I a guest?

How could you not want to know that Savior more? How could you not want to be fruitful and productive in your knowledge of Him and to serve Him and to serve His people and to tell other people about Him?

He's this glorious, beautiful Savior that is beyond description. And if we really love Him like we say we do, then it will be our delight, it will be our joy to make every effort to add these things.

We'll be excited to. We'll want to do it. I want to be this kind of Christian which is a follower of Christ, this glorious Savior that we've seen tonight.

What a blessing then to have a church full of people who are taken up with a vision of Christ. We see His beauty. We see His glory. And we want to know more of that. And we want to love and serve Him.

[46 : 18] That's the kind of church that we'll be building one another up in love, serving one another, noticing needs and fulfilling them, showing hospitality, weeping with those who weep,

rejoicing with those who rejoice, reaching out to the lost with the glorious truth of Jesus, delighting to come and to worship the one true and living God together.

There will be fruit and growth and grace in our lives and in our usefulness and blessing in the lives of others. Thank you for being that kind of people. Again, let us excel still more. Let us pursue these things.

And one last time, remember, it's not in your strength. You can't do this on your own. It's by His divine power. Just like your salvation, growth and grace is possible only through the work of Christ. And so if you find yourself falling short of this standard tonight, go back to the cross, back to Jesus, for grace, for strength, to be restored. And some have never started down this path in the first place.

It's a challenging path, but let me tell you, it's the most rewarding one. And if you'll just take the blinders off and remove the things that are so easy to look at, you'll see the glory of Christ.

[47 : 26] You can come and trust in Him tonight and go down this path that leads us to glory. Don't be so short-sighted that you never come to Christ at all. He's beautiful.

He's glorious. He's worth all of this effort that we're called to here. So may God give us grace to give Him that effort in every part of our lives. Let's pray together. Our Father, we give You thanks tonight for all that You have shown to us in Christ, for all that You have done for us in Christ.

We thank You for His love for us, His willingness to serve us, His willingness to die for us.

And we're amazed that then You could take sinful people with sinful hearts like ours and that You could use us to bring glory to Your Son, to bring glory to Your name, even as we've heard this morning.

We marvel and we thank You that we have this privilege. And tonight we pray that You would give us grace to be ever-increasing in our knowledge of Jesus, ever-adding these virtues so that we might bring more glory to His name, so that we might not be content to stay where we are, but to have these things and to be increasing in them.

[48 : 46] We pray that You'd forgive us for our blindness, our short-sightedness, our forgetfulness. Give us grace to put these things off that we might be an effective and fruitful, productive people that are useful in Your kingdom.

You are a great and glorious God. We thank You for Your love for us. We pray that You would give us hearts that love You and serve You in return. And we ask these things in the name of this glorious Savior, Jesus.

Amen.