

Making Every Effort

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[0:00] We're in the second epistle of Peter and the first chapter of this letter. I'll be reading tonight verses 1 through 11.!

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.

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.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1:34] But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We're coming to the end tonight of our very brief look at 2 Peter chapter 1. We've just started at verse 3 and we'll be wrapping up tonight with verses 10 and 11.

And those verses prompt me to ask you a question tonight. And that is, as you sit here, what are you absolutely confident about?

What are you absolutely sure about in this life as you sit there tonight? I presume you're pretty confident that the chair you're sitting in will hold you up. Otherwise, you wouldn't be sitting in it.

[2:41] What about other things that are more important than that? Are you absolutely confident that you've made the right career choice? What about your investments?

Are you certain, confident about the rate of return you'll get for the way that you've invested your money? These days, I guess the answer to that would be no.

If we invest in something, we like a guaranteed rate of return. We'd like to be confident. We know we're going to get something back for either the money or the time or the effort, the energy that we put into whatever it is.

Well, tonight I have an investment for you that can never go bad. One that you can have confidence in. A stock market crash can't take it down. Devalued currency won't affect it.

I'm not talking about gold. Gold or silver couldn't buy what I'm talking about tonight. Not all the money in the world could buy this.

[3:38] If you invest time and energy into making sure, being certain that you are a child of God, that you are one of His children.

If you invest time and energy and effort into having assurance of your salvation, you will receive a grand entrance into glory.

A guaranteed rich welcome into heaven. You see what Peter says here in verses 10 and 11. Let's look at just those two verses again in 2 Peter 1. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.

For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And from these verses tonight, I simply want to challenge us to a confident life of assurance.

One where we are certain that we are God's children. And so we see here there's a challenge, a promise, and a reward tonight. We start with the challenge. You notice that it's for brothers.

[4:44] Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. Peter apparently is certain of it for his readers because he calls them brothers. He believes that they are followers of Christ, but he wants them to be certain of it as well.

He's seen the fruit of it in their lives, and he wants to see more of it, and he wants them to see that fruit in their lives. Now, it shouldn't be a blind assurance, a baseless confidence. Oh, just believe that you're a child of God and you'll be okay.

No, it's going to take effort. We'll see that. And so it's not just this empty call to assurance, but I could say something similar to many of you tonight. I see the fruit of the Spirit in your lives.

I can call you brothers and sisters, and still I want to tell you to be sure, to be certain of that yourself, to have that confidence. And so I'm talking primarily to followers of Christ tonight, to believers, to those who have put your hope and trust in him.

I want you to be assured of that. But if that doesn't describe you tonight, and maybe for some here, for some of you young people that hear us make that division, all these times, people who trust in Christ and people don't, maybe that makes you a bit uncomfortable.

[5:58] But I just want to be as honest as the Scriptures are. It says some people are brothers or followers of Christ and some are not. And so if you're not tonight, don't tune out and say, well, this is just for everybody else.

Peter's calling us to effort and energy and to hard work. And your effort and energy and hard work need to be directed into getting into that kingdom in the first place.

Your prayer isn't, Lord, give me assurance that I'm saved, but Lord, save me. That's where your energy and effort need to go tonight. And we'll see some of that as we go along. But the emphasis is we want professing believers to have confidence that they belong to God.

And so Peter says, or God says to us, be all the more eager, be zealous, make every effort. It's the word that he used up in verse five or used the noun up in verse five.

For this reason, make every effort. Same same word, but it's the verb here. Be all the more eager, be ever be eager, make effort, be zealous to do these things.

[7:02] And for the moment, just see that having assurance, confidence that God has saved you takes work. It doesn't just come to you. It'll be a real challenge.

That's why I call it a challenge tonight. If it wasn't a challenge, Peter wouldn't be telling us to work hard at it. If your boss at work tells you to investigate a possible business deal, he wants to know everything there is to know about this company he's thinking about doing business with.

And he says, I want you to make every effort to be certain that this is going to be a good deal before we get into it. I want you to do that work. There's a couple of ways you could respond to that.

You could say, oh, that's more work. It's going to take more of my time. And you don't really care.

So maybe in between checking on your fantasy football team and your Facebook, you say, oh, I got the internet.

I'll do a Google search on that company. You don't see anything bad there. And you know a guy that knows something about that company. You say, oh, I'll talk to him. And that's it.

[8:03] That's all you do. That's the extent of your research. To check out this business deal with this other company. You go to your boss and you say, yeah, go for it. I think they're a pretty good company. That person hasn't even approached making every effort.

And he hasn't approached anything close to certainty about that being a good deal. Now, the other thing you can do, you can say, you know what? If we do this deal and it goes south, it's going to be my job on the line.

So I'm going to make every effort to be sure that it's a good deal. I'm going to talk to the Better Business Bureau and see if there's complaints that have been filed against this company. I'm going to find current employees and former employees.

I'm going to talk to them and see what it's like to work there. And I'm going to investigate their other product lines and see if they've been successful or not. And if they're a publicly traded company, I'm going to see how they've done in the stock market. And I'm going to leave no stone unturned.

I'm going to research everything I can about that company. I want to know. I want to be certain. And that's going to take some work. So that when I go to my boss and I say, I think this is a reputable company. I think we should do the deal.

[9:03] And we do the deal and it goes well. Because if you do the deal and you've done some shoddy research and it falls through, it is your job on the line. You're going to make every effort to

be certain.

Make all the more effort. He's already said make every effort up in verse 5. Here he says make all the more effort to be sure of your salvation. Because the results of a slipshod lazy effort here are far more devastating than losing your job.

Now I'm trying to add some of these virtues that Peter's talked about. This knowledge and self-control and love. And I'm pretty sure that I'm one of God's children. If you only put that kind of minimal or no effort into making sure that you are saved, you may get to the day of judgment and find that you're not one of God's children and wish that you had made every effort.

Just like the guy investigating the business deal. He loses his job because it falls through. He's going to wish that he had put a little more work into it. Shoots all sorts of holes in a sort of easy believism.

Once saved, always saved notion of assurance where you pray a prayer and then don't ever doubt it. It doesn't matter if your life doesn't change. Don't work at it. You're saved and you're good. Peter knows nothing of that.

[10:22] He says you make an effort to know. You make an effort to be certain. And the effort is directed towards making your calling and election sure. Well you say how do you do that? Calling and election are things that God does.

So how can I make what God does any more sure? He's holy. He's perfect. We can't improve on his election and his calling. It comes from the decree of an almighty God.

But we can make certain that we are the recipients of them. Be sure that you are one of those people that has been called and chosen. Those come in the reverse order of what we might expect. God elects in eternity. He does that way back before he even creates the world. His divine decree. And then in time and history, in our own personal history, he calls us to himself. So why does Peter put calling first?

Well that calling is our first point of contact with the work of God in our lives. It's where we hear the call of God and he draws us to himself. Our first point of contact with God from our perspective isn't election.

[11:22] It's when he calls us. And so Peter says start there. Make sure that your life looks like someone who's been called of God. Elsewhere, Paul tells us to walk worthy of the calling that we have received.

And so if you're going to make your calling sure, how do you do that? You say, does my life look like somebody that's been called by God? Has my life changed? Is it one of faith and obedience?

One of love for his word? Love for his people? Are you walking as one who has been called by God? In other words, Peter says there shouldn't be any hypocrites in the church.

So he says, oh yeah, I'm a believer, but they sure don't look like it. And that's a charge that's often leveled against the church. It's full of hypocrites. And sadly, it's often true.

Peter says, make every effort in your life that it's not true. Make sure that's not the case for you. You make sure you live like somebody that's called by God. How do you do that?

[12:19] He says, for if you do all these things. What things? Well, Peter's been spelling it out for us in verses 5 through 9.

And let's go back and look at these things. He says, make every effort, in verse 5, to add to your faith, goodness. And to goodness, knowledge. And to knowledge, self-control.

And to self-control, perseverance. And to perseverance, godliness. And to godliness, brotherly kindness. And to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities, and that's the word, these things.

If you possess these things, in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of Christ. Verse 9, but if anyone does not have them. And that them is the same word.

These things. If anyone does not have these things. He's nearsighted, blind, has forgotten that he's been cleansed. And then in verse 10. For if you do these things. The these things in verses 8, 9, and 10.

[13:16] All go back to verses 5 through 7. All of these qualities that we are to be adding. And so, are you doing these things? Here's the evidence that you've been called by God.

Are you adding these things to your faith? Faith. And so ask yourself. Do you have faith to start with? Is the faith there? Are you growing in faith?

Is it more and more confident every day? Or when somebody looks at you, do they see a whole lot more of fear than they do of faith? See, if you're called of God, you'll have faith. Fear and worry. Those things should be less and less as your faith grows stronger and stronger. And then you add to that godliness and goodness. Are you striving each day to live for God and to conform your life to the likeness of his son?

That's the mark of somebody called by God. He says, make certain of it. There better be some goodness and some godliness growing in your life. And are you adding knowledge? Not conforming to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[14 : 16] What about self-control? Are you less likely to lose your temper today than you were a year ago at this time? Because these things will be yours in increasing if you've been called by God.

What about perseverance? Does it take more and more trial and temptation than ever before to get you down? To get you to think about quitting and throwing in the towel in this Christian life?

Early on, maybe just the smallest trouble makes you think of giving up. But now you're growing in perseverance. What about love for the brothers and love for all men? Are these yours in increasing? When's the last time you sat down with a brother or sister in need and showed them love by listening to their trouble?

And encouraging them? When's the last time you did something about it? When's the last time you showed love for someone outside of the body of Christ?

Does it show in your attitude towards them your sharing of the truth with them? You see, we're to be making certain about your calling and election. And to do that, we're going to have to do a little self-examination.

[15 : 22] I have to take a look. What does my life look like? Do I have these things? Are they there? If they're there, it's a sign you've been called by God. And He's drawn you to Himself, which is in turn a sign that you're one of His chosen ones.

His election. So make your calling and your election sure. You want it to be certain. You want to be as confident about that as you are about the chair that you're sitting on tonight.

That it's going to hold you up. When we talk about assurance of salvation, at least this is how I talk about it sometimes. There's three aspects of our assurance.

And I call it a three-legged stool. If you're missing one of them, the stool's not going to work. You've got to have all three legs. And one is faith in the promises of God. He promises us things in His Word that He'll not cast anyone out who comes to Him.

That whoever calls on His name will be saved. And we take those promises and we believe them. We have faith that they're true. And then there's the testimony of the Holy Spirit with our spirit. And that's in Romans 8.16.

[16 : 23] But then there's this third leg that Peter's talking about here. And it's fruit. If you are a child of God, you can know it. Because it will show in the way that you live. These things that Peter has talked about will be yours in your life.

And they will be increasing. You can't look into God's eternal decree and see if your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. You can't do that. But you can look at your life and see the marks of one whose name is written in that book.

And therefore be sure about your status before God. And so the question tonight, brothers, sisters, is are you making every effort to do that? Are you working at it?

A lot of people will view assurance in the Christian life as sort of an optional luxury. You go buy a car and you can get the basic trimmed down version.

Or you can get lots of add-ons that cost you more money and make it prettier and more whistles and bells. And a lot of people view assurance as like one of those add-ons. I don't need it, but it might be nice to have it.

[17 : 27] I don't have it. I've tried. I've thought about it. And I just don't have it. I would like to. But oh well. That's not the attitude you can have towards assurance if you take Peter's word seriously here. And you should because it's the word of God.

He says make every effort to have it. Don't just kick back and oh well. I don't know. Work at it. It's an unacceptable attitude towards assurance to say it doesn't really matter.

You must make every effort. And these may be hard questions to ask yourself. Are these characteristics mine? Are they increasing? You might have to find that there's this area of your life that's not conforming to God and his word.

And that's got to be cut off and put aside. But we must be certain. So there's a challenge here. But before we get to the promise and reward, even in the challenge, there's a sweet encouragement here, I think.

Nobody here, no Christian ever can say they're doing all of these things perfectly. But you can look at your life. And you can know for certain whether or not you were called and chosen of God.

[18:36] That's why Peter tells you to do it. But he's not sending you on some impossible fool's errand. He's like, I'm going to tell them to be certain of their salvation, but I know they can't do it. No.

That's not the way God works. If he tells us to do something, then he's going to give us the grace and the strength that we need to do it. And so if he says be certain of your calling and election, then you can be certain of it.

God wants you to know. And he's given the means by which you can know. I love that. See, some religions teach you that you can't. No. And they would have you live in fear and uncertainty.

Have I done enough? Have I done enough to please God? Am I going to make it to heaven? I don't know. I'm not certain. I hope so, but I'm not sure. And people who believe those things live in fear and uncertainty their whole life.

And it is a miserable way to live. To live with doubt. But Peter tells us to pursue it because it's attainable. You can have it in this life.

[19:34] It's something that's worth pursuing. You see, instead of all of our works being the basis in that, and so we're fearful always before God, we know that our salvation is because of the finished work of Christ.

And if you have faith in him, you're going to heaven. And you can know that for certain. The reason for the examination is not to see if you're good enough to get into heaven, but rather to see if there's genuine fruit and evidence in your life of what Christ has done.

And so we can bless God for this kindness that we can know by looking at this fruit that should be produced in our lives. So there's this blessed reward for all of this hard work.

If you ever worked really hard on a project, something around a house, or maybe getting in shape for the season, whatever. And in the middle of it, you're going, why in the world am I even bothering?

I've gotten to that some point sometimes, working around a house. Why am I even trying to do this?

And sometimes the project stops there. Other times, God gives perseverance and you press through to the end, and then you get the finished product.

[20:44] Why do you look at it and you go, that's why I did it. Look at the result of all of this hard work. Here's this blessing that's come from all of this. Well, that's what we get here. We labor and we labor to make sure of our calling and election, and we're rewarded with that certainty and confidence.

So there's the challenge. Be sure you're one of God's children. But then there's a promise. If you do these things, you will never fall. It's there at the end of verse 10.

And that word fall is a really interesting word. It's got this Old Testament background, and it's used frequently in the Old Testament to talk about a military defeat. Somebody attacks you, and you fall. One example is 1 Samuel 4 and verse 2. The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel, and as the battle spread, Israel was defeated. The Greek translation, Israel fell before the Philistines, who killed about 4,000 of them on the battlefield.