

## Sermon 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1v5-11) “For this reason...”

You sit down to watch a TV drama, but within 5 minutes, you realise you’ve literally lost the plot – and the whole thing has become too confusing.

So then you pick up the newspaper, and you realise why:

you are watching part two of the drama, and because you’ve missed part one, you just don’t have a hope of understanding what’s going on.

Well, this is part two of our series on Peter’s second letter.

In part one we looked at verses 1-4,  
and today, part two, I want to look at verses 5-11.

But if you look at verse 5, you’ll notice that it says:  
*“For this very reason, you must make every effort.”*

Part one, verses 1-4, was the reason, and  
part two, verses 5-11, is what we are to do in light of it.

And what was the reason in part one?

The reason was what God has done for us in Jesus.

Let’s recap.

v1 “you have received”, says Peter, (that’s received as a gift) “a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ”

We are sinful – we are unrighteous.

But we have received a gift of Christ’s righteousness.

He took our sin on the cross, and he gave us his righteousness.

That’s the doctrine of Justification.

That’s the great exchange.

He died in my place, that I might be righteous in him.

And it is all a gift.

v1 –“You have **received** a faith...”

v3 “His diving power (The Holy spirit) has **given** us everything we need...”

v4 “This he has **given** us, through these things, his great and precious promises...”

Part one was all about what Christ has done for us and God has done in us, because we could not do it ourselves.

Part two is now about the effort we are called to make in response to what God has already done.

Now this is important,

because if you jump to part two without getting part one, you may well become one of these Christians who runs around making lots of effort, but has no idea what the reason is.

Every time you meet a moralist, who thinks Christianity is just about good works and doing stuff, you’ve met someone who has missed part one of this sermon.

And every time you meet a Christian who always feels guilty, always feels unworthy, never feels that they are good enough for God, you’ve met a Christian who has missed part one.

So if you skipped Church last week,  
if you were sunning yourself on some beach,  
I’m giving you catch up homework.

Go to the internet site and download a copy of last week's sermon – and read it.  
And then download and re-read today's.  
And that's your penalty for skipping Church!

Anyway, let's get on with part two.

*“For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.”*

Note, first of all, that all that God has done for us means that **we have to make an effort.**

And not just a little effort, but *every* effort.

The idea here is that we are to be eager, earnest, zealous, and single-minded about building the right kind of life because of what God has done for us, and because of the Holy Spirit's work in us.

We are not to simply say, “Oh well, God has done it, he's forgiven me, he'll go on forgiving me, my eternal destiny is secure and therefore I can go on being the lazy, selfish, nasty, person that I've always enjoyed being.”

In the 1824, James Hogg, the Scottish author, published a book called “the confessions of a justified sinner”. In that novel the character is completely sure that he is one of the elect, chosen by God to go to heaven, and on that basis he goes on to commit a whole catalogue of horrendous crimes.

It's a parody, but there is a danger here.

You see if we've got part one of the sermon, the bit that tells us that we are forgiven, that we are made righteous in Christ, that we are promised eternal life, but we ignore part two, then we are going to get this just as wrong as if get part two, but not part one.

So, if anyone is missing today who was here last week,  
can you make sure you print off a copy of today's sermon and get it to them?  
Because we want to get this right.

We are to make every effort to add to our faith – goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, mutual affection and love.

“Every effort” might be translated “diligence.”

It is a great word diligence, it the motto of Stonelaw school.

I remember when I was at Stonelaw as a pupil, the staff wanted to change the motto to the more popular “it wasn't me”.

But this *is* about you.

Are you diligent about your Christian life?

Are you willing to make an effort to become the type of person that God saved you to be?

Do ever stop and think: “who am I becoming”?

The Christian life is like a vegetable patch.

Now, I could grow vegetables if all you had to do was plant and hope.

But the plot needs tended, watered, weeded, and something done about the slugs.

That takes effort, and you've got to want it.

Too many of us make very little effort about our Christian faith.  
It is as if we thought we could lie back and float through life, with very little effort, and it would be OK.

But the water is not static.

Life is full of influences that would take us away from Christ.

Full of that would mould our characters and values in ungodly directions: adverts, the TV, materialism, the chatter of godless friends, the pressures of work, the values of the media. All these things are a current that will slowly sweep us away from God, unless we make the effort to swim.

*“Support your faith with goodness.”*

The word used here means moral excellence – living in a way that God looks at and says “that is good.”~

The only pressure on us as Christians should be the question:

“does my life please God? Does he look on it and say ‘that is good’”.

*“And support goodness with knowledge”*

We need to grow in our knowledge of God.

We need sermons, and Christian books, Church and podcasts, and Bible study, and all the things that help us to learn about God and what he wants.

The question is never, “what do you know?” it is always “are you learning a bit more than last month? Is your knowledge growing?”

Let me ask you this?

Who was Moses’ father in law?

Actually, God does not care whether you know the answer to that or not.

But he does care about whether you are learning about him;  
whether you are understanding what he loves and what he hates;  
whether you are grasping his Word that he speaks  
and working out what he wants from you.

That’s the knowledge in which we need to grow.

Knowledge is found in Scripture, but knowledge is also found in people.

We need to know good people, godly people,  
because if you want to know how to live a godly life, you need to talk to godly people.

If you want to know how to pray, you need to hang out with prayerful people.

If you want to know how to bring up the kids to love Jesus, you need to speak with people who have successfully done that.

If you want to be a Christian in the workplace you need to share with people who also want to do that.

The problem is many of us have advisors who are not godly.

Nice, good people, but they don’t know Jesus.

If you want right knowledge, you need to be listening to the right people.

In the last months, three people here have told me they have eye problems.

In every single case, I’ve sent them to Malcolm Doig.

He’s the eye specialist.

One of the good things in a congregation like this is that if you’ve got a problem, there’s probably someone here who can give practical advice.

We've got medics and financiers, teachers, gardeners, plumbers, people who know their way round the social work system; you name it we've got it.

But don't ask the minister for medical advice.

Don't ask social worker for dentistry.

Don't ask the guy with no job for careers advice,

and don't go to godless people to learn how to live a godly life.

Do you want to grow as a Christian?

Ask yourself:

"Who influences me?"

"Which friends do I think are cool and want to be like?"

"Who do I chat my problems over with?"

*"To faith add goodness, to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control."*

The opposite of self-control is to be out of control.

Sometimes children go out of control and we have to control them – to restrain them.

And so many people have so little self-control that society has to put constraints on them.

So we make drugs illegal, we restrict alcohol, we ban things, and we make things compulsory, because if people are not controlled by laws, many people have too little self-control to live rightly.

And the ultimate social control for people that are out-of-control is prison.

The Christian is to learn self-control.

We will not be controlled by drugs, sex, alcohol, fashions, fads, what the neighbours think, what friends will say.

One of the fruits of the spirit is self-control

and as we learn the knowledge of what God wants we will ask him to give us self-control, that we might have the discipline to order our lives in a godly way.

*"and to self-control, endurance"*

This might be translated "steadfastness", or as once commentator puts it "sanctified stubbornness."

The stubbornness that say "I will stick at this" "I will pray" "I will keep coming to church" "I will follow-through and not quit – even when it's tough"

Be stubborn like that.

*"And to endurance godliness, and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love"*

Godliness means "Be godly" – live a life that's full of God and reflects him.

Mutual affection is that's a poor translation here, the word is "philadelphos," literally "love of the brethren."

Be someone that loves Christians and wants to encourage them, spend time with them, serve them, and see them grow.

And lastly add love.

And as Peter wrote that, he must have been thinking of Jesus.

And all the love Jesus had shown him.

"I want to be like that" "Make me like that" "that's my goal"

And then verse 8.

*8 For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*

How do you know whether a plant is alive? You know that it is alive if it is growing.

How do you know whether a Christian is alive? Same answer.

All of the things we've spoken of here should be increasing among us.

We're never going to be perfect, but we are, in God's grace, going to be changing.

The only alternatives are to be ineffective or unfruitful.

Ineffective here means idle or lazy.

And there are many lazy Christians who can't be bothered making any effort.

Others are unfruitful and you can be very busy, not at all lazy, and still be unfruitful.

I found myself just this week rushing about doing things, and then it occurred to me that I'd been doing things *for* God, *for* the Church, but I'd taken very little time to pray. I'd been doing stuff, *for* God, but not *with* God.

There are some people here who find it very easy to fill their lives with busyness.

If anyone asks you to do something in the church, you'll do it.

You'll be at all the business meetings – no problem.

But you are not growing, you are not praying, the fruit of the spirit is not really being produced in your life.

You need to remember that Jesus said:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

And the key to this is in the next verse.

*9 For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins*

It is a bit of an ageist image this.

It is a picture of a man who is ineffective – he's losing his eyesight and his memory is going too.

Maybe Peter's quite old himself as this is written.

What he's saying is this:

Christians have been given a knowledge of God, and that knowledge should make them effective.

Remember v.3

"his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness"

The Holy Spirit has given you the power to live effectively; all you have to do is make the effort.

But some Christians are blind to this, and they can be blind in two ways.

Firstly, they can be blind to their past.

That is they forget that they've been forgiven.

They forget what Jesus has done for them.

They forget that their baptism signifies that Christ died for them, and that they are given the power to live a live a different way in him.

And if you forget that, if you forget the reason, then you will either forget to make the effort, or you will make the effort but you will forget the power of God that's at work in you. You'll try to do it on your own, and you'll get nowhere.

But, secondly, you can also be blind to the future.  
You can be nearsighted. You can lose the vision of where your life is going.

You are going to an eternal Kingdom.  
You are going to be with Jesus.  
You are going to be accountable to Jesus.  
You are going to stand before Jesus.  
You are going to be resurrected like Jesus.

That's where your life is heading.  
That's the vision.  
If you see that, it will transform how you live.

It was George Bush senior who famously said he didn't get "the vision thing".  
But if you don't get the vision thing you don't know where you are going  
and if you don't know where you are going you don't know what to do now.

There are too many Christians that are living with a full tank of petrol and no map.  
There is no sense of direction in their lives.

Peter will give us that sense of direction in v11

*"For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you"*

Our goal is to hear Jesus say "well done, good and faithful servant, enter into my joy"

But let's not skip verse 10.

*"Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble."*

"Your call and election"

That's part one stuff again – God called you – you are called.

God chose you – you are elect.

You didn't do that – he did.

You didn't die for your sins – he did.

And he has given you all the power you need for life and godliness.

But if you want to be sure of that in your heart,  
if you want it to be confirmed to the world,  
if you want to know that you are his,  
without a doubt,  
then listen to part two, and:

*"For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love."*

Amen.