

**Be Kingdom Useful,** part 9 of From **Election to Perfection,**  
November 30, 2014

We wrap up our current sermon series this morning. Jim started us off with “make every effort.” This is a very important issue for Christians. Peter did not say to make some effort at adding these qualities to your faith. He did not say to make a major effort to adding these qualities to your faith. He said to make every effort. This is strong language. This is of vital importance for the Christians. Moreover, I believe God brought us to this series because this is of vital importance to His church. This is of vital importance to what God wants to do in Emmanuel Baptist Church.

This morning, I want you to think about motives. I want you to think about the reasons to do what we have encouraged you to do in this series of sermons. The passage gives us more than one reason. We often have more than one reason for doing something. Likely there is more than one reason you go to work everyday. One reason would be for the money, the paycheck. Maybe you also go to your job for the prestige you get there. Maybe you go to your job for the people you are able to help.

Some people love their job and can't imagine doing anything else. Thomas Edison loved working in his shop, inventing things. He never took a vacation because he enjoyed his work too much. Maybe you feel that way about your job.

Another motive you might have for working might be that you are fulfilled in serving your country, those who work in some sort of government job, including the armed forces, NSA, police, social work, or a school.

There are likely a number of reasons why you go to work, not just one, and not just the money. In the passage we have been considering there are five reasons presented to us to do what we have been encouraging you to do. Let's recite together our memory portion of the passage. (**2 Peter 1:5-7**)

Over the course of the last 8 weeks, we have encouraged you to make every effort to add these qualities to your faith. The larger passage gives us five reasons or motivations for doing so. Jim spoke of the first one in the first sermon.

### **1. Because you want to become like Jesus...**

**2 Peter 1:4 (NIV)** ... He (God) 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.

The other four reasons come at the end of the passage. I'm going to deal with the last three first and save the second one. That is the meaning of the cryptic numbering.

### **2. Because you want evidence of your salvation...**

**2 Peter 1:10 (NIV)** Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.

When these qualities are growing in you, this will be proof of your salvation. These growing qualities prove your salvation. These qualities can only be produced in you by the Holy Spirit. You add them by intentionally working on them with God. You don't produce them on your own. God forms them in you as you pray for them and yield yourself to God day by day. This is the mystery of sanctification.

**Sanctification is the mysterious process of Christian growth where we work with God for our transformation by the Holy Spirit.** In His mysterious wisdom, God has decided to do this only with our cooperation.

Therefore, as you cooperate with God and you see these changes becoming real in you, then this is evidence of your salvation in Christ Jesus. Sometimes others see these things in you. That often happens, that others who know us, see the changes in us that God is producing and comment on them. You may not realize they are taking place until others mention that you are different than you were before and ask why.

So you are not making your salvation come about by adding these qualities to your faith. Rather, you are seeing that your salvation is real because these qualities are the evidence of God's work in you.

### **3. Because you want to stand strong in Jesus...**

**2 Peter 1:10 (NIV)** For if you do these things, you will never fall,

This is not falling from salvation. This is not falling from grace. You cannot fall from God's grace. Once you are saved, God changes your heart and adopts you. You become His and He does not give up what is His. You cannot fall from His grace.

But you may fall from having a strong faith in Jesus. Because of difficult circumstances in your life, you may begin doubting God. You may ease back into living like you did before your salvation.

No true Christian wants this to happen. However, sometimes, it tragically does. One way of preventing this is to be intentionally working on adding these aspects to your character.

### **4. Because you want to be in a heavenly parade...**

**2 Peter 1:11 (NIV)** and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This may sound a bit selfish of us. But let me point out that Jesus makes much of riches in heaven. He tells us to work for them, store them up, and anticipate them. That is what Peter wants for us too.

This morning I want to focus on the second one in this passage. It is the one you have memorized.

### **5. Because you want to be to be useful to God's Kingdom...**

**2 Peter 1:8 (NIV)** 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.

Jim shared with you how God got him interested in preaching about this passage. God got Jim's attention with one phrase. That one phrase that kept tugging at Jim was "make every effort" in verse five.

Well God had been working on me in the same way. The phrase God had used to attract me to this passage was the one in verse 8, "ineffective and unproductive". God kept calling me to those words, ineffective and unproductive.

If you read this part of verse 8 in other translations, you will see these words used, but also useless and unfruitful. That does not sound very good. I do not want to be labeled with such words. The first word is a Greek word meaning idle.

**argos, Greek, from two words: not & working = idle, (metaphorically: useless)**

You can be an idle Christian, useless to God as a part of His kingdom work.

**James 2:20 (NIV)** You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

This is the same word. James says that a faith that ignores people in need is not the kind of faith God is looking for. This kind of faith will not save you from sin and hell. Instead, the right kind of faith brings about changes in you and in your behavior.

This kind of faith is useless to God. It is not working with God to build God's kingdom. It is a useless faith.

It is also an unproductive faith. It is an unfruitful faith. The word here is...

**akarpos, Greek, = unfruitful**

Now with that help, let me give you a translation that does a better job of bringing out the meaning for us.

**2 Peter 1:8 (ERV)** If all these things are in you and growing, you will never fail to be useful to God. You will produce the kind of fruit that should come from your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the idea that grabbed my attention in this passage. What exactly is the kind of fruit God that should be the result of our salvation? As I kept meditating on this 2 Peter passage, I had to know what this fruit was. I had to learn what the fruit is that should be evident in me as a follower of Jesus Christ. That is what God used to get me here this morning.

Jesus makes it clear that He is expecting us to be fruitful. He makes it clear in Matthew 13 with the parable of the soils.

**Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23 (NIV)** "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the

soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Now what is the crop? The crop was a believer, a Christian. And what did this Christian produce? More Christians. Productive Christians produce, with God, with the Gospel seed, more Christians. Productive Christians are changing lives with Christ Jesus.

Note that there were some who understood the gospel but were not productive. They remained focused on themselves instead of on God and others with God. That is the key. **Productive Christians are changing lives with Christ.**

Are you that kind of Christian? Are you being useful to God? Are you changing lives with Christ?

Peter reminds us that the way to be a useful Christian is to be adding these 7 qualities to our faith. As you do that, you will become useful and God will use you.

Some years ago, an adult was saved through the life of our church. This person's child came to Vacation Bible School and heard the gospel. And then the parents heard the gospel. And the parents got saved. Then one of the parents came to me and wanted to know what we could do all year round that would reach children and their families just like this parent had been reached with the gospel. This person wanted to change lives with Christ. Without the concept of being useful and productive this person wanted to do that.

This is the natural consequence of a right focus on what we have in Jesus. And it comes about by adding these 7 qualities in increasing measure.

So as you look at the impact of your life on others, are you being useful to God? Are you making an impact? If not, note the warning in verse nine.

**2 Peter 1:9 (NIV)** But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

So what has your reaction been to these sermons? We are told to make every effort to add these to our faith. He gives us five reasons to do so. Have you heard all this and thought to yourself, "Yea, it would be nice to be more like that." And you go out those

doors every Sunday and have not done ANYTHING different? You haven't made ANY effort. God says to make EVERY effort and you haven't made ANY effort?

Then you are useless and unfruitful. You are like a broken hammer, or a bent screw driver, or a broken wrench. God can't do anything with you for the building of His kingdom.

You are hurting yourself and us. You may be holding your church back from being used as God wants to use us.

Sure, you know the gospel, but you have forgotten your sin. You have forgotten what you deserved for sin. You have forgotten the personal meaning of what Jesus did for you. That parent who wanted to be useful to God and see get the gospel to other families is no longer seeking to do so. If you had to decide which soil type, in Jesus' parable, this person is, you would have to say that this person is the second type. This person, because of personal circumstances is angry at God, angry at the world, and not serving God at all.

How about you? Which soil type are you? Are you a useful Christian? Are you a productive Christian? You get that way by working on these seven qualities.

Don't be satisfied with remaining where you are. Add these qualities to your faith. This will enable you to be useful to God and fruitful in your faith. Make every effort to do so. Pick one and start praying for it and working on it.