

## Sermon Outline

### “Salvation With Works”

#### 2 Peter series, part 4 – 2 Peter 1:3-15 – Joshua Harris – October 16, 2011

#### Introduction

1. Remember the setting: Peter writes this letter because false teachers are leading people astray. They're indulging in sensuality and adultery. They're lying about Jesus' return and convincing Christians that *godliness doesn't matter*.
2. Peter is standing against their falsehood and declaring that godliness *absolutely matters*. We can summarize Peter's argument like this: God has given us what we need; therefore, we should work at godliness so that we'll finish strong and be welcomed into heaven.
  - a. New Testament professor, Tom Schreiner writes: “[Peter] insisted that people cannot enter [the kingdom] without living in a godly way, but this is not salvation by works, but salvation with works.”
3. Peter is not saying that our works save us. He is saying that good works must accompany salvation. This is salvation *with* works ... salvation *with* godliness. This passage is a clear call to Christians to exert themselves in the pursuit of godliness. This passage also shows us the mistakes that can derail us from that pursuit.

#### Mistake #1: Making Grace An Excuse For Laziness (verses 3-8)

1. Peter clearly teaches that it is the divine power of God through the knowledge of Jesus Christ that enables us to be godly (vv. 3-4). That is grace! But he doesn't hesitate to urge us to make *every effort* to grow in godly qualities. That involves work! There is no contradiction here! Grace is not at odds with effort. In fact, it is the reality of grace, the reality of divine power through Jesus that enables and empowers our effort.
2. Verse 5 ties the two together. “Therefore ... since God has given you all that you need ... make every effort.” That is gospel logic: Because Jesus has won it all for us, we should spend ourselves in obeying him. In other words, we have not been given divine power from God to “sit on the couch” spiritually. We have not been called to behold the glory and excellency of Jesus Christ to be apathetic and unconcerned. If we use grace as an excuse for spiritual laziness or accommodating our sin, we don't understand grace.
3. Titus 2:11 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age.” Grace doesn't coddle spiritual immaturity. Grace isn't a pass for living however we please. Grace trains us and teaches us to say no to sin. There is work and effort involved. And we can work with joy because Jesus has saved us by grace.

## **Sermon Outline**

4. This is an important truth for us to understand as a church. In the past couple of years, we've identified ways in which we've been legalistic, making good practices into laws. But here's the danger: Out of a good desire to throw out legalism, we can inadvertently throw out godliness. That is a drastic mistake. We should not overreact to man-made rules and forget that God has called us to make every effort to grow in godliness and holiness.

### **Mistake #2: Forgetting Who We Are In Christ (verse 9)**

1. In verse 9, Peter makes the link between a lack of godliness and forgetfulness. He says if we lack these qualities we must be forgetting that we've been cleansed. What it means is that godliness doesn't start with a "to-do list." It starts with a "who we are list." We can only pursue godliness diligently and with joyful effort when we remember who we are through faith in Jesus.
2. Consider some of the "identity reminders" Peter has given so far in this letter:
  - a. Verse 1: We are people who, through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, have obtained a faith of equal standing with the apostles.
  - b. Verse 3: We are people who have been called by Jesus himself into relationship with him.
  - c. Verse 4: We are people who have escaped from the corruption that is in the world.
  - d. Verse 9: We are people who have been cleansed from our former sins.

### **Mistake #3: Despising Reminders Of What We Already Know (verses 12-15)**

1. Peter closes this section of his letter by stating in verse 12, "I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have" [emphasis added]. The Christians he is writing already know the importance of godly qualities and holiness. They are already established in the truth of who they are in Jesus. And yet the old Apostle Peter thinks they need to hear it again. He wants to take one more opportunity to stir them up by way of reminder.
2. If we would grow in godliness, we need to be willing to be reminded of the same truth over and over again. We need to be reminded of the good news of Jesus who obeyed for us, died for us and rose again. We need to be reminded that the power of the gospel leads to transformation and holiness. We need to be reminded that without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

## **Sermon Outline**

3. We live in a culture that loves novelty – new techniques, new technology, new diets, new ideas, etc. But to grow in godliness, we don't need the newest Christian teaching or fad. We need to be reminded again and again of what is true. It's reading and applying the truths of God's Word over and over. It's coming to hear God's Word preached again and again. It's sharing fellowship with other Christians and asking them to remind us again of the truth we need to hear. And, it's receiving the same glorious gospel with joy and thanksgiving.

## **Fellowship Starters**

1. Take time as a Care Group to read 2 Peter 1:1-15.
2. How does godly and righteous living validate or give evidence to your salvation? How does Peter make the case that people cannot enter the kingdom without living godly lives?
3. Why can we pursue godliness with diligence and joy only when we remember who we are (i.e., our identity) in Christ? What "identity reminders" does Peter give in the first 15 verses?
4. In what ways are you growing in the godly qualities of verses 5-7? Or, have you been sitting on the "spiritual couch" and become lazy?
5. Think of all that Jesus has done to redeem you and cleanse you from sin. In response, how are you making *every effort* to grow in knowledge, self-control, brotherly affection and love?
6. How often do you remind yourself of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? How often do you remind yourself of God's "precious and very great promises" (verse 4)? Why is it so important to be reminded of what we already know?