

It is a pleasure being able to be with you all here this morning and having the opportunity to share with you what God has been impressing on my heart. As I was recently uploading a message, I was amazed to look on the website at all the various studies that we have gone through and how the Spirit has opened up the Scriptures to us. In particular it is amazing how the end times have become much clearer in what will transpire. I remember being young and thinking how cryptic the end times were. Yet as we have seen, with the proper foundation, the Spirit reveals plain and clear what will become known at the end times. From the rapture to the Tribulation dealing with Israel to the Judgment Seat of Christ and the ensuing Millennial kingdom. Understanding the scriptures and what was addressed to Israel v Christians so that we can better grasp the full scope of salvation. Understanding our part and what that looks like for this life.

And we come week after week, hearing this great message and our spirit, hopefully, gets rejuvenated by what we hear and learn. But the issue I struggle with now and again, and undoubtedly others here have struggled with as well, is an issue of timing. And what I mean by that is, speaking for myself, I understand what will transpire after this life, but I struggle with being faithful day after day, month after month, year after year. Maybe I just expect perfection, because I desire to be holy as Christ is holy so every sin I commit just defeats me. The perseverance aspect of obeying God can be difficult. And so I have been thinking about this. I have learned so much, I know what fruit I am to bear, I know I am to walk in the light and not in darkness. But the question I find myself asking is why is it that I know that which I should do, but I don't always do it? I find myself echoing the words of Paul, in Romans.

Romans 7:15, 18-19 ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

Here we see the struggle, more like war, between the two natures that we are familiar with; our eternally saved spirit and our sinful soul and flesh. Our spirit longs to bear fruit according to its kind; inside we long to do that which we know is right, particularly knowing what is at stake. But our soul, that which is still connected to our sin nature, tempts us, and distracts us, and influences us to do the very thing we hate-sin.

So, again, why do we struggle from time to time with being faithful? Why don't we live according to the Spirit, how we know we should live, every moment of every day? Before we dive into this questions today, I want to share with you an experience of mine that began this past Christmas.

We come here Sunday after Sunday, we read the messages online and re-read them. We answer the study questions. But at times, it is difficult in that while we have an

understanding as to what must transpire in the end times, we don't know when it will happen. We don't know when we will be raptured and taken into the heavens to appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now, we recognize that we are nearing the end of this dispensation and while it would be understandable to think the rapture will take place not just in our lifetime but truly any day now, it is not a guarantee. We may not live to see the return of Christ. Can we persevere year after year? It is my prayer that each one of us does.

But similar to me knowing I had to train for a 10 week period, if we know we will be raptured in 4 years, 3 months and 21 days, all of a sudden it is a lot more manageable for our human brains to compartmentalize the sacrifice it will take if we know we just have to put to death our flesh for that amount of time. But when it is an open time frame, it can become defeating and you start to doubt if the time will ever come.

So what is the answer? What do we do? Because the reality of the situation is we will not know the day or hour that Christ will return. But we know that the day of Judgment is coming, to separate our works that we build on the foundation of Christ. There is no escaping that. What we see in Scripture is it takes perseverance. It takes being faithful, day after day, month after month, year after year. For as long as it takes. I want to turn to the words of Peter as he sheds some light into how we must live.

2 Peter 1:12-18 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, (sounds familiar, right?) and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*. ¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an **[h]**utterance as this was **[i]**made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"— ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this **[i]**utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

Before we get into these words by Peter, I want to look at this last portion that he references. He is alluding to the Transfiguration.

Matthew 16:28-17:5 ²⁸ "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." ¹⁷ Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and **[a]**James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² And He was transfigured before

them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three [b]tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

Here is a passage that was written for Israel first, just as the signs were in John we looked at. But there is secondary application for us as Christians. What we learn here is that some will not taste death before the return of Christ. We learn that the return of Christ will take place after 6 days, a picture of Christ’s return at the end of the tribulation (of which we have learned Christians will be raptured prior to). And we learn that at the end of these 6 days, the 6,000 years, Christ will set up His kingdom atop a high mountain. Mountains of course in Scripture a picture of kingdoms.

Isaiah 2:2 Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established [a]as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.

So why is this pertinent? Because Peter references this event some 30 years later, as if it just happened. All things that have meaning for the end times. When Christ will rule and reign. It was etched into Peter’s mind. Burned on his heart. He had to have realized that he would not live to see the return of Christ. Yet this experience and what it taught him was still his focus and at the forefront of his mind all of his days. His sin is well documented but he continued to live his life according to the purpose for which he was called.

That is the difference. You and I have been called to that same purpose, to that same end. And while we are at the end of this dispensation, it makes no matter if Christ will return next week, next year or in another 100 years. We can’t get caught up in feeling like, “oh, I can take the day off and indulge in my flesh, Christ isn’t returning that soon.” We are to live our life giving all diligence to being called out.

Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few are called out.

It is to this end that Peter says “Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*.”

Constantly reminding ourselves and each other is how we avoid becoming lackadaisical when it comes to the salvation of our soul. Yes, we have studied the Scriptures. Yes, our eyes have been opened to the truth. But it is not enough to simply know or even to be established in the truth alone. We must persistently study that which we have learned. We must repetitively read through the Scripture, studying that which God says.

So, what was Peter always ready to remind them of? I now want to look at that which Peter wrote in the verses preceding that which we just read as it will give us insight into what our focus should be on.

2 Peter 1:1-11 [a]Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same [b]kind as ours, [c]by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us [d]by His own glory and [e]excellence. ⁴ [f]For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. ⁵ Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral [g]excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶ and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, ⁷ and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

He writes to those who have received a faith of the same kind, by the righteousness of God. Clearly, Christians are his target audience. And it is to Christians that he tells them to DILIGENTLY apply in faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Those who have these qualities and who have them increasingly will not be useless or unfruitful. Why is that important? Matthew 21:43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a [m]people, producing the fruit of it. Just as we see God take away the kingdom offer to Israel and give it to a nation that would bear fruit of it, those who are unfaithful and do not produce fruit of the kingdom will forfeit their entrance into the Millennial Kingdom.

1 Peter 2:9-12 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may [n]because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of [o]visitation.

We are the nation that God extended the offer to after removing it from Israel. He has called us out of darkness and we are to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war. This is what I spoke of at the beginning. This is what we are battling daily-the battle between darkness and light within us.

But what did Peter encourage us to do? We are to DILIGENTLY apply in faith moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If we do not do so, if we do not possess these qualities, we are blind or short-sighted. We forget, as I mentioned earlier, we lose focus on when we were cleansed from our sin. Isn't that so human of us? We all have had a moment in our spiritual lives when nothing else mattered. When the only thing on our mind was what Christ did for us on the cross and the life he has given us. But then we got home from that retreat, we started living life and excuse after excuse, we found ourselves no longer possessing that burning desire.

But not Peter. No no. Not after the moment he had at the Transfiguration. That stuck with him. Don't misunderstand-Peter clearly sinned after that moment. But he did not let it dissuade him from continuing to follow Christ and live according to the example He gave him. He knew the struggle real well. That is why he wrote these words. "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

Be all the more diligent...this word comes from the greek "spoude" meaning haste, diligence. To move quickly, properly, swiftness to show zealous diligence. We are to show great passion and zeal toward quickly obeying the Word of God. We are to hastily make certain our calling. Peter is saying, don't leave it to tomorrow or the next day or next month. Do it now, before you sleep. Why? Because those who practice these things will never stumble. As a result the entrance into the "age-long" kingdom will be abundantly supplied to such believers.

So how do we make certain of our calling? We make sure our mind is set where it needs to be.

Romans 8:1-8 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life [a]in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, [b]weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of [c]sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Nothing new. The answer is simple. The following through is the tough part. But it is pretty clear we are one of two people.

Those who walk, or conduct their lives, according to the flesh; those who will forfeit their inheritance, set their minds on the things of the flesh. These have a mind that is dead and hostile toward God. The word hostile invokes enmity, hatred toward God.

Psalm 81:11-16 “But My people did not listen to My voice, And Israel did not ^[g]obey Me. ¹² “So I gave ^[h]them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices. ¹³ “Oh that my people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! ¹⁴ “I would quickly subdue their enemies And turn My hand against their adversaries. ¹⁵ “Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience to Him, And their time of *punishment* would be forever. ¹⁶ “^[i]But I would feed you with the ^[j]finest of the wheat, And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Talking of Israel, they did not obey God but instead set their minds on the flesh and PRETENDED to obey God. If they had sincerely obeyed God, He would have turned his hand against their adversaries and fed them the finest wheat and satisfied them with honey.

We read something similar relating to believers in Romans.

Romans 1:18, 28-32 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth ^[k]in unrighteousness... ²⁸ And just as they did not see fit ^[l]to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are gossips,*³⁰ slanderers, ^[m]haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

This is the one who hates God, the one who has set his mind on things of the flesh. Their mind is dead. Yet they knew the ordinance of God! They knew that those who practice such things are worthy of death! Yet they not only live according to those qualities, they give approval to others as well.

John 3:20 ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

And then there are those who walk and live according to the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit. These have a mind filled with life and peace.

John 3:21 ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

It takes practice. It is not easy and it is not a simple choice that you can make and then never have to make it again. You must practice truth daily.

Hebrews 6:11-12 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence [i]so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Those who diligently pursue the full assurance of hope til the end will not be sluggish. These will imitate and emulate those who faithfully and patiently inherit that which was promised.

How we walk, according to the flesh or the spirit is the only thing that matters when it comes to the life to come. 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 ¹¹ just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and [p]imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, ¹² so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

How will you choose to walk? By the flesh? Or the Spirit? With all diligence, make sure of your calling. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, [i]that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, diligently, hastily, make sure of your calling. Because the day is coming, whether our minds grasp it or not. We have studied the Scriptures. There is no question that we will be raptured, whether we live to see Christ's return or not, and when that day comes, I pray each one of us has an extra supply of oil because if not, what a shame that would be.

Romans 8:14-17 ¹³ for if you are living according to the flesh, you [i]must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you have not received a spirit of slavery [g]leading to fear again, but you have received [h]a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

As I end this message, I want to remind us of the words of Paul which are very familiar to us but should be at the forefront of our mind each day. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I [i]discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

The choice is yours. The choice is mine. It is not Pastor Herberts to make for us. It is not up to your spouse or anyone else to determine for you. It is a choice that you and I make each and every day. What will we set our minds to? That which is perishing? Or that which will last forever? It may require us to persevere year after year after year, but 80, 90 years is nothing compared to 1,000. There is an imperishable crown at stake.

There is nothing this life has to offer that can compare with that which is on offer to us, if we would do that which we know to be right and pure and true.

Philippians 3:8, 10-11 ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss [c]in view of the surpassing value of [d]knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, [e]for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ... ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and [f]the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;¹¹ [g]in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

I read somewhere recently the following statement that I want to leave you with. It asked, “When is the last time the world died for you? Said it would never leave you? And said, I’m going to love you no matter what? That’s what Jesus says about you.”