

*Church! Be Diligent!*

2 Peter 3:14-18

Michael Felkins

Grand Avenue Baptist Church

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Last Sunday, we looked at the six gospel-reminders the Apostle Peter gave us as he closed out his epistle. Now, in the final five verses, I want to point you to six exhortations he gives us in his final words.

Before we look at these six exhortations, we need to look back at what *fuels these six exhortations*. Here is why. It would be easy to simply preach these six exhortations with the Nike slogan of “*Just do it!*” However, if you preach an exhortation without connecting them to the gospel, we simply write a new set of commandments. *We need to make sure our obedience to commands is connected to the fuel of the gospel.*

Think about it this way. When obedience is disconnected from the fuel of the gospel, it becomes legalism and eventually drudgery. Obedience that is disconnected from the fuel of the gospel is of no benefit to you. If your obedience is disconnected from the fuel of the gospel, eventually, your spiritual life will be running on empty. *Obedience that is disconnected from the fuel of the gospel does not create in our hearts gracious, humble, joyful obedience. It creates self-righteousness.*

Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is designed by God to run on the fuel of the gospel that is ignited by the Holy Spirit. So, when *The Holy Spirit takes the gospel of God and fills the heart-tanks of the people of God with the premium, high octane word of God, He ignites the hearts of God’s people with white-hot joyful obedience to the gospel of God.*

Think about it this way. Back on October 4<sup>th</sup>, we looked at the *divine power source (the fuel)*, *divine means (grace-driven efforts)*, and *our divine destination of life and godliness for the glory of God*. I used the illustration of going to a Chiefs’ game. The *source of power* is the *gas* for the car. The *car is the means* to get to the *destination/goal*: KC and specifically Arrowhead Stadium.

If you remember, I said we do not talk about *source, means, and goal* this way. We say: “*Hey! We are going to the Chief’s game! Whose car are we going in? Who’s paying for the gas? Where are we going to park at the stadium?*” We use this functional pragmatic language.

Here is what happens when you take a trip like this with a bunch of guys. You have the engineers in the group who are concerned with the details of the trip. They want to make sure we are leaving Ames at exactly noon, so we will have time to stop and get gas, eat supper, beat rush hour, and still arrive at Arrowhead stadium on time. Then there are people like me. I want to know what time we are leaving and what time we will be back. We can figure out everything on the way down there. I know what the goal is, so I am thinking we will just power through and get there.

We are all wired differently, and we will approach things differently. Some of us can focus on the details at the expense of the journey, and some are so goal focused we overlook the important details. Then other people are at points in-between on this spectrum.

Here is my point. It is one thing to approach traveling this way, but it becomes a problem when we treat our spiritual lives this way. Here is what I mean. Some of us only focus on the *goal*, our obedience for the glory of God, without applying the *divine power source of the gospel* for our obedience. Some of us may only focus on the *divine power source*, the *gospel*. We talk about gospel, gospel, gospel, but we never apply *the means of a grace-driven effort for the goal of obedience for the glory of God*. Finally, some of us simply go

through the *motions of the means of grace*. In other words, we get up in the mornings; we read the Bible and pray without ever beholding the glory of God in what we are doing. We simply check off the means of grace on our *daily list of spiritual duties*. When we do this, it is like getting in our cars and driving to work without even noticing the stoplights in our lives or the beauty of the sunrise, which reminds us that God's mercies are new every morning. Are you tracking with me?

So, as the Apostle Peter closes his letter with these six exhortations, we must be diligent to remain connected to the *divine power source of the gospel* so that it creates joy as we make good use of the *divine means of grace* that will take us to the *divine destination of a life of godliness for the glory of God*.

So, before I get into these six exhortations, let's pull our hearts up to the filling station of gospel-fuel that is found in 2 Peter 1:3-11:

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Now that we have been reminded of our divine power source, the divine means, and our divine destination of the Kingdom of God, let's consider Peter's final six exhortations.

### **I. Be Watchful! (v. 14a)**

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent.*

Verse 14 says, "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these." The phrase "waiting for these" means *watchful*. It means to be *looking toward our destination*.

The question is: for what are we *waiting*? Look back at v. 13 and notice the connection that helps us see our goal, "But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

The Greek word *waiting* is the connection between the reminders in vv. 1-13 and the exhortations in vv. 14-18. In other words, as we live our Christian lives as sojourners on this earth, we are *waiting for the glory of God* to be fully and finally revealed from heaven. *We are waiting* for everything to be made new.

However, our waiting and watchfulness is not inactivity. We are to *diligently anticipate the arrival of Jesus*. The definition of *diligence* is found in 2 Peter 1:5, "For this very reason, make every effort." It is the *grace-driven effort* of anticipation of Christ's return. We are waiting for the righteous reign of King Jesus to

come and make all things new. We are waiting for Eden to be restored to glory beyond what Adam and Eve could have ever imagined. So, while we are waiting, we are diligently pursuing Christ. We are diligently pursuing holiness. We are diligently evangelizing the lost.

And as we wait, the gospel fuels our *diligence to be watchful*. Isaiah 40:3 describes gospel-watchfulness:

*But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.*

Do you get tired as you wait? Think about how discouraged you get as you wait for this pandemic to be over. Think about your anxiety, anger, frustration, and distraction. We get anxious about the virus. We get frustrated with government policies. We may even get angry and frustrated with one another. We don't all agree on safety. We don't all agree on wearing masks. These issues dominate our conversations, and we get distracted from the goal that Christ has given us to pursue. We begin to wait for the pandemic to be over and forget to be watchful for Jesus' return.

I don't know about you, but I had to repent this week of being more concerned with the return to normal life than with the return of Jesus Christ. How about you? Has the pandemic distracted you from watchfulness? Are you more excited and anticipate the return to normal life than the return of Jesus? Perhaps you need to repent of your distraction and how you have acted toward others.

Let's come together and look to the One who bore our curse on the cross and who will return in victorious glory and make all things new. Let's be watchful for the One who will reign in righteousness over His Kingdom for His glory and our complete joy and satisfaction in Him.

## **II. Be Holy! (v. 14b)**

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him  
without spot or blemish.*

Next, we see that we are not only to be diligent *in our watchfulness*, but we are to be diligent *to be found in him without spot or blemish*. Once again Peter connects an exhortation from chapter 1 to the conclusion of his letter.

In 2 Peter 1:10, Peter said, "*Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall.*"

"*To be found in him*" is the same as saying "*to confirm your calling and election.*" It means to have assurance of your salvation.

Peter has already taught us that the *assurance* that you belong to Jesus is not a subjective experience. *Assurance of salvation* is experienced when we live out the graces listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7. This means the *assurance of our salvation* is experienced when we live out practical righteousness that is called for in these verses.

What these verses teach us is that there is a connection between *assurance of our salvation* and *practical holiness*. *Bottom line: The joyful desire to live out practical holiness in our lives is evidence that we belong to Jesus, and when we live this way, it strengthens the assurance of our salvation.* In other words, if you want to strengthen your assurance, consider how joyfully you pursue practical holiness in your life.

Look at what Peter says next in vv. 5-7. He calls us *to be found in Christ “without spot or blemish.”* The phrase *“without spot or blemish”* is Old Testament language for the condition of the lamb to be sacrificed on the altar for sin. The lamb that was sacrificed on the altar was to be *“without spot or blemish.”*

The phrase *“without spot or blemish”* is a *gospel-phrase* that reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. He came and lived a sinless life and died on the cross as our Sacrificial Lamb, who was *without spot or blemish*. His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead purchased *divine gospel power* so that we can walk in His steps to pursue a life of *practical holiness*.

Then when we fall short of living a life of holiness, He purchased our gospel power to repent of our sin. We receive a fresh filling of His Holy Spirit so that we may get back on the *gospel-road to diligently pursue joyful holiness*.

### III. Be Peaceful! (v. 14c)

*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him . . . at peace.*

*“Church! Be diligent to pursue peace!”* If there is anything that we need right now, it is to diligently pursue peace. As the anxiety and stress of the current culture crises of the sexual revolution, hostility in politics, uncertainty in economics, and stress from the pandemic washes over us like a wave, we need the peace of Christ. We need to pursue peace as a church body.

Have you heard the phrase, *“super-spreader?”* Medical authorities use this phrase to describe environments and contexts where the coronavirus can be spread very easily. It can also describe a person who easily spreads the coronavirus. He or she is a super-spreader.

We need some super-spreaders, not super-spreaders of the virus but super-spreaders of peace. As a church, let's be a super-spreader of the peace of Christ to one another.

Let's be found in him at peace with God and at peace with one another. Let's figure out how to be super-spreaders of the peace of Christ during the pandemic.

If you have an idea for that, I want to hear it. Email me over the Thanksgiving holidays, and let's consider how God may lead us to spread the peace of Christ with one another and with our community from now until the pandemic is over.

### IV. Be Wise! (vv. 15-16)

*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,<sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

There are two exhortations that call us to be wise in vv. 15-16. Let's consider these two wisdom exhortations.

The first: Be a Wise Evangelist! (v. 15a) Peter calls Christians to be wise with the time God has given them. Notice what he says, *“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation.”*

Verse 15a reminds us of God's patience with sinners in 2 Peter 3:9, *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”*

God's patience means He is giving sinners time to repent. If God is giving sinners time to repent, this means He is giving us time to be evangelists. His patience means we must make good use of the time we have so that we can share the gospel with our lost neighbors, friends, and family members.

God's patience is our calling to share the gospel. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:14-17:

*How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Let's be wise evangelists and share the gospel with those whom God has providentially put in our lives. The second exhortation: Be a Wise Theologian! (vv. 15b-16)

*Just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup> as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

This second exhortation has to do with how we handle the word of God. The false teachers and scoffers twisted the word of God. They basically made evangelism and missions pointless by teaching Jesus would not return. They removed the hope of Jesus' return for believers and the warning of Jesus' return for unbelievers. These false teachers turned the Living Water of the gospel into lukewarm water that people detested. Beware of those who water down the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter also says one more very important truth. When he teaches us that it was ignorant and unstable people who twisted his and the Apostle Paul's words, he made sure to show us that his letters and Paul's letters were to be treated as Scripture. Peter recognized Paul's writings as Scripture. He recognized that they were on the same level as the Old Testament. Peter's validation of Paul's writings as Scripture means that the Holy Spirit was speaking through the pen of the Apostle Paul, and thus we are to handle Paul's writings with the same care as we do other Scripture.

Dear friends, in order for us to be wise evangelists and wise theologians, we must have high regard for God's word. This means we must know that God's word is sufficient to save and instruct God's people.

#### **V. Be Warned! (v. 17)**

*You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.*

Peter gives us one more warning in v. 17. First, he exhorts us to *remember* with the words, "*knowing this beforehand.*" Then he gives us the *warning*, "*take care you are not carried away with the error of lawless people.*"

These lawless people were not wise theologians. They were careless with God's word. They were false teachers and scoffers. They tried to deceive the church. They twisted the Scripture in order to teach their new ideas about God's word. In 2 Peter 2:14, Peter told us that false teachers want to *destabilize the faith of mature Christians* and *trap weak and immature Christians* by twisting God's word.

Friends, the world is full of lawless teachers who peddle their errors for an audience that has itching ears. Their secular worldviews are corrupt philosophies that masquerade as truth. Even many well-meaning Christians can be duped into adopting their twisted doctrine. When this happens, they *lose their stability*.

The way to heed Peter's warning is to practice what is taught in 2 Peter 1. We must *know and understand our salvation* and *know the Scriptures*. When Christians know and understand their salvation as Scripture teaches, then they are established firm in their faith. *This leads us to the sixth and last exhortation.*

#### **VI. Be Vigilant! (v. 18)**

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

Brothers and sisters, we must be vigilant to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Why? Because Grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ lead us to our divine destination—the glory of God. The glory of God is the end for which God created you and me. It is the end for which God created the world, and it is the grace of God that leads us to that end.

The life of the Christian is grace from beginning to end because the Christian life is Jesus from beginning to end. Jesus is the glory and grace of the Word of God manifested in the flesh. Jesus' death on the cross is the glory of God in its fullness. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the bursting forth of the grace and glory of God. As Jonathan Edwards so aptly put it, "*Grace is but glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected.*"

Friends, on the "*day of eternity*," the grace of God will be perfected in His people. However, church until that day dawns, let's be diligent to grow in that grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.