

Route 66

2 Peter: Make Every Effort

Part 61 – June 26, 2011

True or false: The FCC is proposing a ban on all religious broadcasting. NASA scientists have confirmed the missing day of Joshua. Oilmen drilling in Siberia have recorded the people in hell. Tooth fillings have turned to gold during worship services. You'll receive a special blessing if you forward this email. When believers buy into and perpetuate urban legends like these, it detracts from and distracts from the truth of the Gospel.

In Peter's *first* letter, he explains how to deal with the blatant, *external* attacks of unbelievers. Now, in this follow-up letter, about three years later, he explains how to deal with the sly, *internal* attacks of false teachers.



They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them ... Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. – 2 Peter 2:1b-3a NIV

Their heresies were more serious than urban legends, “even denying the sovereign Lord”; but in similar fashion, believers were accepting it and forwarding it without ever scrutinizing it. These deceivers downplayed the sovereignty of Jesus, and taught that our physical being has no impact on our spirit. So, as long as you believe the right things, you can do whatever you please.

... by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity ... – 2 Peter 2:18b-19a NIV



This is the snare of *compartmental Christianity*: obeying agreeable commands while ignoring the inconvenient or unappealing ones. Remember that old hymn: “I Surrender All--most All of My Life”? It's also known as flirting with the world. I hope this isn't a picture of your faith! Frank Sinatra sang: “All or nothin' at all; half a love never appealed to me. If your heart, it never could yield to me. Then I'd rather, rather have nothin' at all.”

That's actually pretty deep; and it reminds me that Jesus isn't asking anything in *our* relationship that I myself don't demand! He wants my heart to be devoted not divided.

If ever there was a model of total surrender and passionate, undivided devotion, it's Peter. Remember when he took off a guy's ear with a sword? This time he does it with a pen!



The Capture of Christ, circa 1520

[These men] are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. ... They are blots and blemishes ... experts in greed – an accursed brood! ... Blackest darkness is reserved for them. – 2 Peter 2:12-17 NIV condensed

Peter has zero tolerance for anyone who discredits, corrupts, compartmentalizes, or compromises the Gospel. From day one, he had *literally* dropped everything and devoted himself to Jesus.



NW Shore of the Sea of Galilee

Jesus was right about here: the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee (a 13 mile long freshwater lake).

Peter and his wife lived on the NW shore, in a fishing village called Capernaum. [kuh-PUHR-nay-uhm] Convincing evidence, dating back to the 2nd century, actually shows which house is theirs.



Ancient Capernaum, Israel

It's under a Catholic Church. The church has a glass floor so you can see down into it.



This is probably where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. (Mark 1:29-31)



So, Jesus has Peter row him out into the water in order to speak to the crowd on the shore. This is a 27' fishing boat, from the time of Peter and Jesus that was found buried in the mud on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee (in 1986).

Peter is exhausted from fishing all night and catching nothing.



Sea of Galilee, Photochrom c. 1890

This is an 1890's photochrom print of fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. So, Jesus asks Peter to cast the nets that he just finished putting away - to catch the fish that don't bite during the day. But, he obeys.

And the nets begin to break and the boat begins to sink!

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ... Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything and followed him.** – Luke 5:8-11 NIV

Oh, yeah. Remember my point? Peter *literally* dropped everything, devoted himself to Jesus, and never looked back! There are no part-time positions in God's kingdom. It's all or nothin' at all! Peter says, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Jesus says, "I know. That's why I'm here." Some of Jesus' sharpest rebukes are aimed at Peter. But after each failure, Peter repented and returned with an even more determined devotion. He was an intensely devoted sinful man!

... he 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. For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. - 2 Peter 1:4-7 NIV

Grace is not opposed to effort! Grace is opposed to earning. If you're a believer, then *you* are *personally* responsible for "participating" with His Spirit to grow into His likeness.

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. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. - 2 Peter 1:8-9 NIV



But this isn't legalism. Jesus doesn't expect us to be spotless. Remember when He wanted to wash Peter's feet?

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" - John 13:8-9 NIV

He doesn't expect spotlessness, just head-over-heels surrender. And, He certainly doesn't expect us to be blameless; no matter how good our intentions might be. Remember on the night of Jesus' betrayal?



Peter and Jesus from "The Passion"

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." - Matthew 26:34-35a NIV

He doesn't expect blamelessness, just sincere and earnest loyalty!

He doesn't even expect us to always be at peace with *Him* and His ways. Remember when He told His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be raised to life? (Mat 16:21)



Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." - Matthew 16:22-23 NIV

Wow. When you can make *Jesus* call you the devil, that's something! And yet, it doesn't in any way diminish *His* devotion to Peter. Jesus is very aware of who can walk on water and who just sinks.



Wooden boat on Sea of Galilee

Remember, He's the One who nicknamed Peter the "Rock"!

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" - *Matthew 14:29-31 NIV*

Do you think Jesus was offended that Peter doubted and feared; or proud and pleased that He made the effort? I mean, correct me if I'm wrong but ... *he walked on water!* And I believe he's the only non-deity to ever do that. And he became the first person ever to confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God! (*Mat 16:16*) And he got to hear God *speak* on the Mount of Transfiguration! (*Mark 9:2-7*)

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. - *2 Peter 1:16-18 NIV*

And now this wonderfully-imperfect, fully-devoted disciple is fully aware that he's about to be executed. So he writes, probably from prison, to remind us that it's *so* worth the effort.

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. - *2 Peter 1:13-15 NIV*

He touches on those who scoff at Jesus' return, not realizing that God is like a loving parent, momentarily hesitating to punish in hopes the child will *choose* to do what's right.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. - *2 Peter 3:9 NIV*

It's our loving Father counting to three: "1 ... 2 ... 2½ ... 2¾ ..." But Peter assures us that judgment will come; and with it, a new heaven and a new earth. And then he goes out the way he came in.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. - *2 Peter 3:14 NIV*

He doesn't expect us to be spotless, blameless, or perfectly at peace with Him; but He *does* expect us to give it a *Spirited* try.