

Making Every Effort (1 Cor 15:58)

A. I read these New Year's resolutions the other day:

1. "I will not go to a Doctor's office whose plants have died."
2. "I am going to follow my husband's advice by putting a little excitement in my life by living within my budget."
3. "I am going to apply for a hardship scholarship to Weight Watchers."
4. "I will never loan my car to any one I have given birth to."

B. Our resolutions often end in resignations.

1. Because they require change, & change is so very difficult to bring about.
2. Resolutions require resolve: making up your mind, determination, steadfastness, tenacity, doggedness, & firmness (sounds like work).

C. Does it takes resolve to trust God?

1. To trust God means to put our confidence in Him that His Word is Truth, & that He will always do what is best.
2. But trusting God doesn't mean that we just sit back & let Him do all the work.

Phil 2:12 – Therefore, my beloved, as ***you have always obeyed***, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, ***work out your own salvation*** with fear & trembling

3. We cannot earn salvation; Paul doesn't say *work for* but "*work out*" your own salvation.
4. But that does NOT mean we shouldn't try with all our might to please Him – we should!
5. We should resolve to give our greatest effort to growing spiritually, growing closer to God.

[Let's look at some admonitions from God's word that encourages us to "Make Every Effort" to grow in our spirit.]

I. Make Every Effort To Eliminate Your Sins

2 Pet 3:14 – Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot & blameless**

A. Part of being a Christian is admitting we sin & knowing when we do (1 Jn 1:8-9).

1. But also, part of being a Christian is resolving to sin less & less.
2. The fact that we were baptized into the death of Christ should testify that we are through with the practice of sin (Rom 6:1-4).
3. And yet we sometimes keep a sin around like a pet; we coddle it & it becomes part of us: *lust, tale bearing, bitterness, etc.*

Gary Richmond (former Zookeeper) wrote View From The Zoo. He says at 24 months a raccoon undergoes a glandular change so that what was originally a docile animal can become ferocious. He says a 30 lb. raccoon can be as ferocious as a 100 lb. dog. He tells people who find raccoons in the forest not to make them pets. He had a friend who kept a raccoon as a pet & he warned her to let it go because it could harm her. She replied, "Oh, no Bandit would never hurt me." Three months later she was having emergency plastic surgery on her face.

4. The point is you don't coddle sin; it will hurt you.

Rom 6:13-14 – And **do not present your members** [eyes, ears, tongue (taste, talk), hands] **as instruments of unrighteousness to sin**, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, & your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you...** (If it does, you will die – Rom 6:23)

[We live in a down stream world where right is called wrong & wrong is called right.

A Christian has to swim upstream in this down stream world, which means effort, & a lot of it.

If you wish to resolve to overcome sin you will need to let the word of Christ dwell (Col 3:16) in you & rule your heart.]

II. Make Every Effort To Eliminate Conflict In Your Relationships

Heb 12:12-15 (Renew Your Spiritual Vitality) – Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, & the feeble knees, 13 & ***make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.*** 14 ***Pursue peace with all people, & holiness,*** without which no one will see the Lord: 15 ***looking carefully*** lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; ***lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, & by this many become defiled...***

A. A holy life is always accompanied by a life lived in harmony with others.

1. Last year someone hurt your feelings, & this year it will happen again – *that's not the problem.*
2. The problem lies when you perpetuate the anger that resulted from your hurt feelings.

Rom 12:18 – If it is possible, ***as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.***

3. Paul is telling us that our relationships with people are not disposable.

- a. Like a razor, “This one hurts so I think I’ll get rid of it, throw it out.”
- b. Jesus said it is the peacemaker, not the peace-lover that He will bless.
- c. Resolution: “I will remember to love my children the most when they deserve it the least.” – *we might add each other to that resolution.*

Varina Davis & Julia Grant, wives of **Jefferson Davis & Ulysses S. Grant**, who became President of the U.S., after both men died, these two women moved to the same town & became neighbors & best friends.

[**When** you look back on this year, is there a conflict that could be resolved with some degree of effort?

We need to live peaceably wherever & with whom it is possible.]

III. Make Every Effort To Do More Edifying Less Criticizing

Rom 14:17-19 – for the kingdom of God is not eating & drinking, but righteousness & peace & joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God & approved by men. 19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace & **the things by which one may edify another**.

A. The word “edify” refers to the act of building, or the construction of a building.

1. There is no relationship where building up is more important than in the church, *because the church is a spiritual building of the saved*.

(Read highlighted words)

1 Cor 3:9-11 – For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, **you are God’s building**. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, & another builds on it. **But let each one take heed how he builds on it**. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:19-22 – Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers & foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints & members of the household of God, 20 having been **built** on the foundation of the apostles & prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole **building**, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being **built** together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

2. Jason is a bricklayer. What if every time he placed a brick into proper position, someone came along & knocked it out of place?

- a. We can do something similar by being critical of others & making blanket condemnations.

Rom 14:4 – **Who are you to judge another’s servant?** To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand...**10 But why do you judge your brother?** Or **why do you show contempt for your brother?** For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Jas 4:11-12 – Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. **He who speaks evil of a brother & judges his brother, speaks evil of the law & judges the law**. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. 12 There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save & to destroy. **Who are you to judge another?**

Matt 7:1-2 – **Judge not, that you be not judged**. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; & with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

3. There were nine spiritual gifts in the NT, but there was & is NO gift of criticism.

- a. Why not put forth that same effort to encourage the conduct the Lord wants ([Acts 11:23-24](#); [Col 4:8](#); [1 Thess 3:2](#))?

The Duke of Wellington, considered by many to be Britain's greatest General. He defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. He was stern & demanding. He was asked late in life, "Looking back on your life would you do any one thing different?" He said, "Yes, I'd give more praise."

[Can we do more of that in this coming year?]

IV. Make Every Effort Towards Unity

A. **It took the greatest effort on the part of Jesus to create our unity** ([Eph 2:14-15](#)).

1. It will take very great energy on our part to guard it ([Eph 4:3-4](#)).
2. Satan has learned that what will destroy the church is not an attack from the outside, but turmoil on the inside (cf. [Acts 4-8](#)) – so we have to guard against inner strife to maintain unity.

Peanuts. Linus is watching TV & Lucy walks in. She says, "Change the channel." He says, "Why should I change the channel? I was here first." She said, "Because of these five fingers. Individually, they seem as nothing, but when they curl up they become a terrible weapon." Linus says, "What channel do you want?" Then he looked at his hand & said, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Unity is a powerful force for good in Christ's kingdom ([Jn 17:21-22](#)); it needs to be guarded with all our efforts.

Why do I accept you & you me? **Because** Christ has accepted us both; He has united us in one body.]

V. Make Every Effort To Be Like Christ

A. **Don't ever be content as a disciple; there's always more to do to be like Jesus** ([2 Pet. 1:3-10](#)).

1. This may come as a shock, but God did not save you just to get you to heaven, He saved you to transform you into the image of His Son ([Rom 8:29](#)); *He wants heaven to be filled with people who have the character of His Son.*

- a. God expects us make every effort to cooperate with Him in this process.
- b. Our greatest reward & God's happiest moment is when the character of His Son is displayed in our lives.

A 12-year-old boy in a golf tournament: It was a play off & he was leading. **His** ball was in the putting line of his opponent so he marked the ball. **But** his mark was in the line of his opponent so he moved it the allowed four inches, the width of the head on the putter. **His** opponent putted out. **Then** he placed his ball & putted out. **As** he walked off the green he remembered he did not replace his mark in its original position. **He** immediately went to the marshal & told him he did not replace his mark in its original placement. **Not only was he penalized for the error but according to the rules of golf he was disqualified. He** lost. **When** he was interviewed he was asked why did he that. "No one would have ever known. No one caught the mistake." **The** Young man said, *"I feel better for having lost than to win & know I was a cheater."*

[Do you think the character of Christ was seen that day?

CLOSING

Do you think it was worth making the effort (2 Cor 3:18)?

Oh yes, it's an effort worth dieing to achieve (2 Cor 4:16-18)!!]

There is a monument stone in the Alps dedicated to a man that was on his way to rescue his friends. **While** on his ascent he died. **On** his gravestone it says, *"He died climbing."*

Isn't that what we want said of us? **He** or **she** died on the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus" – in pursuit of being like Jesus – "He died climbing."

Where is God asking us to climb?

1. He is asking us to rid our lives of any sin we may be harboring.
2. He is asking us to make peace in the relationships in our lives.
3. He is asking us to be an encourager not a condemner.
4. He is asking us to do everything in our power to maintain peace & unity in the church.
5. He is asking us to work at looking more like His Son.