

2Peter 11-10-21b

Let's pick up our study now. We're looking at the second chapter of 2 Peter, along with the text of the letter from Jude. And Jude tells us that it is necessary to write to us and exhort us to contend earnestly.

The Greek word there is agonizomai, and we sometimes can realize that it is or feels like a sacrifice to do this. Agonizomai means to, it's used for strife and combat of a very rigorous, vigorous, determined variety. And we don't necessarily like to do this.

We like things sort of sedate and comfortable. And technology intrudes itself into our lives to provide comfort. I have a digital thermostat that will monitor the temperature in the room and turn on the A.C. or the heat depending on what we need.

We have a thermometer to tell us if we have a fever. We have lots of entertainment and comforts that come to us by reason of progress of science and so on. And to think about giving some of this up or to set it aside can be traumatizing to us, but this is what it says.

We need to agonize. And a little thing about Greek here, though some of y'all are taking Greek and you know or you will know soon, that when you see that O-M-A-I ending, that's sort of the sign of the middle voice. Agonizo by itself would be an active sense.

I am going to agonize. But when you have O-M-A-I, agonizamai, this means I am doing something and it's the middle voice. You know in English what the active voice is, I hit the ball.

You've got a subject, a verb and a direct object. That's an active thing. If I say I was hit by the ball, that's passive, was hit.

Well, in Greek there's another one in between, the middle voice. And it means that the subject is involved in the action, but it might be a reflexive middle where the subject is acting in his own behalf or in his own interest. But there is an active component and a passive component.

The subject is acting, but it comes back and has sort of a passive effect on the actor. It's the middle voice. Very interesting conceptually.

And so you do this in your own interest. We have got to contend and put ourselves through a little bit of pain in order to preserve our faith. We're going to agonize.

This is going to cost us something. There's a little bit of a sacrifice. There have been studies done, and I won't give you the details.

You can look this up with your technology later on. But they have done studies at university campuses and various places where they will make people go cold turkey off of all of their stuff. Computers, mobile phones, iPods, television, radio, newspapers.

And young people that are put on this program will suffer withdrawal symptoms that are very similar to drug withdrawal. It creates depression, anxiety, fidgetiness, purposelessness, inability to focus and concentrate. It just completely disrupts their whole state of being.

Well, you know what that means. If you suffer withdrawal when you are separated from a thing, you are addicted to that thing. Right? So, you know, we might try doing a little experiment and see how it goes.

Jude says, agonize yourself for your faith. Contend earnestly. Why? Well, you look at this section on your handout that's called False Teachers, which begins with Jude 3 and then engages 2 Peter 2. We talked about these that have come in unnoticed.

Unnoticed means it wasn't perceived as a threat. I don't perceive my cell phone as a threat. I don't perceive my computer as a threat.

It's my livelihood. I wouldn't have a job without it. I, you know, maintain a website for a living and all of the materials that go into it and communicate to a lot of people about it and use technology to get everything done.

Most of us do. Nothing wrong with that. But if we fail to make ourselves aware of the dangers, cars are wonderful things.

We need them to get around in this society. But we have to be aware of the dangers. You don't apply makeup while you're driving.

Don't talk on your cell phone while you're driving. I have been nearly run off the road countless times by people who've got that thing up to their ear and are staring off into space instead of paying attention to traffic. Or people looking down trying to text while they're driving.

Studies have been done and that is worse than driving drunk. Using your cell phone, trying to operate, trying to call somebody, trying to respond to a text while you're driving is more debilitating than blowing .1 something on an alcohol meter. And you need to especially avoid doing it so that you can avoid all the other people who are doing it because you can get killed.

I can't tell you how many times insensible people have endangered themselves and others because they're trying to split their attention. Driving at 80 something miles an hour on Central Expressway requires an engaged mind. All of your senses.

But this is unnoticed. And it is marked out for condemnation. It is marked out for judgment long ago.

And look at Jude 5. I want to remind you though you once knew this. How is it we can lose sight of something that we once knew? Distraction. If we know a thing but it doesn't come to our mind, it's because we're distracted.

We're thinking about something else. Oh, wait a minute. I knew that.

Why is it we put something down and a few minutes later we can't find it? I just had my keys. Where are they now? I just had my phone. Where is it now? I just had my purse.

I just had my X. Where is it? Why is it we don't remember? Because when we set it down, when we put it somewhere, we were thinking about something else. We were distracted. You know how you can always remember where your keys or your purse or your phone or your fill-in-the-blank is? Concentrate when you set it down.

When that thing leaves your hand, say, all right, note the location of these keys. Note the location of this phone. Note the location of this car.

Have you ever gone out one door of your house and looked and your car's not there? Oh, that's right. I parked on the other side. We don't think.

We don't concentrate because we are divided. We are distracted. Our mind is elsewhere.

And there is so much going on that the normal human autopilot that used to keep us apprised and aware that, oh, yes, there's something in the oven, oh, yes, one of my garden hoses is running, oh, yes, I left that on, the stove is on, there's something on the burner. You know, in our previous domestic life, our brain was capable of keeping us apprised. Our subconscious mind would be aware of two or three other things going on.

Well, now there's 20. And the reason everybody, even young people, are starting to have trouble remembering what's going on and leaving something running or leaving something behind or running off and having to, you know, come back for a thing is because we've got too many thoughts intruding into our head all at the same time. There's too much information and it is overloading the human mind.

Well, Satan loves this because for believers, our faith gets washed right on downstream with the rest of it. So he says, I want to remind you, though you used to know this. Now, how does it work for these people? Saints in the first century.

The calm, sedate, predictable manner of life that the Jews had in the land, having followed in the footsteps of their forebears and their forefathers for literally centuries, coming back from the captivity, they've been living there 400 years. It's the same. I do what my father did.

Paul Simon has even written a song about this on his Surprise album. You have to look for it and you have to think about his lyrics. That's the great thing about a Paul Simon song.

Whatever else you want to say about Paul Simon, there is a lot of thought that goes into his lyrics. And don't kid yourself. If it seems cryptic, you know, mother and child reunion, you say, what is that? Well, you've got to parse it.

You've got to think about it. He's got a song on the Surprise album. I don't even remember the name of it.

But the last line in the song says, I am wearing my father's old coat. The beginning of the song says, we get a name and a faith at birth. It's talking about the lines that are filled in on your birth certificate, but it's also talking about your cultural heritage.

And he says, after all these other things, I am wearing my father's old coat. What's he saying? This is the lifestyle. This is the outward appearance.

This is the comfortable garment that my father wore and now I am wearing it. There's a lot to that. But it requires some thought.

What am I doing? Why am I doing it? Am I just wearing my father's old coat? Or do I know why I'm doing what I do? Or am I just following in a rut? Well, these people in the land of Israel in Jesus' day, in the apostolic generation, had a heritage. They took the Pharisees for granted. They took temple worship and synagogue life for granted.

This is what my father did. This is what my grandfather did. This is what my community has done into the reaches of memory.

Much of their tradition was verbal. And now they have been kicked out. They have been thrust out.

Their culture has been exploded. And they're being scattered. And the Hellenistic influence on them is now, instead of being an outside thing that they could look across the border and see, now they have been immersed in it.

And they're a little piece of flotsam floating in this sea of contrariness. So Jude says, I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those that did not believe. I want to remind you, though you once knew this.

How would they know this and need to be reminded? They have knowledge. They have faith knowledge. They have pertinent biblical information that is not coming to the point of application anymore.

Why would that be? I just didn't have time. All around us, you can see there's a lot of contest programming where people are vying to be the next idol or the next X or the next this or the next that. And they say, Well, when it came time for me to go up and be judged, everything I knew went out the window.

I see this everywhere. I mean, you can't help it. If your TV is on, you're going to see this.

People trying out to be cheerleaders in Dallas. And they say, Oh, you know, I memorized that little dance routine to be a cheerleader, but when I got up in front of these ladies who decide whether I'm going to be a cheerleader or not, it just went out of my mind. I couldn't remember the steps.

I couldn't bring back my knowledge. I lost the lyrics of the song. Somebody stands up to sing God Bless America or the National Anthem, and they lose the words.

They've known the words since they were a kid. But under pressure, they can't call it back to mind. You know why? We are losing the art of concentration.

We are losing the art of thought. It takes practice to think under pressure and hear me. This is the nature of the attack on our faith.

Things come up, and if we have not practiced meditation, if we have not practiced thinking through why we believe what we believe and how what we believe applies in the clutch and in the pinch, it won't come to the point of application. We space it. We vapor lock.

Our mind is empty. Why? Well, where's my piece of information? I need to Google something. I need somebody to text me.

Let me check my email. Give me a verse. Let me get my Bible promise book and see if there's something in here.

We go thumbing through. What happened to the fabric of our faith? What happened to the conditioned thinking and the structure in our soul that should be built by thoughtful meditation on the faith? Jude says, I want to remind you of what you already know. Let me give you another chance to think about this and rehearse it.

How do people do well? If you've been watching the World Series, as well you should. You would have seen a great double play last night, and these are guys who play baseball all the time. They're steeped in it.

Here's a guy that catches the ball. He knows that he's got to make an out at second. He doesn't have time to transfer the ball from his glove to his bare hand, and so he throws the ball with his gloved hand while he is falling to the ground after having caught it in midair, and he flips the ball perfectly to catch the second baseman running.

This is like a quarterback throwing a crossing route pass. You've got to throw the ball where the guy is going to be, and the second baseman catches the ball with his bare hand in stride, and tags the guy out at second, and off balance, wings it perfectly to first base, and catches the batter just milliseconds before he's going to tag up at first base. You know why those guys can play at that level and do that? You know why they're in the World Series? Because they sleep, eat, think,

practice, play baseball all the time, and they are that good.

It's instinctive. Nobody has the time to think. Nobody has the time to get out their cell phone and say, now what should I do in a situation where the ball has just come across second base, and there's a runner? How should I fight? Let me Google that and see what the best play would be.

They are instinctively, intrinsically, they don't even have to think about it. It's reflexive. Every one of those guys was acting on instinct and reflex because they are that steeped in baseball.

Well, are we that steeped in our faith, or do we need a reminder? Do we need to pull ourselves out? Do we need to do a little bit of agonize-a-my and get back to what is important and what counts? Nobody's going to be reading my email at the judgment seat of Christ, inbox or outbox. I am not going to be able to pull my cell phone out at the judgment seat of Christ. It is going to be what is in my soul, what is the record of my thought life, my application life, my laying hold of righteousness by faith in the common, ordinary, day-to-day situations.

Not what did I Google? What did I remember and apply? What did I observe, interpret, and apply? That's what's going into the books. That's what counts. That's the meaning of our life.

Our life is meaningless if we get distracted into this virtuality. And that's a good word for it. It's virtual life.

It's not real. Reality is what's coming up in eternity. So Jude says, I need to remind you of what the Lord has done.

Now, skip down to your final page that says exhortation at the top because we want to have this firmly in mind. When we go through this supplementary, explanatory, supporting information, which is the heart of the parallel between Jude and Peter, this is why it's there. It doesn't have any meaning apart from its purpose.

And this is its purpose. Look at what Jude says. Look at Jude 17.

You, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. What does 2 Peter 3 say? That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior. Remember your doctrinal truth.

How are you going to remember it? Got to review. Got to call it to mind. Spend a little time in chewing on it.

What's easiest to remember? What do I typically remember when I'm grasping for an illustration? Well, what have I seen recently? You can tell I watch too much TV, because I've got six illustrations tonight, all from television. Too much TV. That's what's in my mind.

Jude and Peter both say what ought to be in our mind is our faith. What have the apostles communicated? What have the prophets communicated? It doesn't mean that we have to shut everything off and go into some sort of total withdrawal. What it does mean is that we need to invest some time day by day by day.

Remember, call to mind these words that were spoken by the prophets and by the apostles. Jude 18, how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly desires. These are people who consider religion, Christianity, biblical faith, frivolous.

That's not what counts. You need to know what's going on. You need to be in the know.

You need to be in the groove. You need to know. We'll see in the groove, that dates me.

You need to be aware. Peter says, knowing this first, scoffers will come in the last days walking according to their own desires. This is what I want to subscribe to.

This is what I want to follow. This is what I want to like, quote, unquote. I will like this thing, and that subscribes me to its feed.

It will come to my phone. It will come into my email. For some people, it's the sale at their favorite store.

Now I get emails from a store, and it says, here's what's on sale. Guilty as charged. Guitar Center's got me on their mailing list.

I get cards in the mail and emails. 20% off this weekend only on everything we marked up 20% a few minutes ago. Mockers and scoffers are, why would you mock and scoff at something? I don't take it seriously.

It's not important to me. I make light of it. Look at the humorists.

Look at Bill Maher and his religious film. Mocking and scoffing, I don't think it's pertinent. I don't think it's real.

And in many cases, sadly, he's right. Because so much of religion is frivolous and stupid. That Christianity of the genuine sort gets lost in the shuffle.

This is what Peter talks about. That faith is ill-spoken of because of faithless believers. Walking according to their own desires.

And now look at Jude 19-23. These are sensual persons. You can stop right there.

Sensual persons. Stimulate my senses. Show me something.

I want to see something cool on YouTube. There's a little thing on my phone. When I go to my Verizon homepage on my phone, it's a phone formatted deal for a tiny screen.

And it's got nine little boxes. Well, eight of the boxes I don't care anything about. One of them says news.

And if I've got a minute, I'm stuck somewhere, I'll hit the news thing and say, what is news? Well, I go to the news page and the top two things, one of them is top news and the other one is oddly enough. Oddly enough is just bubble gum for the brain. It's, you know, some guy in Norway, you know, some walrus showed up in his backyard.

I mean, it's the most inane, silly things. But I promise you, the reason they put oddly enough right up under there next to top news is that's what people want. Hey, show me something fun.

I want something interesting. Show me something weird, the weird and the unusual. Sensual persons.

Why do I care what happened to some guy in Norway? Why do I care about the odd and the unusual? What good does it do me? If it's odd and unusual, it's probably not going to happen to me, so I don't need to know this. Do I? It's filler. It's bubble gum.

It's sugar with no nutrition. It is a time waster. Listen to me.

Time wasted is time lost at the judgment seat of Christ. Does anybody seriously want to see the total of wasted time that the angels are tracking up there that's going to be written in some slot in the book? Total time wasted by Samuel Curtis Hall. I shudder to think what that... I hit oddly enough.

How do you think I know what's in there? Well, show me something odd. Oh, that's odd. What's next? Odd, odd, odd, odd.

And first thing you know, five, ten, fifteen minutes. If I'd spent that ten or fifteen minutes reviewing, rehearsing, remembering, thinking about current issues in my life, current decisions to be made, current situations relationship-wise, priority-wise, task-wise, what would be a responsible, beneficial, godly use of my time and talents and energy in this day? How am I going to plan out and most effectively use the rest of my time doing my mundane tasks as unto the Lord and not unto men? Guilty, guilty, guilty. We are sensual people, and we have got to break ourselves out of that.

If we just go with the flow, we are lost. The flow is all downhill. Did you ever think about that? The flow is always downhill.

Always. These are sensual persons who cause divisions not having the Spirit. It's not God the Holy Spirit guiding us into these diversions, but you, beloved, building yourselves up.

It's the opposite of down. It's the opposite of where gravity takes us, the mundane and the earthly, takes us to earth, takes us down. You, beloved, and it doesn't say sitting there passively being built up.

It doesn't say, but you, beloved, being built up by your pastor. But you, beloved, being built up by your radio program. You, beloved, built up by the verse on your refrigerator or the aphorism on your car air freshener or whatever.

What does it say? Building yourselves up. Agonizomai. We have got to take a hold of this and put some effort into it.

Take a strain for a change. Shut something off. Turn something down.

Hit that little circle with the straight line at 12 that is the power button that turns it off. Try 15 minutes of nothing. Take a walk.

Even better, take a walk with a loved one and turn everything off. Spend some quality time. You, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith.

Praying. How much prayer are we going to get done if the text notify sound is coming out of our phone? If the message ding is coming out of our computer? If the phone is ringing? If the television is on? If the commercial is blaring off of the radio? How much effective praying can we actually do? Well, if you do nothing, you will be inundated. You can't even drive anymore without billboards and distractions of every kind.

Building yourself up, praying in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God. We have to do it ourselves.

This reminds me of the... I was trying to level a thing and somebody a few years ago, and whoever it was, thank you, I can't even remember now, but somebody gave me one of these levels that sticks on the wall. It's a round ball. And it's got a laser light in it.

And if you want to hang a shelf or some pictures and get them all the same, you take this little tin cup and you stick it on the wall and then it's got a magnet in it and you put the ball in there and it's got a laser. But you know the laser is straight because it's got a built-in level. Well, you've got to play with that thing to get the bubble right in the middle.

And any sort of a jostle, any sort of a movement, and the bubble is no longer right between the lines. And you've got to work to get that in the middle. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

Get your bubble between the lines. Everything on earth is going to conspire to disturb it. There are vibrations that knock the pictures out of line in my office.

And about every other day I have to go... Well, I don't have to, but I go straighten the pictures. It

just disturbs me for them to be crooked. But left to themselves, things go out of whack.

Keep yourself in the love of God. If you do nothing, you will drift out of the love of God. Out of the place where it can be dispensed because we qualify.

Looking for the mercy. Not waiting for, not passively expecting that it will just drop on us out of nowhere. Looking for, seeking, actively pursuing the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with a view toward, always with a view toward eternal life.

Not temporal life, not the momentary, not the minute by minute, not what's the hot thing at this particular hour of the day. With a view toward eternal life. The things that last, the things that are permanent.

Treasure in heaven. Foundations of the new Jerusalem. Once we have got ourselves squared away, then we can look at others.

We can have compassion on others. We can find those who we can assist. Our fellowship can be beneficial.

We can keep each other oriented and focused on the things that count. Speak a word in season. Help somebody get pulled out of the fire.

This is the purpose. This is the context. This is the bracket.

This is the beginning and ending. And in the middle of this is the section we are studying in both 2 Peter and Jude. He's going to go into detail about the ways that we are attacked.

About what these who push an alternate view, how they do, how they live, what they focus on. But we need to keep all of that in context because it's going to be an other guy deal. Look at that false teacher.

Look at that false professor. Look at that bad believer. Look at what he's doing.

Clouds without rain. Spots on your love feast. This, that, and the other.

Boo on him. Boo on him. And we need to remember Romans chapter 2. Looking at the other guy.

Don't forget to look at yourself. This is why both Peter and Jude bracket this material with the purpose. If you don't get anything else, get the purpose.

We must contend for our faith. We must keep ourselves in the love of God. We must build ourselves up on our most holy faith.

That's why we are here. And anything that intrudes on that, anything that diminishes it, anything that divides it, distracts it, deflects it, numbs it, abates it, suppresses it, has got to be eliminated.

We do not want to be ashamed at his coming.

His coming is nearer now than ever. The end of our life is nearer now than ever. The time that remains to us is shorter than it has ever been.

You have never had, I have never had as few days of life remaining to us as right now. The time is short. The need is urgent.

The mission is critical. The calling is emphatic. The purpose is godly.

And the exhortation is diligent. It is the last thing Peter could think of to say before he checked out. It is the thing that Jude writes to remind his listeners of.

It is what God the Holy Spirit is confronting you and me with. We must wake up and contend for our faith and pursue those goals for which the Lord Jesus Christ died to save us. If we don't, we are lost.

We are useless. We are unprofitable servants. And there is blackness of darkness reserved for those who do not cling to the truth.

This is what we will now see in our upcoming couple of weeks of studies. We go through these sort of dismal verses. We are going to see the consequences, not just the characteristics, but the consequences of failing in our faith.

And it is dire. It is so dire that most Christians, most interpreters and commentators have said, well, this is the unbeliever. This is what happens in hell.

It's not in hell, and it's not unbelievers. It's us. Remember that commercial, this is your brain on drugs, and it's that frying egg in the skillet? This is your faith on technology.

That's what's going to come up in this section. If you review it and look at it in this handout over the coming week and get ready to look at it in detail, it ought to sober us. It ought to scare us.

Our society is headed downhill in a frantic way. We're not only headed downhill, we've got the accelerator pressed to the floor. And if we as believers do not take active steps, we're going to go right along with it.

That's what Peter and Jude are both warning us about. And in its own way, it wasn't that much different in the first century than it is now. We just have it exponentially so.

Well, we'll close here for tonight in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word, how pertinent it is, and how relevant it is, despite its antiquity, despite the setting down so many years ago. God the Holy Spirit is as wise then as He is now.

Your truth is as relevant and meaningful and applicable now as it was then. We thank You for this

truth that is given to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts and on our minds, give us the strength that we do not have in and of ourselves to rise above the mundane and the earthly, to live a supernatural life, to live a life that is focused on eternity, on Your plan and purpose, and that reflects Your glory both now and in ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.