

SECOND PETER

Lesson 3

Making Election Certain

2 Peter 1:5-11

In my last church there was a man a man who very honestly said to me, “I have trusted Jesus; I’m saved; I’m among the elect; I’m eternally secure, and quite frankly, I am happy with just getting through the gate of heaven. Whether I push on in my Christian life is not nearly so important as the fact that I am saved. After all, none of us is perfect, so why should I make a serious attempt to go deeper in the Christian life?” Well, the Apostle Peter had a few words for this confused saint (and so did I).

This man had a perverted view of salvation and eternal security. Unfortunately, there are too many Christians today who have this same attitude.

Peter was facing this problem in the churches of Asia Minor where a type of Christian Gnosticism had crept in. This was a heresy which minimized the person and work of Christ. The Gnostics felt as though they had all truth in their particular philosophical system. It was a very heady type of religion, and the necessity for moral and ethical change in one’s life was either denied or played down. If one had their particular brand of secret knowledge, he was among the elect.

These Christian-Gnostics were extremely intellectual and considered changed lives irrelevant. Many of these heretics had high doctrine with some Christian truth mixed into their philosophy, but they also had immoral lives. Peter refutes this heresy in 2 Peter 1:1-11.

In this lesson we are going to concentrate on verse 10, “*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you.*” The Bible teaches that in eternity past God chose the Christian to salvation. “*God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth*” (2 Thes. 2:13). He also sovereignly called the Christian to salvation in time. “*(God) who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity*” (2 Tim. 1:9).

From God’s perspective, election and calling are already sure. They are as certain as the character and plan of God. Yet, we are told to make our calling and election sure. The question then is how can we be sure or certain that we are among God’s elect and have been called by Him for salvation?

In this context Peter is not looking at the fact of election and calling but at the working out of these things which the Christian already possesses. He wants the Christian to have assurance in his experience that he has these divine works. We must remember that the first evidence that we are among the elect of God is that we have believed in Christ as our Savior and Lord.

“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

“God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2 Thes. 2:13).

If we have truly trusted Christ, then in an objective sense we know we are among the elect. However, there is also a subjective evidence of being among the elect, and this is what Peter is dealing with in this section of Scripture.

BY PRODUCING CHRISTIAN GRACES (1: 5-7)

“Now for this very reason also”

The “very reason” refers to what Peter has been teaching in the previous verses where he stressed God’s sovereignty, grace and purpose in saving us. In verse one, we are told that God granted every Christian saving faith so that he could believe in Christ. In verse two, each Christian has been given knowledge about Christ, which is to be worked out in practical application. In verse three, Christians have been granted eternal life and the potential for godliness by the divine power of God. In verse four, all Christians have been given magnificent and precious promises to experientially escape the corruption in the world (which they have already escaped positionally). This verse also says that Christians are already partakers of the divine nature so that they are participating in the life of God.

Saving faith, knowledge, life, godliness, promises, and the divine nature are already possessed by the Christian because God has done a sovereign work in him. God is at work in him, and because of this the Christian can now work out his salvation. *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).*

Peter stresses the necessity of good works in the life of the Christian as evidence of the fact of salvation. These works do not come from one’s own inherent willpower but by God’s power, which a Christian already possesses. It is not as though we roll up our sleeves, grit our teeth and grind out our lives so as to keep ourselves saved by our good works. These good works were ordained by God and flow out of what Christ has already done for us.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10).

This in no way negates human responsibility to produce good works. This is what Peter is stressing. There is always a tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

“applying all diligence”

The Christian is to work at his salvation that God is working in him. He is to make some determinations by the act of his will to apply the truth he has, to live experientially in accordance with his position in Christ. We are to start living, start believing, start obeying the truth about our salvation. Our Christianity involves effort, even toil, at times. Growth is not automatic or spontaneous. God has granted new life, but like a divine germ. it needs to be developed by diligence on our part.

“in your faith supply...”

God has given saving faith, and the growing of this faith is called sanctifying faith which is our human wills cooperating with the divine will. Faith is the source for all our Christian living and from it spring seven Christian graces which are proof that we are among God’s elect. It is a working, sanctifying faith which produces these graces that makes for a healthy Christian life.

The term “supply” here means “lavishly supply.” The Greek literally meaning “to outfit a chorus.” In Peter’s day, the word was used of the patrons of the arts who lavished time and money and effort to build culture, competing with one another to see who could do the most. No expense was spared. Peter says this ought to be our approach to the exercising of sanctifying faith in our Christian lives. We are to begin to act on the truth of our positional state in an energetic and enthusiastic way.

Again, I want to point out that Peter is not saying to try harder to gut it out. He is assuming the life of God is already in the Christian, and that being true, we are to act. Indeed, we must act because the God of the universe is at work in us. We are to let the life of God express itself. We are not to frustrate it or inhibit it, but rather use it by diligently applying our wills to a life of moral advancement.

moral excellence “

Here we begin a ladder of seven spiritual characteristics, each giving birth to the next and all springing from faith. Christians are to live a life of moral and ethical excellence.

Notice this does not say we are to live a perfect life, but an ethical one, whereby we are moving on in morality. This assumes that sometimes there will be failure, but morality is to be the life-style. The word “excellence” means mastery. We are to use the truths about our divine position to master life.

Christians should excel and master what they do. Whether we are mechanics, doctors, housewives, lawyers or preachers, we should excel in our professions. This is one of the easiest ways to have a positive testimony for Christ.

“and in your moral excellence, knowledge”

Knowledge is a reference to spiritual understanding that comes through the Bible. We must begin to read the Scripture so that it possesses us. We must study it, memorize it and meditate on it, and we must prayerfully seek to understand what it is saying to us. If we begin to read the Word, we will want to obey it, and the more we want to obey it, the more hunger we will have for it. If we want to know more of God, we must do it through the Scriptures.

This is not just head knowledge but applied knowledge, experiential knowledge. Christianity is not merely the reception of certain systematic truths apart from real life. True biblical theology results in a transformed life. Doctrine is important, but it must issue in a changed life. The possession of truth demands from us an experiential progress in that truth.

Let’s face it, we do not have Christianity unless we are progressing in our Christian lives to some degree. Our Lord taught this truth. *“Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews*

who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine' (John 8:31).

“and in your knowledge, self-control”

A proper knowledge of Christ leads to self-control. Christians are to be displaying self-control in every area of life—food, drink, material things, recreation, or pleasure—for an inordinate desire after these things is inconsistent with an earnest desire for Christ.

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

“and in your self-control, perseverance”

A habit of self-control over mind and body leads also to endurance or a life of perseverance. When trials and difficulties come, we can endure them with patience. True faith always endures. We may struggle severely at times but we will persevere. *“And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved” (Mark 13:13).*

“and in your perseverance, godliness “

A life of perseverance leads to a life of practical, godly living, for all trials teach us the necessity of walking close with our God. A close walk with God cultivates a likeness to God because we are becoming deeper partakers of the divine nature. *“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification (holiness) without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).*

“and in your godliness, brotherly kindness”

A life of godliness leads to real affection for our Christian brethren. The Greek word is *philadelphia*, which is the love of affection or friendship. There comes in the life of a Christian a growing attraction to Christians and a desire to be with them, accept them, and appreciate them. This is the love of “give and take” where we respond to people because of mutual likes and dislikes.

“and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love.”

This brotherly kindness should lead to the crown, the ultimate in Christian moral advance—*agape* love. *“But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13.)* This word speaks of God’s love reflecting itself in the life of the Christian for his brethren. It springs out of one’s will, not his emotions, for it is a deliberate act of loving someone when he or she is unlovable, when there is nothing to bring out a normal response of love.

Agape love is a deliberate desire for the highest good of the person loved, showing itself in sacrificial action for that one's good. While *phila* love is "give and take," *agape* love is "all give and no take." This kind of love must come into play when we find ourselves not really liking another Christian brother or sister. It is supernatural and is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love*" (Gal. 5:22). We must remember that unsaved men will never believe that God is love unless they see it in the lives of His followers.

Furthermore, we are specifically told that if we do not have this kind of love to some degree as professing Christians, then we are not Christians at all. "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and every one who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love*" (1 John 4:7-8).

BY INCREASING IN CHRISTIAN GRACES (1:8-9)

"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."

If these graces (spiritual characteristics) are increasing in our lives, then we know we are going to be fruitful Christians. We must be increasing in spiritual graces or we are decreasing; we are never static in our Christian walks. If we attain a certain level of spiritual maturity and then, for some reason, begin to get indifferent or lethargic, we will begin to slip, regressing in our spiritual lives.

One of the most difficult things in our Christian lives is maintaining a freshness, a vital relationship with the Lord, an on-going experiencing of spiritual truth. Yet, this is Christianity; it is not just a head full of knowledge. As we diligently seek to have an active faith of obedience and moral advancement, then we will not be useless or fruitless. Knowledge must be applied by faith or it is useless knowledge.

An opinion is commonly held by many in our evangelical and reformed churches today that after attaining a certain level of spirituality we never go any further, usually because it makes too many demands on our selfish life styles. A deepening, growing relationship with the Lord does not seem to characterize many so-called Christians, and that is why they are useless (on the shelf) and fruitless (having no power for living). We need to catch a vision for spiritual growth.

As long as we are on this earth we should be growing in grace. When a church thinks it has arrived spiritually, it is on very shaky ground. The same is true for an individual. Are you useless? Are you unfruitful? Why? God never intended this for a Christian, and if you are, you had better get moving for Christ or you are opening yourself to a lot of divine discipline and possibly even to apostasy.

Peter says that no matter how frustrating our circumstances, if these spiritual qualities are in us and we are growing, we are not useless and unproductive, but fruitful.

If you women who have babies and small children at home and only get out of the house to take dirty Pampers to the garbage can or to hang diapers on the line are producing these qualities in your home, you are fruitful. These spiritual graces can be produced by faith anywhere and everywhere, and they are basic to our Christian development.

"For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins."

If these spiritual graces are not present in a professing Christian he has deliberately turned from the truth and is blind or shortsighted. He may be out of fellowship with Christ, rebelling against God's will for his life, or he may not be truly saved. In either case, he has forgotten about the real purpose for redemption.

God saved us to deliver us from sin, positionally and experientially, even though we are not yet perfect and never will be in this life. Christians can become forgetful and so preoccupied with self and the world that spiritual realities are set aside and the life is opened to all kinds of sins. A Christian must fight spiritual forgetfulness. A Christian may forget occasionally, but a life style of forgetfulness means the professing Christian was never saved in the first place and is on the road to apostasy. The next two verses speak clearly about this.

BY PROGRESSING IN CHRISTIAN GRACES (1:10-11)

“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you”

Peter assumes the fact that a Christian has been divinely chosen and sovereignly called to salvation. Those God has chosen and called are certain to Him, for He has a perfect plan. Yet, Peter is talking about something we must do to make election and calling certain to our experience. This is in the middle voice in the Greek and means “make certain for yourself” which stresses human involvement in demonstrating divine election with one's life.

Notice that calling is put before choosing. Calling occurs in time and election in eternity past. Theologically, election comes before calling, but Peter puts calling first because he is dealing with the human side of our understanding of election. God called, and we believed in Christ, and then we began to grasp sovereign election. We do not know we are elected before we are saved.

In this context, Peter assumes the fact of election and calling, but he wants to deal with how we are to come to a knowledge or understanding that we are elect. So we are talking about the assurance of election from a professing Christian's viewpoint. We are to be diligent in our efforts to assure ourselves that we are truly numbered among God's elect.

The “therefore” of this verse may go back to verses 3-9. If so, the thought is that since we have the life of God (positional truth), now we should be diligent to prove this life in us by our moral advancement. However, I think the “therefore” should go back only to verse nine where Peter was talking about professing Christians who are shortsighted or blind, forgetting all about the fact that they were cleansed from their former sins by Christ. He is concerned that some of these folks may not be Christians at all because their lives give no evidence of that fact. So he challenges them, as to whether they are among the elect. If they do indeed have the life of God, they are to demonstrate it by the quality of their lives.

“for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble (fall)”

“These things” refers to moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and Christian love. If by faith we are progressing in these

spiritual graces, if we have a lifestyle characterized by these spiritual qualities, if we have a propensity or leaning towards moral advancement, then we shall never stumble.

This word means to “fall into misery, to become wretched.” If a person is elect and he is producing these spiritual graces, then he never has to worry about being a false Christian or a person headed for spiritual apostasy. He never has to concern himself about falling into perdition. The diligent, persevering Christian will never have to question his election or calling. His life should be the silent proof of his election.

The Apostle Paul taught this same truth for he, too, knew that pushing on in a living faith which produces good works was the proof or evidence of God’s election to salvation.

“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. And 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. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Peter’s ultimate point is that the person who does not have any evidence of these spiritual graces in his life, no matter what that person professes intellectually, has no reason to believe he really belongs to God. A changed life is the mark of the election of God.

This verse does not say we will never sin. Yes, we will fail at times, but we will not fall (apostatize) if we are consistently putting into practice the spiritual graces of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly-kindness and Christian love by faith. God looks for progress, not perfection, in our lives. If we fail, then we must confess our sins, get up and keep moving on for Christ, being diligent to make our calling and election sure.

“for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

By producing the spiritual graces, proving and demonstrating that we are among the elect of God, we have an assured entrance into the eternal kingdom—heaven, the eternal city.

Notice that entrance will be abundantly supplied. This metaphor of entering into the kingdom goes back to the Olympic Games. Because of the pride and joy in an athlete’s success, his home city would welcome him back not through the usual main gate of the city but through a part of the wall specially broken down to afford him a grand entrance.

Those who are the elect of God, who have truly believed in Christ, will make their calling and election sure by good works, and they will persevere to the end, gaining a lavish entrance into heaven as a victor, saved by grace. What a homecoming this will be! Surely, this is a strong motivation to produce spiritual graces by faith.

CONCLUSION

What does God want us Christians to learn from this section of Scripture? First, intellectual Christianity can never become a substitute for moral application, because those

who have divine life will manifest that life to some degree. Second, if a person professes to be a Christian but does not have any evidence of divine life, then divine life is not there, indicating the person is not saved. Third, God chooses people to salvation that they might produce changed lives. Fourth, we Christians are to make every effort to progress in our Christian lives and this is the way we demonstrate the fact of our election and calling. Fifth, God expects progress and improvement, not perfection, in our Christian lives.

Can a professing Christian be satisfied with just getting into the gate of heaven? No! Can a person rest securely back in election and eternal security and have no moral and ethical change in living? No! Can a person who claims to be a Christian say, “Well, I’m sinful, but saved. I’m going to sin so why seek to be holy?” No! Election to salvation demands a change in life-style. *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph. 1:4).*

If you are not a Christian, are you wondering whether you are among the elect of God and whether you will ever be saved? You can know that you are elect by believing in Christ as your Savior and Lord. Jesus promised to save all who come to Him by faith. You can settle the issue right now. Believe in Christ! Trust in the Savior! Bow to Jesus as Lord! Then, and only then, will you begin to understand anything about your election by God.