

Title: Confirming Your Calling (Part 7)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:8

Theme: Growing in the knowledge of grace demonstrates the reality of grace

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{{Read Passage}}

The great British Expositor D.M.L.J. ==>

"It is true to say that this tenth verse is really the key verse of the whole Epistle, that the object of the entire letter is to enable us to make our calling and election sure."

IOW - The lines are to be drawn between those who truly know JC & those who profess to know him & yet walk in t/darkness of their sin & unbelief.

Lloyd Jones goes on to say ==>

"What does Peter mean by this exhortation? On the surface it sounds rather self-contradictory - we are to make our calling and election sure! Now there are those who would interpret it by saying that this is just an exhortation for people to make themselves Christian and to make certain of the fact that they are Christian. According to that argument, if you do the things enumerated by the Apostle, the result will be that you will become Christian in a true sense. Yet, surely, that is an interpretation which we cannot accept or a moment, and for this good reason, that it would be a complete and entire contradiction of the whole doctrine of the Bible and very especially of the doctrine of the New Testament. The Apostle is not here exhorting these people to make certain of their calling and election in an ultimate and eternal sense, for that is something of which they are incapable. The election and calling are on God's side and are God's action. The Apostle has already been making that clear. Did you notice in the first verse that very significant statement. Simon

Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith'? They have not created it, they have not generated it; they have obtained it, they have received it as a gift. The faith is something that we 'obtain', we 'receive'.

This is the great doctrine we find everywhere in the New Testament, is it not? 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' 'For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . .' 'Let us be quite clear about this - the calling and election are on God's side. Peter gives the word in the third verse - 'According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.' It is His glorious power, it is He alone who can give us the gift of life. Paul tells us that 'we were dead in trespasses and sins'. But while we were dead in trespasses and sins God 'quickened us'. A dead person cannot regenerate himself; a man cannot give life to himself; he cannot quicken himself. He is incapable of any action. A man cannot give birth to himself. That has always been a stumbling block to many, but it is one of the central doctrines of the New Testament. It tells us that salvation is entirely the gift of God by grace. No, Peter not telling us here to elect ourselves or to choose ourselves or to call ourselves. It is God who calls, it is God who chooses. It is a great mystery- let us acknowledge and confess it. The mind of man cannot grasp and understand it. Let me go further and say that the mind of man would never have thought of it; no man would have thought of this. These terms 'election' and 'calling' are only to be found in the Bible.

'Well, if this is so,' says someone, 'I feel God is not fair.' But so long as you are anxious to understand you will not accept this doctrine. To me the essence of faith is to believe where I cannot understand, because I find it in the Word of God. It is not for the Christian preacher to

understand the mind of God but to accept His gracious revelation and submit to it. If I could understand the mind of God, my mind would be equal to the mind of God. I cannot understand the mind of God. But it is an essential part of the Christian preacher's work to say this, that any man who examines himself and his life and experience, and who at this moment, finds himself in the Christian position and the possessor of the Christian life, as he looks back across his experience must acknowledge and admit and confess that he is what he is by the grace of God. Look at the world and you will see with your own eyes a confirmation of the New Testament teaching. There are those who are concerned about and interested in the things we are discussing; and there are the large masses of people who are not only unconcerned, but who dismiss them with scorn and to whom all this is insulting. What is the cause of the difference . . .? Why have we this understanding and concern? Why are we not like many thousands of heedless people in this modern world? Is there any answer but this, that God has called us, that the grace of God has dealt with us? No, the calling and election are from God. It is God's action; God initiated the movement. There would be no salvation if God had not acted.

Well, what is this exhortation? It is that you and I may be certain of our salvation. The exhortation is that you and I shall do these things in order that we may know and be aware of the fact that, in the words of Philip Doddridge, 'Tis done, the great transaction's done'. The election and the calling are of God; but the question is, Do I know that I am called and elected? And Peter here exhorts these Christians to be certain about that." [33-34]

We will take a furth. look at this issue of "assurance" next time; but suffice to say that Peter unpacks t/issue nicely in this passage starting in v. 3 ==>

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

Just as His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

It has been "granted" to us. The word δωρεομαι carries with it a sense of generosity. It's to be granted a gift.

Paul's whole argument in Romans 4 ==>

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Someone asked me yesterday about that. The word "credited" in v. 3. Is it imputation or something else? This person had someone online who was trying to say that, no, this word means to be made righteous. Be very careful about getting your theology online!

The word used in v. 3 is λογιζομαι.

57.227 λογιζομαι: to keep records of commercial accounts, involving both debits and credits—'to put into one's account, to charge one's account, to regard as an account.' [Loew and Nida]

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. 5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 “BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

It is ==>

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

Also ==>

B. An Inheritance Grounded in God's Call (3)

... through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

The work of God by which He awakens a spiritually dead sinner unto eternal life. {Cf. verse 10 and what Lloyd-Jones said earlier}

Where there is justification there is sanctification ==>

II. Salvation's Service: The Believer's Fruitfulness (5-9)

D. An Inheritance Guaranteed to Sanctify (4)

His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness . . .

a. Positively: We become partakers of the divine nature (4)

... in order that [result] by them [the promises] you may become a partaker of the divine nature . . .

b. Negatively: We escape the world's corruption (4)

... having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

What follows from vv. 5-7 are 7 virtues ==>

A. Faithfulness Demonstrated Through Seven Virtues (5-7)

Moral Excellence & Knowledge (v. 5); Self control, Perseverance, & Godliness (v. 6); Brotherly kindness & Love (v. 7)

These are the sorts of things that are to be evident in the believer's life. This is part of what it means to be sure of your calling & election.

A. Faithfulness Demonstrated Through Virtues (5-7)

B. Faithfulness Contrasted with Vice (8-9)

As far as my outline is concerned, I'm going to abandon my original subpoints to vv. 8&9 (not accurate).

I said earlier that I have really had to wrestle w/this passage. On t/surface it may not seem difficult. The challenges come once you start to unwind it all (esp. true w/v. 9).

VVs 8 and 9 are the hinge to vv. 10 and 11. BTIM, these 2 vv. are t/tendons that connect t/thought of vv. 3-7 to t/body (key point) of verse 10 and what follows in v. 11.

Lurking in t/background are t/apostate false teachers that Peter turns to in t/next chapter. Very Imp.

We can unpack it this way ==>

1. A Positive Exhortation (v. 8)

2. A Negative Warning (v. 9)

3. A Logical Deduction (v. 10)

4. A Final Promise (v. 11)

[And I'm very much looking forward to t/next section, vv. 12-15, so I can improve my outlining skills]

1. A Positive Exhortation (v. 8)

For if these things are yours and are increasing, they make you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For if these things are yours and are increasing . . .

a. Preposition γάρ connects this section with vv. 3-7. The "things" that Peter has outlined

There are two conditions: 1) They (virtues) are in your possession; 2) They are growing.

b. Question as to the conditional translation ('if')

Vast majority of translations render it conditional. Could be translated>
For these things being yours and increasing make you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm going to stick w/the conditional translation but keep in mind that t/"if" is implied not stated.

IOW - Peter isn't doubting that these things exist in these 1st c. Xns because they are Xns & to be a fruitless Xn is an oxymoron.

Fruit of grace. Things like (enumerate t/list of vv. 5-7). Cf. v. 3/4.

c. You not only have them, but they are increasing! (πλεοναζω = abounding / multiplying)

Chrysostom: "These things, as well as those already mentioned, namely, virtue, knowledge, continence, patience, godliness, brotherly love and charity, must not only be present in us, they must be present to overflowing. For if their presence is a good thing, how much more their abundance! What advantage do these things have, and what will it mean to have assurance on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? Peter is speaking here of his second coming, when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead. Before the great and terrible judgment seat of God, what a good and wonderful thing it will be to have assurance of being acquitted!" [Catena]

d. Neither useless nor unfruitful

. . . they make you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You don't want to be useless. The world is filled with useless people and useless things.

Top 10 Useless Inventions . . .

1. Solar Powered Flash Light
2. A black highlighter pen (magic marker)
3. Inflatable Anchor
4. Motorcycle Airbag (A/C)
5. Inflatable Dartboard
6. Silent Alarm Clock
7. A Pedal powered wheelchair
8. Braille Shooter's Guide (braille controls at the drive-up ATM)
9. Double sided playing cards
10. Ejector seats for Helicopters (think about that one).

(1) Seriously, the word could be understood in the sense of "being inactive"

Was used in para. of t/landowner in Matt. 20 of t/workers who were standing in t/marketplace "idle" rather than working.

Cf. Use of the word in James 2:20 (faith without works is useless).

Here the idea is uselessness due to inactivity. As t/old saying goes, "you can't steer a parked car."

Peter's point is that growing and demonstrating t/fruit of God's grace in your life will lead to greater productivity.

(2) You won't be "unfruitful" (ἀκαρπος)

No such thing as a fruitless Xn.

(3) Matthew 13

(a) verses 18 - 19

We could call this "an unresponsive heart" - he hears, but there's no understanding, and before the truth can crystalize in any way, the devil comes and snatches it away. [cf. D.A. Carson, Expositor's Bible Commentary, Matthew 13-28, 315]

(b) verses 20-21

Impulsive heart. These 2 vv. describe the majority of contemp. Amer. Evangelicalism. This is a revival crusade, where dozens go forward on emotional impulse. But there's no real life; it's temporary.

See ppl. like this all the time. Maybe they're going thru a difficult time in life & they're grasping for anything to help them. They turn to X, not as Lord, but as an "out" from their problems. But when they see that the call to Christ is a call to suffer, they're gone.

(c) Verse 22 – Preoccupied Heart

James Boice calls this, "The Strangled Heart". This describes the person who wants Christ cheap. One foot in the world and one foot in t/K.D. This is t/Rich Young Ruler of Matthew 19 - he thought he had kept all t/law but was unable to see over his own wealth and self-importance.

(d) Verse 23 - The Responsive Heart / Regenerate Heart

I believe this is t/only group that is truly justified. It's the same seed or message, but the soil of t/heart is different in this case. This man hears, understands, and bears fruit (as we saw in James, t/fruit evidences his justification, it doesn't cause it).

If you look at the connection to the parable of t/Wheat and Tares that follows you see the same thing from a different perspective. Here t/emphasis isn't on t/soil, but on t/seed. Good seed sown by God brings forth wheat (real Christians); Bad seed, sown by t/enemy brings forth tares (pseudo-Christians). But the tares don't become wheat and the wheat doesn't magically transform into tares (which is what can and does happen in Romanism). Those whom God brings to birth are those whom God will one day harvest (verse 30).

I want you to note something - go to verse 10 {read 10-11} --

It comes down to God's sov. grace. It is no chance occurrence that some see and others don't. The fact is, none would see apart from God's

electing grace. That he chooses to open t/eyes of any is totally of his choice in keeping w/his mercy.

(4) Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus warns:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, & the way is narrow that leads to life, & few are those who find it.”

(2) He goes on to say in verses 15-16:

“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.” [i.e. works or deeds]

(3) He then gives an illustration in verse 16 and following:

"Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Note that the fruit doesn't make the tree, the tree makes the fruit. In fact, Jesus says that it is *impossible* for a bad tree (an unregenerate person) to produce good fruit (good works). But a regenerate person, illustrated by the good tree, will produce fruit that evidences the reality of that person's transformed heart.

Hence the reformers' well-known saying that "Faith is pregnant with good works." IOW - true faith births Christlikeness.

The great expositor of a generation ago, Dr. Donald Barnhouse, once said: "Holiness starts where justification finishes; and if holiness doesn't start, we have the right to suspect that justification has never started."

Bring it back to 2 Peter . . .

For these things being yours and increasing make you neither useless nor unfruitful

Note the end of the verse ==>

. . . in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean that these things (vv. 5-7) make you neither useless nor unfruitful ==>

. . . in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ??

Is the knowledge of X the cause of growth or the result of growth?

YES!

The Xn life starts with a true knowledge of JC. It's to know him and the power of his resurrection & t/fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to His death.

But that's also the basis for our growth. A true knowledge of JC is t/fuel for all that is our salvation!

It's to know who He is: Lord/God/Master

What He did: Live an obedient sinless life, keeping t/law in all respects.

What He accomplished: died for sin, my sin. God's wrath falling upon him rather than on me!

"Knowledge" is not the simple form used in verse 6 but the compound form used in verses 2 and 3. It implies an intimate and growing knowledge of One whom they already know. It is knowledge "of," not merely "about," the Person whom Peter and his readers acknowledge as "our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a part of the divine nature which has been bestowed on them, but by its very nature it can never be fully apprehended in this life. This knowledge is both the root and the goal of the Christian life. "The best evidence that can be given of `knowing' the Lord is to `follow on to know' Him." –D.E. Hiebert, BSac 141:561 (Jan 84) p. 49

Growing in an ever-increasing understanding / appreciation of that through t/graces He supplies!

Those graces must be evident if we are to be assured that God has chosen us to be recipients of that grace. If you're chosen to receive grace, grace will be there.

That's what's at stake ==>

B. Faithfulness Contrasted with Vice (8-9)

Fruitfulness of v. 8 as against t/Fruitlessness warned about in v. 9.

The fruit of faith comes from a true knowledge of Christ.

The positive exhortation of v. 8 is quickly followed by ==>

2. A Negative Warning (v. 9)

For he who does not have these is blind or shortsighted, being forgetful of the purification of his former sins.

What is that all about {problems / options} – Answer? Next time.