

Title: Confirming Your Calling (Part 8)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:8-9

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

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{{Read Passage}}

Entitled this series out of 2 Peter {cite}

We've broken it down into 3 main sects ==>

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

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

III. Salvation's Surety: The Believer's Assurance (10-11)

We have an inheritance – we are heirs of salvation. This is solely the work of God—he's t/one who calls (v. 3).

We have come to believe in JC as Savior/Lord and are thereby partakers of His divine nature.

As a direct result of our union with X – We escape t/corruption that is in the world by lust (v.4). IOW - we have been rescued from a sinful world as well as from sinful lives. We've been born again and are now different. We have beliefs & attitudes that conform to Scripture.

We demonstrate that change through a life of usefulness and fruitfulness; what we saw in v. 8 last time (cite).

This is ==>

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

A. Seven Virtues of a Fruitful Life (5-7)

1. Moral Excellence (5)

2. Knowledge (5)

3. Self control (6)

4. Perseverance (6)

5. Godliness (6)

6. Brotherly kindness (7)

7. Love (7)

Seven Examples of the kinds of things that ought to be evident and growing in our lives if we are to be sure about our calling/election.

Back in the day when I came to X (1980s) I felt as if I had walked through a door to truth & that once I passed thru t/door locked behind me. There was no turning back. I was forever changed; transformed.

With that I had t/fanciful notion that everyone who professed to be born again was t/exact same way. They were changed & could never revert back to what they once were—or professed to be.

That's the key word: Professed. Back then I didn't understand that t/world was filled w/men & women who once believed as I did but had since left those beliefs for something else.

That a RC could come to the truth and later return to Rome was unthinkable.

That there were people who had "Prayed the Prayer" only to return to their sinful lives? How could that happen?

I suppose that in my ignorance God was protecting me from the discouragement of knowing that many who start in t/race never finish it.

That included t/pastor of t/first Xn CH I attended in my early 20s.

Doug was in his early 30s. He had traveled t/world exploring various religions; I think he had dabbled in Buddhism at one time. He went to seminary, came under the tutelage of an older man, a well-respected pastor and theologian. He took over t/small Evang. Presby. CH I was attending at t/time. He later left to take the place of his mentor, who had since died, at a larger Presby. CH nearby. I later learned that he had issues t/the board and left disillusioned.

Not only disillusioned w/the CH, but w/Xnty. He went on to disavow his faith. For a time he taught at a CC (Philosophy). Last year he was out on his motorcycle and was killed in a traffic accident.

That's one of many stories I could share.

About a dozen years ago I met a man, a former pastor and Bible College prof. who had gone through some difficult times. He was the brother-in-law of a friend back in AZ. He also had connections to t/CH we were attending at t/time. Had lunch w/him once and even shared my story of how I was mistreated at t/hands of fellow believers.

I later learned that he had wavered in his faith. The truth is, he had repudiated it entirely. Ken became a hero in atheistic circles, esp. on t/internet.

He's been a guest on various atheistic media outlets and has a blog "Former Fundy" where he answers t/? "Why I De-Converted from Christianity."

His summarizes his departure from t/faith this way ==>

I was "saved"(trusted Christ and Christ alone) at the age of 18 and was baptized in a Baptist Church in Georgia. I graduated from Baptist University of America (1981) with a B.A. in Theology. I earned an M.A.(1982)and a Ph.D. (1986) in Theology from Bob Jones University. After graduation, I taught at International Baptist College in Tempe, AZ for 9 years. After a few years of accumulating doubts, my Christian faith evaporated sometime during the course of 1996. I am no longer a believer. If I had to pigeonhole myself, I would say I am an agnostic atheist.

Ken was contributor to a book being published by Prometheus Press, "The End of Christianity," slated to be released next year. His contribution consists of a single chapter entitled, "The Absurdity of the Atonement."

Also been working on a book that he had hoped would debunk the doctrine of X's substitutionary atonement – a doctrine that is central to t/true Xn faith.

I say been working because t/God he did not believe in would not permit him to finish that project. A week ago Ken died "suddenly and unexpectedly" as his wife put it, of a massive heart attack. He was 50.

We live in an interesting time. Never before has such a wealth of atheistic, humanistic, X-rejecting information that is so universally accepted and available.

We are exposed to an information explosion where any number of belief systems are defended and propagated.

Seems to be a time of great apostasy and confusion regarding anything related to truth. There are a million voices out there vying for your allegiance. Only 1 of them is true. ? is: Can you hear it?

It seems that more and more who profess the name of JC are sliding into the ditch. Some end up disavowing their faith, other's end up exchanging it for heretical doctrines. Some are simply content to languish in a comfortable Xnty where they can have Jesus & t/things of this world, all t/while ignoring the very words of t/One they claim to know when he warned ==> {Mark 8:36}

When one sets out on t/Xn life he or she goes out on a long journey. There are dangers and obstacles all around. Not all who set out on t/journey arrive safely to t/end. The waters are littered w/the dead corpses of those who have made shipwreck of their faith.

Frankly, these sorts of things frighten me. They resonate w/the warnings we read in places such as Hebrews 3:12 / 10:31.

We all know what it's like to flirt with danger. From t/time we're children we're warned not to go too close to this or that—to t/edge of an embankment or a body of water or t/dancing flames of a fire.

We have a common phrase we use all the time: Flirting with Disaster. To flirt with disaster is to attempt to walk t/fine line between being safe & being reckless.

It's assuming that it can't or won't happen to you.

It's eating a steady diet of high-fat foods with the hope that it won't hurt your heart.

It's smoking cigarettes with the hope that you will be like your uncle who smoked for years and died at 95 rather than like your grandfather who died of lung cancer at 58.

It's viewing pornography with the hope that your spouse or your parents won't find out and that this time will be your last

It's also being lazy in t/Xn life hoping that next week, next month, next year you will get your act together.

That's a long introduction to the end of this passage. Specifically, I want to point you to verses 8-9 ==>

B. Staying Out of the Danger Zone (8-9)

Relates to verses 10 and 11 {cite}

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.

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.

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

d. Neither useless nor unfruitful

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

(1) 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" (ἀκαρπός)

Note the end of the verse ==>

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

This knowledge is both the cause of growth & the result of growth.

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.

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

2. A Negative Warning (v. 9)

For he who is lacking these is blind or shortsighted, being forgetful of the purification of his former sins.

Here's the verse I've wrestled with t/past few weeks. After one more week studying it, I'm revising some of what I said last week.

a. Going to break this verse down piece by piece

For he who is lacking these . . .

(1) Does not have what?

The qualities that we are expected to have, v. 8 – those things that flow out of a true saving knowledge of X, things like moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

It's interesting (noteworthy) that Peter switches to t/3PS. It's literally, "He who is lacking these."

I think Peter is doing this, switching from t/plural "yours" and "you" in v. 8 to t/singular "he" in v. 9 back to t/plural "brethren" in v. 10. because he's giving a hypothetical situation.

Peter doesn't believe that true Xns are going to be unfruitful, not totally and finally anyway. But to lapse into fruitlessness and inactivity is to tread into dangerous waters.

(a) I'm not so sure that Peter is saying that these qualities are absolutely and finally lacking

When he says ==>

For he who is lacking these . . .

He uses the verb παραειμι = to be present, have at one's disposal, or to be near at hand.

(2) To be in that condition is to be blind or shortsighted

Kind of blindness that Peter has in mind is being short-sighted, a word that literally means "to close the eye."

Word that was used of near-sightedness. "Myopic." It's a failure to see, a closing of the eyes against something of great importance.

Sight is a wonderful thing . . .

Last week t/story broke about a man who shot his friend while deer hunting. He was hunting with a shotgun out of season. He was hunting at night. Not a safe situation where one can think and see clearly. He thought his friend was a deer and he fatally wounded him.

What really struck me (it would be humorous if it wasn't so tragic) was the comment at the end of the story. The guilty man, hunting in the dark, told police afterward that he was a diabetic and his vision was blurred.

Not being able to see well physically is one thing. Peter has in mind something else: Spiritual myopia.

Scripture is replete with warnings about blindness.

Jesus spoke of the Pharisees, calling them ==>

". . . blind guides of the blind. [He asks] And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:14)

One of the things that Satan, t/god of this world, does is to **blind t/minds of the unbelieving, that they not see the light of the gospel** (2 Cor. 4:4)

John, in 1 John 2:11, warns ==>

But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Perhaps the most striking denunciation of spiritual blindness is that which was written to the Laodicean church in Revelation 3 ==>

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and {that} the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.

It may be that in the back of Peter's mind was Isaiah chap 59 (turn there) {{Isaiah 59:1-10 & back to vv. 1-2}}

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2. A Negative Warning (v. 9)

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(3) Note the last part of the verse:

. . . being forgetful of the purification of his former sins.

Literally ==>

. . . having received forgetfulness.

A similar phrase is used in 2 Tim. 1:5 where Paul says of Timothy, "I am mindful of the sincere faith within you" only there it's "having received remembrance."

Paul received remembrance of Timothy's faith.

Here, the man who is lacking in Christian virtue has received forgetfulness.

(a) What has he forgotten?

. . . being forgetful of the purification of his former sins.

This is the specific part of the v. that I have long wrestled over.

Here's my struggle in a nutshell ==>

Peter is talking about being sure of your salvation. He's emphasizing t/fact that fruitfulness is a key evidence that one has a "true knowledge of Christ." To be fruitful is to evidence that one is indeed elect. In fact, living and thinking as a Xn will keep you from stumbling (v. 10) and, as a result, the door to the eternal KD will be abundantly supplied."

Fruitlessness, then, serves as a warning that one has not been called and saved. It's to come to t/door of t/eternal KD only to find that door tightly closed.

So verse 9 would imply that apostates are in Peter's purview here, esp. with chapter 2 coming up.

But if they are apostates, how can it be said that they have had their sins "Purified?"

As one commentator observed, "this may make your theology a bit uncomfortable."

Some think that apostates can have once been true Xns, but they forfeit their eternal life by means of their apostasy.

Others contend that Peter is writing from the perspective of those whom he is describing. IOW - they would say that their sins were purified but their lack of fruitfulness demonstrates that they were not.

Another view is that this refers to their baptism. Word καθαρισμος (purification) is not t/normal word you would expect for salvation. It's a word that was commonly used in t/Gospels of ritual purification.

Example, Mark 1:44, Jesus heals a man of leprosy and says to him: "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

'do not consider unclean what God has made clean' Ac 10:15.

But it's also used in Heb. chapt. 1 of t/satisfaction Jesus made for sin==>
. . . When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right
hand of the Majesty on high;

There are many who think this verse points to unbelievers but they leave the apparent tension unreconciled. Includes many Calvinists.

Another view is that this refers to an unbeliever's baptism. The purification, then, is symbolic of something that never occurred in reality. IOW - The man was baptized symbolizing the fact that his former sins were forgiven. But he wasn't born again and that's why he became blind and forgetful.

Puritan Thomas Adams takes this approach ==>

"Now how can a reprobate be said to be purged from his sins? For this is a sure ground, if God remit some sins, he retains none: if no sin be remitted, that man is not purged. If he be purged, how can he have forgotten it? If he have forgotten it, how was he purged? If this wicked man had been so purged he could have never have forgotten it. But he had only the baptism of water not of the Spirit."

Others think this is referring to true believers and the warning is one against laxity. John MacArthur ==>

Where you have the increase of moral virtue, you have the evidence of salvation. Where you have the absence of the increase of moral virtue, you have the lack of assurance of salvation. One's assurance of salvation is directly related to what's going on in his life. Those people who do not see the virtues on the increase in their life will not remember that they have been purged....the failure to diligently pursue spiritual virtues produces spiritual amnesia. The failure to pursue moral excellence in one's life, the failure to pursue these seven virtues will dim one's vision

of his own spiritual condition. And there will be no memory of salvation at some point. . . . Now mark this, that kind of forgetfulness leads to repeating the old sins. So there you have two options....A believer who has these qualities and virtues increasing will enjoy assurance because he'll see the fruit and the usefulness in his own life. And he'll see that he's in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a believer who does not pursue these virtues and lacks these qualities increasing will forfeit assurance."

I think there's truth in some of these views.

Here's what I think:

I think Peter is speaking hypothetically.

For he who is lacking these is blind or shortsighted, being forgetful of the purification of his former sins.

The connection of "purification" with "former sins" would imply that Peter has in mind their baptism. Not that water baptism is salvific; but remember, these 1st c. readers were pagans who, in coming to X, experienced a rather dramatic conversion. It wasn't as if they were raised in Xn homes and eased into it. So they would have been baptized upon their confession of faith, their baptism being symbolic of their being "purified" from their past life of sin.

Peter's switch from the plural in v. 8 to the singular "He who" implies to me that he's speaking hypothetically.

For a believer to grow dull in living t/Xn life is to be spiritually myopic. It's to receive forgetfulness when it comes to t/blessed Cross-work of X.

Remember ==>

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The Scottish preacher of the 17/1800s, John Brown, who wrote a mammoth commentary on the first chapter of 2 Peter, writes ==>

"The Christian who does not add to faith virtue, etc., is sure to lose sight of his being a forgiven and sanctified person, and fall into doubts whether he has been purged from his old sins by the sacrifice and Spirit of Christ. Like a man recovered from sickness, but falling back again into bad health, he will begin to doubt of his recovery and to think of it as a dream.

There is no retaining, in a course of spiritual declension, a well-grounded assurance of our own forgiveness. The self-deceiver, and even the declining Christian, often attempt to unite the two things [that is, they try to retain assurance even while they lack] . . . But God has so constituted human nature and the plan of salvation, that it is only living faith, a faith which proves its life and energy by its effects, that can give and sustain the 'good hope through grace.' Surely the thought that our not adding faith virtue, etc., is certain to shake our assurance of salvation, and excite painful doubts and fears, is a strong motive to add to faith virtue and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity." [John Brown]

It's a warning against spiritual laziness and stagnation.

"This is the admonition which Peter gives to us who believe, to agitate and perform those works by which we shall in this one conviction, namely, that faith alone justifies. Where this then is present, there works must follow." [Luther, 240]

In the ancient world it was an expected that one who was gifted retain a grateful attitude toward the one who gifted him.

Being “forgetful” was scorned upon.

Cicero writes that “all people hate forgetfulness of benefactions thinking it to be an injury against themselves since it discourages generosity and thinking the ingrate to be the common enemy of the needy” [De officiis 2.63].

Seneca adds that “the most ungrateful of all is the person who had forgotten a benefit.... Who is so ungrateful as the person who has so completely excluded and cast from his mind the benefit that ought to have been kept uppermost in his thoughts and always before him?” [De beneficiis 3.1.3- 3.2.1].

No one likes an ingrate. To be ungrateful is to be forgetful. It's the zenith of selfishness.

To have been forgiven of such a great debt of sin and to receive the very life of X!