

Making Your Calling and Election sure



Alex Nelemans

'Making Your Calling and Election Sure'

*A discussion of Second Peter 1, verses 1 – 11
(References to New International Version throughout)*

Verse 10 of the first chapter of the second letter by the apostle Peter **exhorts us** to “be all the more eager to **make your calling and election sure.**” Peter had at least two very good reasons for saying this in the opening chapter of this second letter.

Peter's first letter was written in about the year 64, and his second letter in about 67. This seventh decade in the early history of the Church was the same period during which the apostle Paul wrote the book of Acts, as well as the majority of his letters to churches within Asia (a Roman province, Acts 16:6, Revelation 1:4). Peter, probably writing from Rome, had by 67 become deeply concerned for his fellow believers. Christians were still being threatened with **persecution** by the Roman government, led by emperor Nero, whose reign would end with his death in 68; but even more dangerously there were “destructive **heresies**” being spread by **false** teachers (2 Pet. 2:1b, 2). Peter's second letter is therefore a bold letter **aiming to strengthen and caution** his brothers and sisters in the faith. He made sure that “after my departure you will always be able to **remember these things.**”(2 Pet.1:14)

After identifying himself as being an **apostle** (also in First Peter, 1:1) to those of the “faith as **precious** as ours”, he blesses his readers with God's “grace and peace in abundance” (2 Pet.1:1-

2). Making one's calling and election sure thus begins with receiving an abundant **blessing** upon God's children from God as Father and from God the Son, our Saviour and Lord. In the next verse Peter **strengthens** his brethren as follows : “His divine power has **given us everything. . . for life and godliness** through our **knowledge** [by faith] of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” **Verse 3** may be seen as the '**key**' to Peter's second letter, his readers being the same as those “**chosen** according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**” in 1 Pet. 1:2a. See also Eph. 1:3-14. In 2 Pet. 3:14-15, Peter refers to his awareness of **Paul's** letters to **Gentile** congregations such as the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and others.

Toward making our calling and election sure in the **knowledge** of Jesus our Saviour, we need to **recognise** God's glory and goodness as having given us God's “very **great and precious promises**”(2 Pet. 1:4) through which, Peter points out, we “may **participate** in the divine nature and **escape** the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” God's **promises**, originally made to Abraham in the Old Testament (Gal.3:14) are in fact **fundamental** to our salvation by grace and restoration to fellowship with the Father through Jesus our Mediator and our (increasing) **knowledge** of and confidence in Him. See also 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:3-6. By 'participation' in the divine nature, i.e. **growing** into the reality of it, Peter means the same as what Paul's words describe as “...being **transformed** into His **likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from **the Lord**, who is the Spirit.” See 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-23.

In the process of our transformation into the nature of Jesus, Peter urges believers to diligently **add to** our faith **goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness** (or holiness, 1 Pet.1:5-6), **brotherly kindness**, and to brotherly kindness, **love**(1:5-7). This is our responsible and active way of **appropriating and co-operating with** God's process of transforming His children into His very own nature and likeness to Jesus Christ. Peter of course had the teaching authority of an apostle, but also in the tender way of a shepherd he wrote not only to bless (2 Pet. 1:2) but also to **protect and edify** his “children” (1 Pet. 1:14) by affirming and proclaiming **nothing but** God-given truth to them.

Taking this position he boldly opposed **the false** teachers who brought “the way of truth into disrepute” and would “In their **greed...exploit** you with stories they have made up.”(2 Pet. 2:2-3) While many Christians still lived under the threat of **persecution** for their faith as if under a dark cloud, a greater and more immediate danger were the “secretly introduced **heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them** [with His blood] (2 Pet. 2:1)” by those who sought to **deceive** people for personal gain (“greed”). Peter's exhortation was intended above all to make their calling and election **sure**. It so happened that Peter was in fact martyred for his faith in about 68. As he wrote in 2 Pet. 1:14, the Lord Jesus Himself had prepared him for this (See John 21:18-19).

As mentioned, **verse 3** of 2 Peter 1 is like a **key** to the whole letter. In terms of our knowledge (and by implication, **faith**) in Jesus Christ, we have therefore by **grace** already been granted

all the attributes in verses 5 to 7, but for the very purpose of participating (v. 4), and thereby **growing** in divine nature, we are yet exhorted to willingly **add** “these things” in order to “possess these qualities **in increasing measure...**”(v. 8). The believer who **determines** to make his or her calling and election sure and thereby **secure a “rich welcome** into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (v. 11), will therefore want **to remain far** from “being **ineffective and unproductive** in his or her **knowledge** of our Lord Jesus Christ”(v. 8 continued).

Verse 9 : “If **anyone does not** have them[these qualities], he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has **been cleansed** from his past sins.”(See also Ephesians 5:25b, 26). **Not** having such qualities in **increasing** measure can only mean that one is not (yet) utterly convicted by Peter's exhortations, **nor** has fully responded yet with understanding and faith, to God's great and precious promises. Some of us are **slow to learn** all about the life and **purpose** of our Lord Jesus Christ and His unique role as Mediator between the Father and sinful mankind. This kind of person does not, or at least not eagerly, **participate** and **grow** into the divine nature in order to escape the “corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”(2 Pet.1:4; 1 Pet.1:14-16) Having been **cleansed** from one's past sins should therefore indeed be “**this very reason** [to] make every effort **to add** to your faith...” (2 Pet.1:5) “and make one's calling and election sure. For if **you do** these things, you will never fall.” (2 Pet.1:10).

Essential Points of 2 Peter 1 : 1 – 11
“Making One's Calling and Election Sure”

- This is a strong message of **exhortation to believers** who were being actively persecuted for their Christian faith in a heathen empire, **and** who were in danger of being lured into misleading and deadly doctrines about personal salvation. **The author** of this letter and of First Peter, Simon Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ (1 : 1) was **himself persecuted and martyred** in Rome for his faith shortly after writing his second letter.

- The message serves to establish the utter trustworthiness of apostolic teaching by Peter, who as we know was an eyewitness to the Lord Jesus Himself. (1 : 16 -18) The endeavour of making one's calling and election **sure** is especially concerned with the believer's **response**, by sincerity in faith as well as effort, to **God's promises concerning redemption** in the Scriptures, promises made to both Jews in the Old Testament and particularly Gentiles in the New Testament.

- The response by faith to God's promises on the part of the believer is explicitly a response based on **knowledge** -- “our knowledge of **Him who called us** by His own glory and goodness.”(1 : 3) Interestingly, the word 'knowledge' regarding the Lord Jesus Christ is found **six times** in this short letter. Peter aimed to **edify** as well as **protect** his readers by strengthening them with not only “grace and peace”(1 : 2), but particularly with a clear insight regarding divine revelation. In this way the

brethren were enabled to **confidently resist** persecution and at the same time yet more urgently, readily recognise **heresy** in any of its treacherous forms.

- Clearly only the **correct knowledge** from God and concerning Jesus Christ would lead the faithful to “**participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the world...” and for the same reason motivate them to “**make every effort** to add to your faith...” a number of qualities such as goodness, [further] knowledge, self-control and so forth. (1 : 4 – 6) Unless one progresses to possessing these in **increasing measure**, one is like a person who has forgotten that he or she has been redeemed from past sins. (1 : 9) This kind of person has **neglected to grow** beyond the knowledge (1 : 3) originally granted to him or her by grace !

- The exhortation confirms that possessing the right qualities in increasing measure keeps a believer “from being **ineffective and unproductive in your** [intimate] **knowledge** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**”, (1 : 8) which not only serves to make “your calling and election sure” but also promises that “you will receive a **rich welcome into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1 : 10, 11) in the life to come.

How shall we respond ?

The apostle Peter wrote his second letter in approximately the year 67, more than twenty centuries ago. Peter was very much part of the **beginning** of the Church of Jesus Christ, while we are living close to **the end** of what Bible scholars term 'the

Church age'. The apostle could hardly have imagined how the Church has spread all over the world, as so many hundreds of years have come and gone, yet we soon see that what he wrote is as relevant as ever. As did those Christians who “[had] received a faith as precious as ours”, (1 : 1) **we still acknowledge Peter** as one of the first and closest disciples to “our Lord Jesus Christ. . . **eyewitnesses** of His majesty.” (1 : 16b)

As it deeply concerned Peter, we are also aware that **the persecution** of faithful brothers and sisters is still a reality in the 21st century. This is particularly the case in countries in the Middle East where the Christian faith is barely acknowledged or is severely discriminated against. Even **more seriously**, the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole, and certainly individual believers, are still as susceptible as ever to various man-centred or nature-centred doctrines and practices. What with all these distractions and the world around us becoming ever more corrupt as the days go by, let us determine to “**...escape the corruption** in the world...and receive a rich **welcome into the eternal kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (1 : 4b, 11)

Let us **then simply believe and obey** that which Peter makes plain. Let us “make every effort to add to our faith...”(1 : 5) in order to grow in our love of the Lord and intimate knowledge of Him, to indeed become more godly ourselves by responding as Peter urges every believer to respond. See also 1 Pet. 1 : 14-16, 22-23; 1 John 3 : 23-24; Rev. 14 : 12. Keeping in mind **verse 3** as the 'key' to 2 Pet. 1 – 11, let us grow in each of the seven

qualities Peter recommends “in increasing measure”(1 : 8). It is often said that **Scripture interprets itself**, so what we really need to do is to meditate upon them within the Word as a **whole**.

Goodness

Our faith in **Jesus Christ** is what essentially makes us good in the sense of **being righteous** before God. (Rom. 3 : 21-24) Therefore, without Jesus and salvation through none other than Him, God the Son, we would **hardly be any good whatsoever** before God – on the contrary we would remain “objects of wrath”...see Eph. 2 : 3-9 ! Righteousness, then, is only the beginning of our life and growth in goodness; and what better way to increase in goodness than to meditate upon and follow our Master Jesus throughout His Word? See what **He says in John** 14 : 23, 24 and teaches in chapter 15 about His being the “true vine” and that “apart from [Him] you can do nothing.” (15 : 1, 6) Based on righteousness, goodness is clearly about pleasing God the Father with **Christ-like fruitfulness**(15 : 8). See also Col. 1 : 10; Eph. 2 : 10; Gal. 5 : 22, 23; Heb. 13 : 15, 16. In some versions of the Bible, **goodness** is rendered 'virtue' in the sense of **moral uprightness** or moral goodness. Compare Ps. 25 : 8, 9, 21; Ps. 64 : 10; Ps. 112 : 4; Prov. 14 : 11.

Knowledge

The **specific** knowledge Peter is referring to is, of course, what he exhorts us about again in the last verse of his letter : 2 Pet. 3:18. See also Col. 1:10; 2 : 2b-3. He does not want his readers

to “be carried away by the error of lawless men and **fall** from [our] **secure position.**” (2 Pet. 3:17) Second Peter also reminds us that its author was not only an apostle but indeed an **eyewitness** (2 Pet. 1:16-18) of our Master's glory and majesty, who was even privileged to hear the **voice of the Father.** Peter's words thus carry great **authority.** In 2 Pet. 3 : 1, 2 he alludes to his earlier letter, addressed to the same brethren who were probably Gentile as well as Jewish believers, in which he makes points of **essential** knowledge about the Lord Jesus. The **Jews** in particular needed to recognise that Jesus was like “..a lamb without blemish or defect...chosen before the creation of the world, but was **revealed** in these last times for your sake”(1 Pet. 1 : 19, 20). See also John 1 : 10-13; Heb. 1 : 1-4.

Self-control

This quality is urged upon us by Peter in both his letters. In First Peter (4 : 7) he warns that “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” In Second Timothy, the **lack** of self-control is stressed as belonging to the blatant lawlessness of our own times, the “last days”. (2 Tim. 3 : 2, 3) The N.T. generally uses the term self-control to refer to **being sober, disciplined**(Titus 1 : 7, 8); and faithful in marriage. Second Peter's self-control, perseverance (or patience) and kindness are in fact listed as **fruits of the Spirit** in Galatians 5 : 23. A particular form of self-control is the attitude of **meekness** in the Scriptures, as Paul shows in 2 Cor. 10 : 1. The meekness of **our Master Himself** takes us back again

to John 15 : 5b : “If a man remains in **Me** and **I** in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart** from Me you can do **nothing.**”

Perseverance

Perseverance is often used in the N.T. to mean either patient **endurance** or **persistence**. According to 2 Thess. 3 : 5, the love of God and the perseverance of our **Lord Jesus** are what God wants to fill our hearts with. This is true and desirable simply because God our Father is the source of all love (1 John 4 : 8-10), and therefore **love “always perseveres”**(1 Cor 13 : 7). Let us **persist in sowing to please the Spirit** of God, and “..not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we **do not give up**” (Gal. 6:8, 9). Paul also wrote that **he pressed on** “..to win the prize for which God called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3 : 14) James (1 : 12) pointed out that those who **persevere** “..will receive the **crown of life** that God has promised to those who love Him.”

Godliness, even God-likeness

The Bible gives us a more complete meaning and understanding of **godliness** than, for example, a dictionary. What God's Word teaches is what **He** really wants us to appreciate about this quality, and how it relates to Him. Second Peter 1 : 3 tells us that “..everything we **need** for life and **godliness...**” has already **been provided** to us by **God's own power**. See also 1 Pet. 1 : 5. Rather than imagine that we can somehow manage to live godly lives by our own ability, the true quality and value of godliness has its source in God Himself and what He imparts to the believer by His grace through our faith. Since godliness

comes from God it is an expression of **power**, which Paul tells us is being denied in the **last days** (2 Tim. 3 : 5)! As believers however, we are “..called to a **holy** life..”(2 Tim. 1:9). Therefore not only do **life** by faith, and godliness, go together, but also **holiness** and godliness : 2 Pet. 3 : 11, 12. See also 1 Pet. 1 : 15, 16. A life characterised by godliness is thus actually a life **empowered** with divine holiness. The power of godliness or **God-likeness** is also implied in having the “**mind of Christ**” (1 Cor. 2:16).

Brotherly kindness

Like self-control, we find that this quality is **one of the fruits of the Spirit** in Gal. 5 : 23. Flowing as it does from the Spirit of God, kindness is part of God's very character, which is **essentially love** in its fullness of expression. See for example Ps. 36 : 5-10; 1 John 4:10, 16. The great prophet **Isaiah** recorded God's kindness and compassion in Is. 54 : 8-10. Again in Is. 63 : 7-9, Isaiah was deeply touched by God's “lovingkindnesses.” In the New Covenant, Paul urges God's **people to “continue** in His kindness.”(Rom. 11:22). See also Rom. 12 : 10, 13. **Jesus Himself** expressed the need for brotherly kindness by means of the love He shared with His disciples : John 13:35. See also ; 1Pet. 1:22; 2:17a. In Col. 3:12-14, Paul tells his readers as God's chosen people, to **actually “clothe”** themselves with compassion and kindness.

Love

"Love is patient, love is kind..."(1 Cor. 13 : 4). As anyone knows and as even those who do not acknowledge God take for granted, we find love expressed in a number of ways. In the **Bible**, the incomparable love of **God** is clear from both the Old and New Covenants : Neh. 9:16-18; John 3:16. But why is there such a thing as love? A more helpful question may be 'what is the origin or source of love ? Happily, many sooner or later realise that any thoughtfulness, any act of caring by reaching out to others must have a **supernatural** source. In the Bible that source, that initiative is without doubt **God our Father**. John, one of Jesus' closest disciples, states that "...love comes **from God**. Everyone who loves has been born of God and **knows God**."(1 John 4:7b, 8) and, "We love because **He** first loved us. [...] And He has given us this **command** : Whoever loves God must also love **his brother**." (1 John 4:19, 21; John 13:35). Here we have the central and most enduring quality (1 Cor. 13:6, 7) of all, which is like **foundation** to the **other six** in 2 Pet.1:5-7 or better still, "...binds them all together in **perfect unity**"(Col. 3:14).

Our faith and trust in the **Father** as the very author of love (in terms of His very **revelation, favour**, grace, protection, compassion and so on) enables us understand His reconciliation and redemption of mankind in all its fullness. Beginning with Abraham (Gen. 15 : 17, 18) and later Israel, God in His perfect righteousness and wisdom has had **compassion for all** peoples down the ages. See also Gal. 3:14. Without the Old and New

Covenants **He initiated**, we cannot imagine how we might have learnt to know, worship and obey the Triune God. He inspired the whole of the Bible to be put together as a kind of **love-letter** to His chosen people, and ultimately **to all the world**. See Deut. 4 : 31, 37, 38; John 17 : 23; Matt. 28 : 18-20. Jesus Himself ordered the Father's message of **love and salvation to the world** to be spread by His disciples from Jerusalem "to the ends of the earth"(Acts 1 : 8).

In His enormous **love** for all the world, **God is patient** with us, "...not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to **come to repentance.**" (2 Pet. 3 : 9) Having repented and becoming **"...conformed** to the likeness of His Son.."(Rom. 8 : 29), the Holy Spirit of God gently reminds us of everything Jesus taught in **obedience to the Father** (John 14 : 26.) Jesus said "Now **remain in My love**"(15 : 9). Remaining in His love of course means to remain close to Him who is "the author and **perfecter** of our faith" (Heb. 12:2a) and who made it clear that "man does not live on bread alone, but on **every word** that comes from the **mouth of God**"(Matt. 4:4, quoted from Deut. 8:3).

Here then and in conclusion to this little Bible study, King Jesus Himself in His very own words includes Peter's teachings and exhortation in God's purpose and desire for us to **"be all the more eager** to make your calling and election **sure.**"

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