

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

An Expositional Journey Through 2Peter

5- The Doctrine of Assurance- Part 2

June 14, 2020

2Peter 1:5-11

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

8 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.

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

10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

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

To the Glory of God

Now I told you last time that there are two biblical Truths that are *related*- but that, many times get confused in people's mind:

- The Doctrine of the Eternality of Salvation
- The Doctrine of Assurance

These two Truths are very *similar*, and usually *feed into* each other; and *complement* each other- but they are NOT the same. Salvation being Eternal or Permanent- is a fact of Scripture- while the “Doctrine of Assurance” is how we personally *relate* to the fact that *our own* Salvation is eternal. So, the Doctrine of Salvation being Eternal is “objective”; while the Doctrine of Assurance is “subjective”. The Truth that Salvation is Permanent is “propositional”- while Assurance is much more “experiential”. We are to simply “trust”; and “accept”; and “believe” what the Bible teaches about Salvation itself being Eternal. But then, we must also personally come to grips with whether or not- we are truly saved. And therein lies the struggle.

When we read about Salvation itself- the Scriptures are crystal clear. Jesus called Salvation:

Eternal Life (John 3:15)

... and said,

John 11:25b&26a

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

... while Daniel called Salvation,

Everlasting Life (Daniel 12:2)

But when we read about the Assurance of Salvation- we see a very troubling word in nearly every single Passage- the word, “IF”. For example, Peter said,

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.

... and the Apostle John said,

1John 2:3

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

... and in **1John 1:7** that says:

but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

... and the word, "IF" is a *Qualifier*- or a *Condition*- meaning that we *might* do these things. But then again, we might *not*. And even if we DO those things- maybe we aren't doing them *enough*; or properly; or perfectly; or to our best ability. And so, there is always that nagging doubt that we aren't "meeting up" with the Requirements set before us in Scripture pertaining to our own Salvation.

And so, even though we would readily say that Salvation itself is Eternal- most people struggle about the Assurance of their *own* Salvation. And the Apostle Peter knew that- which is why he wrote the Passage that is before us. And, as I said last time- the key to this Passage is found in verse 10 that says,

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble

... and Peter gave us a blessed Promise about this in verse 11:

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

... so, we won't merely get into Heaven by the "skin of our teeth"- but our Entrance into the eternal Kingdom of Jesus- will be ABUNDANTLY supplied to us! Praise God! Yet, even in this fantastic Promise- we see that nagging Condition:

... as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble

Peter didn't say, "*When you become saved- you will never stumble.*" Instead he said, AS LONG AS WE PRACTICE THESE THINGS- we would never stumble. And then he went on to say,

FOR IN THIS WAY the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

In *what* “way”? In the “Way” of practicing these things. What “things”?

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

... and then Peter gives us yet another Promise at the end of *this* Command:

For [Because] if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

... which is very encouraging... except there is that nagging qualifier, “IF” again- which throws many people right back into despair. Because not only do I have to possess these Qualities- but Peter says here that these Qualities need to be INCREASING in my life. And only then- will they,

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

But if these Qualities are NOT in me at all; OR they are in me- but not INCREASING- then it seems that Peter is teaching that I *am* “useless and unfruitful” in the true Knowledge of Jesus.

And this is an example why, many people, who can easily understand that the Bible is crystal clear about Salvation being Eternal- nevertheless struggle with the Assurance of *their own* Salvation. And that Struggle is almost *always* the result of three things:

- The realization that we sin after Salvation
- Very bad Teaching
- False Converts

Many times, satan will use the fact that we still periodically sin- as a

hammer to beat us over the head. And our enemy will whisper to us- *"How can you say you're saved when you act like that?"* And that Accusation hurts us; and it wounds us; and, many times, even discourages us.

Now there is a very destructive Teaching that has become popular with many in the modern Church- that says that satan is the "*false* accuser" of the brethren. But the Bible doesn't teach that. No English version that I am aware of uses the phrase, "*false* accuser"- when speaking about the devil. The Bible teaches that satan is the "accuser" of the brethren. So, what satan is accusing God's people of- is NOT usually *false*- it is mainly true- which is why it hurts us so much. So, please go with me to a very important portion of Scripture about this subject- found in **The Revelation 12:7-9**, where the Apostle John writes:

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Now notice here that the Bible teaches that at some point BEFORE God made Man- the Arch- Angel, Lucifer had deceived 1/3 of all the angels of Heaven; and convinced them to try to overthrow God.(**Isaiah 14**) So, they "waged war" in Heaven against God and the Arch- Angel, Michael. (**The Revelation 12:4**) But John writes here that the "dragon" (Lucifer) and 1/3 of all the other Angels "**were NOT strong enough**".

John says that this fallen Arch-Angel is also called, "**the devil**" and "**satan**"- and that he was "**thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him**". Jesus said in **Luke 10:18**:

I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

Now pay close attention to this- because the Confusion about this- is *part* of why so many people struggle with the Assurance of their own

Salvation. Several times, John infallibly teaches in **The Revelation 12**- that satan has been thrown down OUT of Heaven; or IS NO LONGER IN HEAVEN; and CAN'T EVER GET BACK INTO HEAVEN.

- **there was no longer a place found for them (satan and his angels) in heaven.**
- **he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him**
- **I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning**

So, at that time- satan and his angels were cast down to the earth- where they have remained ever since. So, satan does NOT converse with God in Heaven- as so many teach. Neither does the devil travel back and forth from Heaven to earth. Satan does NOT go to heaven, in the Presence of God, to accuse us. The Bible simply does NOT teach that. Anywhere. But what the Bible DOES teach is:

there was no longer a place found for them (satan and his angels) in heaven.

Now the reason this is important will become evident in just a moment. But first, please read verses 10-12:

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

11 "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

12 "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time."

So, *when* did the loud voice say, “**Now the Salvation and the power, and the Kingdom of our God and the Authority of His Christ have come**”?
When Jesus rose from the dead? No. When Jesus ascended into Heaven?
No. When?

... for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

So, the Salvation; and the Power; and the Kingdom of God; and the Authority of His Christ came to the earth- when satan was cast out of Heaven into the earth- where he now confronts us **ON THE EARTH** to wage war against us! So, all of satan’s accusations are carried out with us- on the earth. And here, John calls the devil,

the accuser of our brethren... who accuses them before our God day and night

... not the *false* Accuser- just the Accuser.

So, it was NOT until satan was cast out of Heaven and into the earth- that the Kingdom of God; and the Power of God; and the Authority of Jesus Christ- even Salvation itself- could be “realized” or “made real” to God’s people. Now *why* is that? It seems that satan being cast out of Heaven and into the earth was where all our troubles began. Satan being here with us- angry; bitter; having great wrath against God; knowing that he can’t ever get back into Heaven; knowing that his time is short; and that he will burn forever; and that he CANNOT repent; and he now is allowed to accuse us- THAT is when the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory and the Authority of Jesus Christ is able to be manifested!

So, it is NOT when God *protects* us from satan- but when God allows the devil to attack us; and wage war against us; and accuse us- that allows us to possess the Kingdom and the Power. It is when this frightening, angry

immortal created being is down here with us on the earth- confronting us; resisting us; fighting against us; making everything hard- it is THEN that all that God desires to do in us and for us- is fully realized.

And this one Event- satan being overthrown and cast into the earth- this WHY all Heaven rejoices and WHY we have our Woes. Look again what John said in verse 12:

For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time."

Here John tells the Heavens and those who dwell in the Heavens to rejoice! But then he says,

Woe to the earth and the sea...

Why did John tell them to rejoice and us to "Woe"? For what "reason"?

... because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time

So, while the Heavens and those who dwell there are told to rejoice- those who dwell on the earth and in the sea have this terrible Woe to deal with. Now look again at verses 13-17:

13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*.

14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank

up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Now unlike the logic of fallen Man- God's Plan is that satan be allowed to confront us; and to tempt us; to wage war against us; and accuse us. Now *why* would a Good and Loving God do that? So, that the end of verse 17 would come to pass and God would have a people; out from every nation; tribe; and language who,

... keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

God is NOT glorified the most when we are simply delivered from the trials and sufferings and accusations of the devil. No, God is glorified the most when we are so changed (by what God alone does for us- sometimes using satan) that we delight in Jesus the most. In other words, our *enjoyment* of God; our finding the *fullness of Joy* in God alone being glorified; our truly finding the highest zenith of our own Satisfaction in Jesus- proves to the world that Jesus is better than *anything* this world can give to us; and He is better than *anything* this world can take away from us. And that is proven beyond any doubt when satan gives us opportunities to set our Love on something other than Jesus- and yet, by God's Grace- we don't. So, better than anything else- God is seen as truly being the "Treasure of Heaven" when we are fought; and tempted; and oppressed; and accused- and yet- our love and devotion to Jesus- becomes unshakable- NOT in spite of this- but BECAUSE of this!

So, the best way to understand satan- is NOT that he is Sovereign. Satan is NOT in charge- but he is a "tool" that God uses to make the Faith and the Love of the saints- pure. So, satan is a "Means of Grace"- in our Sanctification. And it is in our Sanctification where we find true biblical Assurance.

In other words, by giving people, who say they are saved- every opportunity to walk away from Jesus; by allowing satan to make serving Christ really cost something- only those who have been given the ability to see Jesus in His Beauty; and empowered to make much of Christ- will remain standing.

So, it isn't that we never fail- but that we never stop. Sanctification is more about Perseverance than it is about always reaching the Goal. So, it isn't that we always accomplish what we set our hearts to do (i.e. love more; obey from the heart; rebel less; forgive easier, etc.)- but it is that when we fail (and we DO fail)- we cry out for Forgiveness and Help- and we go again.

And so, we don't base the Assurance of our Salvation on our own spiritual Accomplishments- but in the fact that we are genuinely and relentlessly trying to be conformed to the Image of Jesus. Remember what Paul said in **Romans 8:28-30**:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For [Because] those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Now notice that absence of the word, "Sanctification" here. But Paul didn't leave this word out because he didn't believe in it; or because this Passage doesn't have anything to do with it- because it does. No, Sanctification is the unspoken "400- pound gorilla in the room." Sanctification is ALL that this Passage is about- and so, it doesn't need to be spoken.

So, he begins by saying that God faithfully and sovereignly "works all things (both what we would call "Good" and what we would call "Bad") TOGETHER for "Good" (the *greater* "Good" of the Glory of God and, ultimately, the fulfillment of our own Joy). But he says that God ONLY does this for a certain kind of people, who have two things true about them:

- **Those who love God**
- **Those who are called according to *His* [God's] purpose.**

... and to understand this correctly, we should say, "Those who love God BECAUSE they have been called according to God's Purpose."

But then Paul tells us WHY God works all things together for Good for these people:

For [Because] those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become*

conformed to the image of His Son...

So, God doesn't merely work all things together for Good. No, there is a reason behind WHY God does this. The Bible says that God is very busy- sovereignly Causing and sovereignly Allowing; pushing and pulling; raising up and casting down; bringing in and throwing out- for one single Reason:

Because He has predestined those He foreknew- so they would be conformed to the Image of His Son.

So, we are NOT merely forgiven- but conformed. The Holy Spirit is NOT finished with us when the sinless Blood washes away our Sins. No, He then goes on and progressively sanctifies us so that we may be molded; and made; and shaped; and change- so that we will be in His Image. And this is what Paul meant in **2Corinthians 3:18** when he wrote,

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

So, our Salvation is NOT completed when we are declared to be Righteous. No, our Salvation *includes* the "ongoing process" of us being conformed to the Likeness of Jesus. And this ongoing process is called, "Sanctification" and it is IN our Sanctification where we find true Assurance. And that is why we CANNOT rest or stop or even be satisfied with whatever spiritual maturity we may have- or even because we are headed for Heaven. We are to be grateful for all of this- but God has predestined us to be conformed to the Image of the Lord Jesus Christ- and it is in that- where our Assurance lies

But why did God do all this? Paul says,

... so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren

Or, in other words, so that Jesus would have the *preeminence* among the saved; and so that Jesus would be exalted. And now look at verse 30:

and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

.. and we should understand this to say,

“ALL OF THOSE whom He predestined, He also called; and [ALL] these whom He called, He also justified; and [ALL] these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So, every single person that God predestined- He called. And every single person that God called- He justified. And every single person that God justified- He glorified. But besides the universality of this verse- notice that ALL of those who are justified- are glorified. And again, the unspoken Reality of being glorified is that we are also progressively sanctified. And that means that every single person, who has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- is called by God- to go through the “Process of Sanctification”- so they may be conformed to the Image of Jesus and be glorified. And Paul teaches here that THIS IS WHY God works all things together for Good.

So, it MUST be pretty important to God that we are conformed to the Image of Jesus- for Him to work all things together for that greater “Good”.

So, in verses 5-7, Peter gives us eight Signs or Markers along our path that will verify that we are on the Path toward being conformed to the Image of Jesus- and then Peter gave us a Promise:

... if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

... along with a Warning:

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

Now I have told you many times- there are two sides to biblical Christianity. There is the “objective propositional Truth” recorded in Scripture- which is the historical facts of the Life; Death; and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. So, *some* biblical Truth is meant to simply be read; and heard; and understood; and believed; and accepted; and trusted; and confessed. For example, the Apostle Paul was “carried along” by God the Holy Spirit to write:

1Corinthians 15:3-8

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

So, each individual person should simply *believe* this; and *trust* in it; and *confess* it- or they're not saved. But nobody *experiences* these Truths. We simply read the Record of the historical facts of Christianity and we put our Hope and Faith in what it says.

For example, when a believer sins- and he feels *terrible* about it; and doesn't *feel* that God has forgiven him- that person should go to the objective Truth in Scripture where the Apostle John wrote:

1John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

... and simply trust in what this says. So, *regardless* of how badly that individual might feel- he should then submit his will to God's Word and confess: *"Even though I don't feel like God should forgive me- His Word says that He has and that He does. I have confessed my sins to Him; and the Bible says I am forgiven and cleansed."*

That is *trusting* in the historical Realities of the Bible and putting your Hope in what God has promised- *regardless* of your own personal feelings.

But then there is the "*subjective, experiential* side" of biblical Christianity- which allows for individual believers to actually *experience* what the Bible talks about. For example, in **Matthew 11:28-30**, Jesus said,

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

... so, individual people should take Jesus at His Word and actually “Come to Him”. And then these same people should then personally *experience* the “Rest” that Jesus promises here. Yet that Experience will look a little different from one person to the next- which is why we say it is “subjective”. Or when the sons of Korah wrote in **Psalms 42:1&2a**

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...

... this is NOT something we are to merely *believe*- but it is in the Bible so that believers will actually *experience* this “Panting” and this “Thirsting” for God.

And this tells us that human beings were NOT created to be merely intellectual. We have feelings and affections and longings and loves and desires. And those things are as much a part of us as our intellect. And the Bible would be *ineffective*- if it merely addressed the mental and intellectual side of us. So, it doesn't. The Word of God speaks the foundational *objective* Truths that every genuine believer MUST believe and trust in and confess. AND it also speaks *subjectively* to our deepest longings; and our most valued affections; and our greatest fears.

So, the Doctrine of Salvation itself- *includes* the *objective* part where Salvation is *eternal*. But then there is the *subjective* part of Salvation that allows for each individual believer to have Hope; and to take Courage that *they* are actually saved. And I believe that the Apostle Peter is *uniquely* qualified to help us along this line because of two divergent parts in his *own* walk with God:

- Peter was the *protos* (first among equals) of the Apostles. Peter was given the Divine Revelation of “Who Jesus is”. Peter walked on water; and saw Jesus in His transfigured State. Peter wrote Scripture; and was used by God in Signs, Wonders, Miracles, and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Peter preached the first Christian Sermon. Peter was martyred for the Faith.
- Peter betrayed the Lord- three times. Peter rebuked Jesus. Jesus called Peter, “satan”. Peter didn't immediately believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

... so, if *anyone* had reason to *doubt* his own Salvation- it was Peter. But if

anyone had reason to believe he was truly saved- it was Peter. Both of these Statements are true about this Apostle- and *that* is why I think Peter can help us concerning this Issue.

So, let's look again at verses 5-8:

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

8 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.

Now one of the most important things to remember when looking at verses 5-8 is to understand that these four verses are based on what verses 3&4 told us,

seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

So, Peter tells us here that God, through Christ, has granted to us EVERYTHING pertaining to this life of Godliness. And that He has already granted to us His precious (rare) and magnificent (excellent) Promises- and that by these Promises- we HAVE ALREADY been made to be "partakers" of the Divine Nature through the miracle of the New Birth.

And then, after telling us all that- THEN Peter begins verse five with the phrase,

Now for this very reason also...

For *what* "reason?" The "Reason" that God, through Christ, has granted to us EVERYTHING pertaining to this life of Godliness. And that He

has granted to us His precious (rare) and magnificent (excellent) Promises- and that by these Promises- we are made to be “partakers” of the Divine Nature through the miracle of the New Birth.

For THAT Reason- we are then told to:

Apply[ing] all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence...

... which is simply another way of saying, “*make every effort yourself to be godly.*”

Now please don't miss the connection here (because the KJV *completely* misses it). *Since* God has ALREADY given Power for Godliness- we are then to strive to become godly! Now, on the surface- this may seem to be “circle reasoning” but, in reality- this is the very *core* of New Testament Commands. We are to *ongoingly* labor for Godliness- FOR (or BECAUSE) God has ALREADY labored for us; and is at work in us!

Don't ever reverse the order, lest you believe “another gospel” (which is no Gospel). Never say, “*I will work out my own Salvation in order that God might work in me.*” Because that is deception and heresy. Peter is NOT going to tell us the glorious Good News of verses 3&4 about all that God has done and all that God is doing in us and for us- and then turn around and tell us to work it all out for ourselves.

But, rather, Peter wants us to agree with the Apostle Paul, who said,

Philippians 2:12b&13

... 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.

Notice here that Paul did NOT say, “**Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling. (period).** But rather- **BECAUSE [For] God is ALREADY at work in you- to give you both the Will and the Ability to Work for His Good Pleasure- THEREFORE- work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.**

So, we must never say, “*I press on to make it my own in order that Christ might make me His Own.*” But rather, let us say with Paul,

Philippians 3:12b

... I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Dear friends, there is a world of difference in a Marriage where the Husband doubts the love of his Wife and labors to earn it; and a Marriage where the Husband rests in the Certainty of his Wife's love and takes pains- joyfully- NOT to live unworthily of it. So, Peter's point is:

God is 100% *for* us with His Divine Power. Of that we may be sure. Now, in the Confidence of that Power- may we all take great pains to NOT live unworthily of His Love.

.. and verses 5–7 describes what that looks like. And there are eight things that Peter mentions:

- Faith
- Virtue (or moral excellence, or fortitude)
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Perseverance (or patience)
- Godliness
- Brotherly kindness
- Love

So, the list Peter gives- begins with Faith and ends with Love. And that agrees with the Order of the rest of the New Testament: Confidence in God's Promises is the way we plug into God's Power. And Love (even for our enemies) is the Goal and Sum of all of life- the Light of the world- that shows others the Way into the Kingdom.

And in between Faith and Love are six other Qualities that Peter says that all saved people should have. But, unlike others, I don't think Peter means that these Qualities are added to our character in always this exact sequence. There is a lot of overlapping among these Qualities.

For example, Love is already present in Patience according to **1Corinthians 13:4**. It is NOT strictly added on. Therefore, I think what Peter is saying in verses 5–7 is this:

True Christians do not stop pursuing their growth in Grace (**1Peter 3:18**). They go

on. They advance. They apply themselves with all diligence to *increase* in these things (as verse 8 says). So, Peter calls us here to a “Holy Dissatisfaction” with our present spiritual attainments.

Now the literal translation of verses 5–7 does NOT say,

"add *to* your Faith Virtue" and so on; it says,

"furnish *in* your Faith Virtue" and so on.

... so, you can hear a kind of encouragement by the Apostle "*Forward! Forward! Push ever Forward!*" if we understand Peter to say something like,

"As you have ALREADY obtained Faith in Christ and stand in it, prove that it is real by applying yourself diligently to *advance* in Moral Excellence. And as you stand firm in that- do not become satisfied- but press on to increase your Knowledge of God and His Will. And as you stand firm in that- do not be satisfied in that- but be diligent to enlarge your capacities of Self-control; and mastery over your Passions. And as you stand firm in that- don't be satisfied- but go on and cultivate every form of Perseverance. And as you stand firm in that- let Devoutness and Piety and Sweet Love to God flourish. And as you stand firm in that- don't stop- but go on and strive to kindle your Affection for other believers. And as you stand firm in that- don't stop- but go on and grow in love to all men."

In other words: "*Forward! Ever Forward! Press On! Advance!*"

Now there are two ways to have fun in the water. You can float or you can swim. And both of them are sometimes called, "swimming"- as people say, "*We went swimming today*"- when all they really did was lay on a float.

But the reality is that people who float never stay in the same place. They go wherever the current leads them. The only way to overcome the current of the water is to swim against it. And that is what we are called to do here on the earth as believers: swim against the "current" of this present evil world.

So, we are NOT called to be "like" the world; or to figure out how to "get along" with the world; or to "make peace" with the world. We are called to live "counter-intuitive" to the world- which is just another way of saying, we

are called to be "Holy". And that means that we are NOT called to find Peace or Safety here on the earth. Periodically, God gives us a temporary "Reprieve" from the spiritual War we are in- but mostly- we are called by God- to be Faithful; Fruitful; and Busy in the Work of the Lord for as long as we live on this earth.

And so, people, who just lay around and float- disobey verses 5–7 and do not apply themselves with diligence to bear the fruit of Faith. And the end for those people- is that they eventually drift into great peril.

And that tells us that the ONGOING effort towards Virtue, Knowledge, Self-control, Perseverance; Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and Love is NOT optional "icing" on the cake of Faith. So, we can't judge a person's Genuineness by how close he seems to be to Heaven- but on how hard he is swimming. The Evidence or the Proof that God's Power has ALREADY been given to you by Faith- is that you are now making every effort (as verse 5 says) to advance in the Qualities of Jesus.

Now verse 8 gives us a very explicit Warning:

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.

Now look back at Verse 2 that it is in "the Knowledge" of Jesus Christ that there can be a barren and fruitless Knowledge of Christ. In other words, it is possible to make a "start" in the Christian Life, but then to become indifferent and unfeeling and careless in using the Means of Grace, and to drift into Destruction. **2Peter 2:20-22** says,

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "*A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire."

If the Knowledge of God's glorious Promises does not spur us on to strive against the worldly tide- then we will be barren and fruitless and drift to our ultimate Destruction.

Then Verse 9 describes what has happened with the person, who has become weary of well-doing and quits swimming and is no longer pressing forward in Christ's Qualities.

For he who lacks these *qualities* [from verses 5-7] is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.

The problem with the person, who does not strive toward all the fruit of Faith, is that he is blind in two directions. When he looks to the future- it's all a haze, and the Promises of God are swallowed up in a blur of worldly longings. I think that is what Peter meant by saying they are “near-sighted”. But when this person looks to the past- the Forgiveness that made him so excited at first- is well-nigh forgotten, and all he sees is empty Prayer; and a meaningless ritual of Baptism.

In other words, just as in verse 3- the Power for Godliness flows through the Knowledge of God. So, in verse 9- blindness to the past and future Work of God- blocks that Power from becoming real in that person's life- and he is left limp in the water- floating toward ultimate Destruction. And there is a literal “sea” of people who fit this description.

Then Verse 10 makes crystal clear what is at stake in such Blindness; and Powerlessness; and Fruitlessness:

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

My dear friends, we must understand that the great Danger described in verses 8 and 9 (as an Incentive to help us to advance in the Fruits of Faith) is NOT the danger of slipping into the Kingdom with no rewards. It is the danger of NOT GOING TO THE KINGDOM AT ALL- of NOT BEING SAVED AT ALL!

When Peter says,

be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you...

... he means that our *lack* of Diligence in Christian Graces may be a Sign that we were never "called" AT ALL- and are NOT among the elect.

And *regardless* of what you may think about the subject of Election- I beg you to pay very close attention to this verse. The Assumption is that the whole world lies under the righteous Judgment of God because of Sin. And so, because of His great Mercy- God ordained that a people be saved by Grace that would belong to God. And these are God's elect; His chosen people- whom He has predestined to be conformed to the Image of his Son.

And Paul explains in **Romans 8:30** how this works from God's Side: that those elect; whom God predestined to Christ-likeness; He also *called*; and ALL THOSE He called- He also justified; and ALL THOSE He justified- He also glorified! And so, NONE of God's sheep will ever be lost. They are safe and secure in Jesus.

But then from our side- the single most important Question of life is: "*Am I among the elect- whom God predestines to be like Christ and then calls; and justifies; and glorifies forever?*" And if we are- God wants us to *know* that we are. He wants us to have joyful Assurance- because out of that Assurance flows tremendous Power for sacrificial Service that gives God glory.

Therefore, Peter says,

"Confirm your election! Make sure of it!"

... How? By standing in your Faith and pressing on to Virtue, Knowledge, Self-control; Perseverance; Godliness; Brotherly Kindness; and Love. In **1John 3:14**, the Apostle John wrote,

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

... but we don't love the brethren- SO THAT- we may *earn* the Right to pass from Death to Life. No, we prove that God has ALREADY *caused* us to pass from Death to Life- by the Love we have toward the brethren. And this tells us that, ultimately,

The Confirmation of our Election (Assurance) is our progress in Sanctification

Remember, God predestined all the elect- NOT to merely be forgiven

and eventually go to Heaven- but to be conformed to the Image of Christ! (**Romans 8:29**). Therefore, the reassuring Evidence of our election- is our ONGOING stroking toward Christ-likeness.

And then, Verses 10 and 11 conclude:

for as long as you practice these things [verses 5-7], you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Virtue; Knowledge; Self-control, Perseverance; Godliness; Brotherly Kindness; and Love: these are NOT the “wages”; or the “payments” that we have to give- in order to earn an Entrance into the eternal Kingdom. No! These are the necessary Evidences that prove that our Trust in God's Promises is real and genuine. And “in that way” they are the Confirmation; or the “Assurance” of our Call and Election.

Now let's just close by applying this Truth to ourselves. The point of verses 5–11 is that *we should earnestly confirm our Call and Election by making every effort to advance in the Qualities of Jesus* (vv. 5-7). So, here's the Application:

- Are you making every effort towards Moral Excellence?
- Are you making every effort to increase in the Knowledge of God's Character and His Will?
- Are you making every effort to strengthen your power of Self-control? Are you making every effort to enlarge your capacity for Perseverance? Are you making every effort to cultivate Godliness- to develop a heart for God?
- Are you making every effort to grow warm in your Kindness and Affection for your fellow believers?
- Are you making every effort to stir up Love in your will for the person you dislike the most?

Well, if these things are in you and *increasing*- the Promise from a God, Who cannot lie- is that you will not be fruitless; (v. 8), you will never ultimately stumble (v. 10); and you will enter the eternal Kingdom of Christ (v. 11)!

But if these things are not your earnest concern- then it is because you

are floating and not swimming; you have shut your eyes to the Beauty of God's Promises; and you have forgotten the humble exhilaration of being forgiven. And you have reason to seriously doubt your Salvation.

Dear friends, the infallible Word of the living God warns us against being lazy in our faith; and of just drifting away from Jesus- Who is our only Hope. And so, this same Word encourages us to “fight the good fight of faith”; and “take hold on Eternal Life” (**1Timothy 6:12&19**). It tells us to “lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us.” It tells us to “run with perseverance the race before us” (**Hebrews 12:1**); to “press on toward the mark of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 3:14**); to advance and grow and go forward in Virtue and Knowledge and Self-control and Perseverance; and Godliness and Brotherly Kindness; and Love (**2Peter 1:5-7**).

And “in this way” you will never doubt your own Salvation. But you will reassure your heart; and you will make your Confidence firm that you are indeed called to share in God's Glory and Excellence and Kingdom (**2Peter 1:10, 3**)!

Amen! Let's pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

