

A Growth That Endures...



A VERSE BY
VERSE
EXPOSITION
OF THE
EPISTLE OF
2ND PETER

Spiritual Stability 2 Peter 1:10-11 (726)

It is no secret that I have a problem with skin cancer. Others of you do as well. One of the first lines of defense for folks like us is careful and routine self-examination. I want to read you a few sentences from a publication from the National Cancer Institute (National Institute of Health Publication No. 92-1564): “The cure rate for skin cancer could be 100 percent if all skin cancers were brought to a doctor’s attention before they had a chance to spread. Therefore, people should check themselves regularly for new growths or other changes in the skin (p.8) ... You can improve your chances of finding skin cancer promptly by performing a simple skin self-exam regularly” (p.23).

Our passage for the morning, **2 Peter 1:10-11**, is a call to self-examination. *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.* We are called to self-examination elsewhere in Scripture. For example, self-examination is to accompany one’s participation in

the Lord's Supper. **1 Corinthians 11:28**, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* In **2 Corinthians 13:5** Paul writes, *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless you fail the test?* With this idea of self-examination in mind let's look at the text.

Therefore, brethren. Peter is speaking to those who had made a credible profession of faith and had been baptized; those members of the visible church; those whom he views as Christians. And for the first time in his letter Peter uses the conjunction, *therefore*. *Therefore* connects what has been said previously to what Peter is going to say here in verses 10 and 11. That being the case, let's go back and do a little review so we get a feel for the flow of Peter's argument here in Chapter 1.

The introduction of doctrinal error and reckless living was beginning to undermine the stability of the community of faith. II Peter was written to counter this deadly influence. Peter's strategy is to establish believers so firmly in the **gospel** - to familiarize them so thoroughly with the **truth** - that error (either in doctrine or practice) would be readily detected and resisted. Indeed, the point of this entire letter is this: **growth in the truth of the gospel fortifies the church against the destabilizing influence of error.** Peter's aim, then, is to **stabilize** Christians. In **2 Peter 1:3-4** Peter reviews what God has done to this end. God has supplied all we need to live the life to which He has called us in Christ

In **verses 5-7** the focus shifts to our response to the gracious initiatives and provision of God. Here's the point of these two verses: **gratitude for grace is**

expressed by growth in grace. **2 Peter 1:5-7** (NASB) *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.* Our labor (work, effort) is to pursue (with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength) these virtues; virtues that beautify, that commend, that adorn our profession of the gospel of grace.

In verses 8 and 9 Peter argues that **true, saving faith is confirmed by the reality (are yours) and vitality (increasing) of the graces that attend it.** *For if these qualities [those he just named] are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.* Genuine faith is not an empty, hollow, void, isolated thing. Indeed, it is full of, it is accompanied by, it is adorned with those virtues that God has ordained and that the Holy Spirit produces. The reality of faith is confirmed by the fruit it produces. **Psalm 1:2-3**, speaking of the righteous man, says, *his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.*

Now I think our transition into verse 10 may sound something like this: "Because of the extreme consequences; because of what is really at stake ... *therefore.*" In **verse 8** the presence of these virtues render the believer useful and fruitful in the knowledge of the gospel. In **verse 9** the absence of these virtues can eventually lead to apostasy – the repudiation of one's profession of faith. The old Scot, Alexander Nisbet, wrote, "the hazard of falling is here made a motive to stir up believers to diligence and exercise of grace" (*1 & 2 Peter*, p. 231).

Trail Ridge Road runs through Rocky Mountain National Park. At some points the shoulder is not but a foot or so wide. Let me tell you, the hazard of falling is certainly a motive to diligence and the exercise of caution as I drive that road.

Therefore, brethren **be all the more diligent**. This word “diligent” is used three times in Chapter 1 – *applying all diligence* in verse 5, *be all the more diligent* here in verse 10, and *I will also be diligent* in verse 15. It appears again in **3:14**, *be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless*. In English, if someone is diligent, he is characterized by steady, earnest, attentive, and energetic application and effort in a pursuit, vocation, or study. The Greek word (*spoudazo*) here means essentially the same thing – to exert oneself, to endeavor, to be zealous, to labor, and so on. Now, Peter is not suggesting that the Christian life is an oppressive, burdensome existence. On the contrary, **Romans 14:17** tells us that we are called to a life of *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*. Nevertheless, our life in Christ is to be lived soberly. It is to be lived seriously. **I Thessalonians 5:5-6**, *We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober*. **1 Peter 1:13** *Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit*. So our lives are to be marked by a measure of earnestness, of steadiness, of energy and zeal in the things of God.

Our lives are also to be marked by a measure of self-scrutiny. We are to allow the light of the Word of God to shine on our own lives and, as honestly as we are able, to examine our lives in the light of that Word. Now let me offer some counsel that may be helpful at this point.

We all probably know sincere believers who have depressive problems and are just melancholy (sad, blue) by temperament. Whenever subjects such as falling

away from the faith or the unpardonable sin come up they fixate on them; they lock in on them like laser beams. They become convinced that they have fallen away. They worry that they have committed the unpardonable sin. And it seems that efforts to convince them otherwise are not very effective. Ironically, this is often the case even when there is abundant evidence that would suggest otherwise; evidence that suggests that they truly know the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus (ex. William Cowper). So exhortations to self-examination must be made but with both care and clarity.

Beloved, there is a difference between healthy self-evaluation and unwholesome, gloomy introspection. Both self-evaluation and introspection look at the same things – one's thoughts, one's motives, one's life, one's experience, and so forth. In both the heart is opened up as if in surgery. Here's the difference. In introspection the heart is not closed back up but is left open and the person becomes wholly, predominantly concerned with or fixated on his or her own life. In self-examination the heart is opened, you yourself look inside, you invite the Lord Himself to take a look as well. Then, you close it up and shift your gaze upon the gospel, sincerely repenting of all that the Spirit points out and rejoicing in the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to you. Look at our own order of worship for this morning. What do we do *after* we open our hearts in confession of our sins? We close them back up and then "receive comfort in the promise of the gospel." Do you see that? The pattern, you see, is modeled for you week after week in worship itself.

Now what are we looking for in this self-examination? Evidence that our faith is adorned by the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit; the graces mentioned in verses 8 and 9. Chapter 16 in our Confession of Faith, *Of Good Works*, says this: "These

good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life."

It is this assurance that Peter has in mind when he says, **to make certain about His calling and choosing you**. We must slow down as we unpack this phrase. Let's speak first to the action of God Himself in calling and choosing believers. When Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross He won for us wonderful spiritual benefits and privileges. These may be summarized with a string of theological terms – calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. These comprehend the totality of the redemption **accomplished** for us by our Savior. The Holy Spirit graciously and sovereignly **applies** these wonderful benefits to us in time and space.

This word "choosing" is another term for God's election. God's choice of certain individuals for salvation before the foundation of the world was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part (such as repentance or faith), but was based solely upon His own good and sovereign will. Such was the case in the Old Testament with God's choice of Israel (**Deut. 7:7-8, 10:15**). Such was the case in the New Testament at the preaching of the gospel (**Acts 13:48**).

This choosing purpose of God is eternally prior to *calling* (**Rom. 8:29-30a**). Calling is a summons (**Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; II Tim. 1:8-9**). In this calling the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, He persuades and enables us to receive Christ by

faith. It is the sure *drawing* of the elect unto salvation. Jesus said in **John 6:44**, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” Taken together *choosing and calling* emphasize the concept of God’s effectual, gracious initiative in bringing the sinner to Himself in salvation.

Now, these are sovereign acts of God. They are sure; they are certain in and of themselves. It is not for us to complete these gracious works of God as if He does His part and we do the rest to make His act certain. Nothing could be further from the truth. The application of redemption to the sinner is a sure work in and of itself based upon the perfect, finished work of Christ. There is nothing left for the sinner to do but to receive Christ by faith, to accept God’s gracious invitation, to reach out his hand and to take the gift offered to Him in the gospel.

When Peter speaks of *making certain* or *making sure* he has in mind possessing and enjoying the comfort of this knowledge in one’s own soul. The form of the Greek verb here (*poieistha*, middle voice) suggests “make sure for yourself” (M. Green, p. 83). The issue is growing in the certainty, the assurance that “I” have been chosen to life and, in time, effectually called by the Spirit of God. We are talking about the assurance, the comfort, the consolation in the soul of the believer. Some would reduce assurance to nothing more than a “peaceful easy feeling.” But this is inadequate and certainly not necessary. Our assurance of salvation is based upon the testimony of the **Word** of God itself. Jesus promised in **John 5:24**, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

Our assurance is based upon the testimony of a **good conscience**. **1 Timothy 1:5**, *But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*. Conscience is the self-awareness of the rightness or wrongness before God of one's actions and attitudes. It is the human moral self-evaluator. Men are created in the image of God. His perfections and His standards are inherently present to the human conscience. In **Romans 2:15** Paul goes so far as to say that men have *the work of the law written in their hearts*. It is this self-evaluator which rebellious men *reject* (**1 Tim. 1:19**). It is the conscience, which is *seared* in the unregenerate (**1 Tim. 4:2**). Paul refers to a *good* conscience at this point. "Paul means by the good conscience an honest self-evaluation that one's conduct has been obedient rather than disobedient, as one evaluates the direction and perspective of one's life at the particular moment" (George W. Knight).

This assurance is based upon the **internal witness** of the abiding Holy Spirit (**Romans 8:12-17**). This assurance is based upon the presence of new **affections** for the things of God. The assurance is based upon the testimony of an **obedient**, fruitful life. We saw this last week in verse 8.

And this is what Peter has in mind when he says, **for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble**. This is not a performance mentality - that by the *practice* of certain things you merit something from God. Rather, as long as these graces – those mentioned in verses 5-7 - are real (*are yours*) and vital (*increasing*) in the heart you are not to suppose that you are in the downward spiral leading to apostasy. You are where you ought to be. You have not wandered off into the weeds of unbelief. You are in the path of holiness and obedience.

You will never stumble. When we stumble we usually trip over something or lose our balance. Now **James 2:10** says, *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet **stumbles** in one point, he has become guilty of all.* In James 2:10 the word “stumble” means to fail at any one point to keep the law of God. That’s not what Peter is saying we will never do. The other uses are in the context of eternal destiny. **Jude 24**, *Now to Him who is able to keep you from **stumbling**, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.* Stumbling is the opposite of being in the presence of God. In **2 Peter 1:10-11** stumbling is the opposite of what? Of *entrance* into God’s *eternal kingdom*. So stumbling is a metaphor for falling into eternal perdition. Stumbling refers to an irreversible slide into apostasy. And this is what Peter assures us will never happen.

For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. Luther said, “If you will become assured, then the only way is that marked out for you here by Peter” (p. 241). In our pride we assume that whatever seems right to us will find acceptance with God. That’s not the way it works. We are talking about perseverance in godliness. God is pleased to us the presence and the practice of these graces to comfort the souls of His children.

Peter is supplying motivation for diligence in the cultivation of Christian graces – the fruit of genuine faith. What would excite, what would stimulate and stir you, a weary believer, more than a vision of what God had in store for you at the end of his journey in the path of obedience? Peter is saying, you will not stumble. Indeed, yours will be a rich, effusive welcome into the eternal kingdom of Christ. Paul was moved along in the same path of obedience by the same glorious prospect. He said in **Philippians 3:14**, *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the*

upward call of God in Christ Jesus. May God grant to you that same motivation and the same expectation.

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Spiritual Stability

2 Peter 1:10-11 (726)

Our passage is a call to _____ - _____.

II Peter 1:10-11 ... *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.*

Therefore, brethren

Review of previous verses.

2 Peter 1:3-4

2 Peter 1:5-7

2 Peter 1:8-9

The old Scot, Alexander Nisbet, wrote, "the hazard of falling is here made a motive to stir up believers to diligence and exercise of grace" (*1 & 2 Peter*, p. 231).

Therefore, brethren **be all the more diligent**

Our life in Christ is to be lived _____ . It is to be lived _____ .

Our lives are also to be marked by a measure of _____ - _____ .

Beloved, there is a difference between healthy self-evaluation and unwholesome, gloomy introspection.

Introspection ...

Self-examination ...

Then, you close it up and shift your gaze upon the _____, sincerely repenting of all that the Spirit points out and rejoicing in the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to you.

Chapter 16 in our Confession of Faith, *Of Good Works*

“These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.”

To make certain about His calling and choosing you

This word “choosing” is another term for God’s _____.

“Calling” is a _____ (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:8-9).

Taken together *choosing and calling* emphasize the concept of God’s effectual, gracious initiative in bringing the sinner to Himself in salvation.

When Peter speaks of *making certain* or *making sure* he has in mind possessing and enjoying the _____ of this knowledge in one’s own _____.

You will never stumble

So stumbling is a metaphor for falling into eternal perdition.

Stumbling refers to an irreversible slide into _____.

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