

II PETER

- I. His Divine power has granted us everything necessary for life and godliness. Therefore, pursue godly qualities and live accordingly.
 - A. II Peter 1:5-11 . . . 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.
 - B. Pray
- II. Choosing godly living over defending or attacking theology
 - A. Today, we are going to look at verses 10-11, and the first thing I want to do in relation to them is to look at them from the standpoint of seeing the spiritual weakness of getting sidetracked by theological issues and neglecting the point God is making in a particular portion of scripture. To do this, I am going to point out the theological challenges in these two verses and then look at them from the standpoint of what God is saying to us about living the Christian life.
 - B. Looking at these two verses from a theological point of view quickly reveals that there is a statement in verses 10 that forms a theological contradiction, and one in verse 11 that is supportive of some theological positions and challenging to others.
 - 1. In verse 10, Peter appears to present a theological contradiction by exhorting US – *those who have been born again* – to be exceedingly diligent in making certain that GOD has called and chosen us.
 - 2. In verse 11, Peter says that our entrance into heaven will be abundantly supplied IF we add and practice the seven spiritual qualities listed in verses 5-7.
 - 3. So lets return to the first half of verse 10 and examine it.

- C. II Peter 1:10a . . . Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;
1. The first part of this statement – “[you who are born again] be all the more diligent to make certain” – clearly implies some serious effort on our part in relation to salvation. Now the fact that Peter is exhorting us to this kind of action supports the Arminian and free will tradition – two groups who hold a narrow view of God’s involvement in the process of salvation.
 2. The second part of this statement contains two words – “calling” and “choosing.” Both these words are used to support Calvinism and the Reformed tradition – which are two groups who hold a narrow view of the sovereignty of God in relation to man’s involvement in salvation.
 3. Now regardless of your theological position, the reality is, the two halves of this single statement are theologically contradictory. But since it is God who has done this, maybe we ought to conclude that God and the scriptures are bigger than Calvinism and the Reformed tradition, and bigger than Arminianism and the free will position.
 - a. For example, the Bible teaches that God is sovereignly involved in the work of salvation (Romans 9:19-24; Acts 13:48). Jesus himself said: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .” (John 6:44a).
 - b. And the same Bible teaches that God does not want anyone to die in their sin, but rather He wants all to come to repentance and salvation (I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9).
 - c. Added to this is the teaching of scripture that we are involved in the salvation process, and it is an involvement that includes the exercise of our will – whether we respond to God’s calling and choosing with faith and repentance or with unbelief and rejection (John 3:14-16, 3:36, 20:30-31; Romans 10:11-13).
 4. So what is my point about verse 10? We can look at this verse from a theological perspective and get mired in theological debates, or we can look at it within its larger context and discover the message God has for us about living the Christian life and spending eternity with Him in heaven.
 5. Which brings us to the second half of verse 10b and 11, for this portion also has theological implications.
- D. II Peter 1:10b-11 . . . 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.

1. Now it is important to keep in mind that what we are to practice so as to never stumble is the adding and living out of the seven spiritual qualities listed in verses 5-7.
2. In other words, God is saying here that you can be abundantly certain about entering heaven after you die IF you add these seven spiritual qualities to your faith, and IF these qualities are growing and gaining ever greater influence over the way you live as a Christian.
3. Oh, but you say, not only my theology, but also the scriptures tell me that my salvation is certain. And that is true – Calvinism, the Reformed Tradition, the Free Grace movement, the Eternal Security group, and numerous scriptures – when taken by themselves – all affirm that once you are saved, you are always saved.
4. Which brings me back to the point I am trying to make. Getting too involved in the theological implications of this verse may make for great discussions and debates, but it will lead you away from the truth God has for you.
5. So what is Peter's point in these two verses? In simple terms, Peter is exhorting us to make worthy and ongoing efforts to stop sinning and to mature spiritually by adding these seven spiritual qualities, which will result in becoming useful and fruitful Christians. And the outcome of that is being exuberantly welcomed into God's eternal kingdom. So now let's take a closer look at these two verses.

III. A Godly Life is the Assurance of Salvation

- A. II Peter 1:10a . . . Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you . . .
 1. Back in verses 8-9, Peter tells us that we will experience great spiritual gain if we are adding the seven qualities of verses 5-7 to our faith and living accordingly. But Peter also says that we will suffer significant spiritual loss if we fail to add these seven spiritual qualities to our lives.
 2. Now because there is so much to be gained or lost, Peter then says we are to be all the more diligent, that is, we are to go above and beyond normal efforts to make certain about God's calling and choosing us so that we gain instead of lose the certainty of our salvation.
 3. Does this mean we earn salvation by diligently living a godly life? No! The penalty for sin is death, and the only way it can be paid by you is for you to spend eternity in hell – no matter what level of righteousness you attain in this life. Other than that, you need

someone else pay it for you – which is what Jesus did in His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

4. Well, what about Christians who continue to be spiritually lazy, selfish, and worldly? Does this mean they can lose their salvation? Peter is not answering that question any more than he answers the question of how selfish and sinful we can be and still be saved.
5. And this is important to understand, because what Peter is NOT telling us leads directly to the point I am trying to make.
 - a. You see, Peter never mentions that Christian perfection is impossible.
 - b. He says nothing about how often we want to do what is right yet still do what is wrong.
 - c. He does not comfort us in our struggle for righteousness with the reminder that no one is perfect.
 - d. He says nothing about God's grace being greater than our sinfulness – as if to comfort us when we sin.
 - e. And he never speaks a word about how sinful we can be and still be assured of our salvation.
6. What Peter focuses on is what God calls us to be as Christians, and what God has done to enable us to fulfill His call, and what we are to do in response to all that God has done. And then, Peter says that it is a God-pleasing life which assures us of our salvation. Let's read on . . .

B. II Peter 1:10b . . . for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

1. In other words, if you will put forth the diligent effort required to add these seven spiritual qualities to your faith, and if you will make it your daily habit to live accordingly– as much as you know how – you will never stumble.
2. Now I understand that it is unpopular in our day to teach this as if it were possible. I also understand that at certain levels of Christian maturity, it is hard to perceive that such a thing is possible. And yet, here is God is telling us through Peter that if we give proper attention to spiritual growth, we will get to a stumble free life.
3. And so my encouragement to you is, if you cannot perceive how a stumble-free life is possible, take God's word for it, and by faith make it your aim to diligently head in that direction.
4. And this brings us to verse 11.

- C. II Peter 1:11 . . . for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.
1. The truth Peter is conveying here is that the result of diligently pursuing the seven spiritual qualities is a godly life, and the outcome of living a godly life is having a biblically supported reason to be certain about the certainty of your salvation.
 2. Do you want to be certain about the certainty of your salvation? Then take hold of and make use of God's provisions as stated in II Peter 1:2-4 to follow God's prescription as stated in II Peter 1:5-11.

IV. End of year call to specific prayer and pursuit in 2014

- A. Because this is the last Sunday of 2013, I want to conclude today's teaching with an invitation to each of you to ask God for one specific thing in 2014, and to pursue this one thing – personally and as a group.
1. I am not suggesting that my recommended request and pursuit is the most important spiritual activity or action you as an individual or we as a church can take in the coming year. Surely, you know best what God is saying to you about what your focus ought to be in the coming year. And as you examine yourself throughout the year, you know what needs putting off, what needs putting on, and what needs further development.
 2. However, there is an area of the Christian life that I believe we would be exceedingly wise to pursue, individually and corporately, for at least one year.
- B. So what is it that I am asking us to pray for and pursue? It is the first and great commandment of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. Now let me give you some explanation.
1. When I love my wife, and I mean truly love my wife, I do not spend my days talking about how much she loves me, or how wonderful and gracious she is for forgiving me again and again for my repeated selfish, unkind, and insensitive ways. I do not repeatedly assure myself that she will never stop loving me no matter how poorly I treat her.
 2. Rather, when I love my wife, and I mean truly love her, my focus is on her. My efforts are focused on pleasing her and on doing what I can to endear myself to her. In fact, my efforts include avoiding even the appearance of anything that may jeopardize our relationship or

send the message I don't love her. And when I truly love my wife, I will love her without much regard for what it costs me to love her.

3. You see, when we love someone, life becomes about them, not us. We become incidental in comparison to them. And this is the kind of focus and the kind of relationship I long for us, individually and corporately, to have with God.

C. Now let me qualify what I am proposing for those who may need this kind of qualification.

1. I am not at all saying that it is wrong to treasure God's love for you, or His faithfulness to you, or His grace and forgiveness in the face of your sinfulness. I am not saying it is wrong to speak and sing of His love and grace. Such gratitude is fitting and worthy from those who have received from God far more than they deserve.
2. Yet at the same time, we are wrong to place an emphasis on His love for us without placing at least an equal emphasis on loving Him.

D. So here is what I am proposing to you as individuals and to us as a body of believers – spend this coming year praying about and acting on loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength – with an emphasis on the word LOVE and the word ALL. And here are some examples of what I mean by praying about and acting on.

1. Regarding prayer, I am inviting you to daily ask God to teach you personally and us as a church how to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and with all our strength.
2. And I am inviting you to daily ask God to show you where you are not loving Him this way, or to show you what is standing in the way of loving Him this way. And when you see something but don't know what to do about it, then ask Him to show you what you need to do to correct it.
3. Regarding action to take, I am inviting you to continue pondering and evaluating your choices, your longings, and your behavior to see if you are loving someone and/or something in place of God, or more than God. In other words, you are looking for people or things that are standing in the way of loving God supremely.
4. And I am inviting you to persevere in working at either removing from your life or putting into proper perspective anyone or anything that competes with God for your supreme love so that you can devote yourself to loving Him supremely.

E. Why a year?

1. Now you may be wondering why I am asking you do consider doing this for one year. Though the answer is simple, what you are dealing with is complex.
2. So the simple answer is: a year is needed because going from where we are today to loving God above all else is a complex process. For example, there is so much we need to learn about ourselves, about the way we see God, about what we actually treasure, about being honest with God and ourselves about ourselves, about living up to what we know – especially when only God and us know what it is we are doing, about loving as we want to be loved . . . just to name a few of the complexities of loving God supremely.
3. Added to this is the challenge of perseverance in the right direction. A year is a significant help in setting your course and establishing the habit of pursuing this level of love for God the rest of your days. Therefore, I am recommending that you personally and us corporately make a specific effort in this direction for one year.

F. There will be a cost.

1. If you take this invitation to heart and start down this path, you will experience trials and testing related to this pursuit.
2. The devil will throw what he can at you, as often as he can. God will test you to see how serious you are about loving Him this way, and to show you how far you have come in the process. In other words, this process will add hard times to your life. So count the cost and be prepared to pay the price.

V. Conclusion

A. I want us to conclude this time with Communion. And why Communion?

1. Because it is a wonderful reminder of God's love for us and the price He paid to love us and reclaim us as His own.
2. And it is a wonderful reminder of the fact that He is worthy of our supreme love while we are unworthy and therefore undeserving of His love.
3. And yet, He loved us and continues to love us. May we commit ourselves to showing Him gratitude by loving Him above all else.