

Ensuring Our Calling

II Peter 1

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On the way here, Beth noticed one of the placards on a church that said, "We are open between Easter and Christmas." That is typical of Protestantism, you know. Nobody seems to show up anytime but the Easter and Christmas holidays.

But, I am not really talking about that today. I am talking more about a doctrine that defines Protestantism. It is a doctrine that they really cling to very tenaciously, because it is a foundation of their particular brand of Christianity. This doctrine upholds a similar belief that we know as the Immortal Soul Doctrine, which is a lie that Satan has foisted upon mankind since the days of the Garden of Eden. Let us go back to that, just to look at it, because this is the origination of it.

Genesis 3:1-3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

What God had done here was to let them know that there was a penalty for sin; and one of those penalties was death—the cessation of all life. And, if you take it on far enough, this means total death—no eternal life, period. And after your judgment, you are burned; and that is the end. That was the threat that God held over mankind (and still holds over mankind) that, if we continue in sin, we will die. Now notice what the devil said.

Genesis 3:4-5 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So here was the lie—the lie that, "Look Adam. Look Eve. You have an immortal soul. God can't make that threat work." And, in its various forms down through the centuries (in the different types of religions that have been created on this earth), that is one of the doctrines that comes through time and time again—that man has an immortal soul.

Well, the particular doctrine that I am speaking of today is a part of this. It is called, in theological terms, the Doctrine of Eternal Security. And, what is worse is that this is the doctrine that has begun to deceive God's people; and it has because that was one of the things that was brought in, in the latest church apostasy over the past dozen years or so.

To put it in a nutshell, the Protestants believe that their salvation is assured once they accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Many call this doctrine by the very familiar phrase: Once saved, always saved. To them, this means that God is bound by the strongest of binding truths to accept them and to give them salvation no matter what occurs after that point—they are eternally covered by His grace; they have eternal security that they will be saved. We have probably heard the Protestant hymn "Just as I am, Lord. Just as I am."—The one that Billy Graham has taken around the world and had sung in probably just about every one of his crusades, that he does here and abroad.

To us, this idea of "eternal security" (knowing what we know and understanding what we do, with the Holy Spirit in us, and with the truth of God), we know that this is a totally ridiculous concept. God is pure and holy. He would not accept a people that are not the same. He would not even look at Jesus Christ, His own Son, when sin was put upon Him. Why would He look upon any of us, who are far further down the rungs of the ladder, if we came before Him in sin and with an attitude of "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah. God, You've already promised me eternal security." That just does not ring any bells with us.

I will use an analogy. Just because a criminal is absolved of a certain crime does not mean that he will never again be guilty of another crime. If the governor of a state (let us say, the state of North Carolina) absolves or commutes the sentence of a criminal here in the state, that does not mean that if he commits that crime—or any other crime—later on in his life that he will be held innocent. He will still be found guilty of the crime. He *will* be guilty of the crime. So, in the same way, a person who commits sin will be guilty of committing sin even though God's grace has covered that person in the past. If a person who sins continues in the sin and it becomes a habitual way of life, he is very much in danger of losing the salvation that has been promised to him; because he has gone against the wishes of God and sinned.

Let us go back to Hebrews. I want to just show this very quickly, because it is brought up a couple of times back there. I will just go to the one in chapter 10 and verse 26. Paul writes here:

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Do you catch what that says? If we sin willfully—meaning that we are doing it in rebellion against God, we have set our will to go against what we have been taught and use that as our way of life—Jesus Christ's sacrifice no longer applies. We have spit in His face. But notice what does apply.

Hebrews 10:27-30 But a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. [Then he compares this with what happened under the Old Testament law.] Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. [That is pretty harsh.] Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people."

Judgment is now on the house of God; and, if we live a life of sin, we will reap the judgment that comes—the punishment that comes—upon those sins. Verse 31 says:

Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

He is the God of justice. So, this idea of "eternal security" is something that we find very strange. How could they come up with such a thing, when the Bible, time and time again, comments, warns, advises (in many places) that we could lose it all?

There is one scripture that I would like to focus in on, that is—for those who believe on the doctrine of "eternal security"—a very tough nut to crack (like this other scripture that we just read there in Hebrews 10). This particular verse, that I am speaking of, exposes the lie in this infernal teaching by

stating a very simple command to us Christians that God wants us to carry out. And, if we will carry it out, then we will have the reward. But, if we do not carry it out, we will have the punishment. In the time remaining, I would like to go through that scripture and its context. So, please turn to II Peter 1. The particular scripture that I am going to be speaking about is verse 10. We will read verse 11 as well.

II Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, just looking at the face of it—in the simple English, as it is written in here—it is very easy to see that if we do not do what Peter advises, then our calling and election are *not* sure. All you have to do is turn it around, making it into a negative statement. Make both halves, of verse 10, negative. "Therefore, brethren, if you are not diligent to make your calling and election sure, you will stumble." We just turned it around. If we look at it that way, it is very clear. You will stumble; and, if you attach on the negative part of verse 11, it says there will not be an entrance supplied to you into the Kingdom of God.

God has done *His* part—He is the One who has called us. He is the One that has made the election (or, the choice) of us, out of all the billions on this planet. He has given us His Holy Spirit. He has granted us repentance. He has forgiven us. He has opened up the truth to us and revealed His life to us, and His Son's life to us. He has made a relationship with us and has given us the covenant. He has supplied grace, and love, and faith. And we can go on and on and on.

But, if there is not some reciprocal action on our part, things are going to fall apart. Our calling and election are *not* going to be certain. We can fall away. That is what is being said here. If we do not do *our* part, we will most likely stumble and not make it into the Kingdom of God.

Now, we have to ask the question: Why did Peter say this? What was the reason that he felt compelled to say this to the whole church? I want you to notice (up in verse one) that this was a General Epistle. This is very much unlike Paul, who usually wrote his epistles to a specific congregation—such as, "The apostle Paul to the saints who are in Ephesus" or "To those who are in Corinth" or "Those who are in Rome." Notice what Peter says though:

II Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

He is writing this to anybody who is a true Christian, who (like him, and like the other apostles) has obtained the like precious faith that comes through Jesus Christ. So this was a church-wide open letter to all the people in the church. No matter where they were, Jew or Gentile, in the Roman Empire or out of the Roman Empire. We could even say whether we were living then in the first century, or whether we are living now in the twentieth century (and about to dawn into the twenty-first century).

The reason why he wrote this is because there, in the church at that time, they were going through some very similar things as what we have been going through in the past dozen years. Let us go to chapter two and verse one; and we will see his reasons for wanting to write them and tell them to

make their calling and election sure. He had just been talking about the Old Testament. So now you understand why he uses this particular phraseology.

II Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people [speaking of Israel], even as there will be false teachers among you [meaning, the saints. Remember, he had addressed this to those with like precious faith as he had. So the "you" would be the other people in the church.], who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. [This hits this idea of "eternal security" in the head too.] And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

So he is repeating again that there is a judgment coming. God is a God of judgment. He is obviously a God of faithfulness and a God of mercy, but a God of justice as well. And there are, and will be, false teachers who try to bring destructive doctrines to turn the people away.

Just think, what reason would Satan have to put false teachers in the church if there was not a chance for the people to fall away? It just makes logical sense that he would just concede that x, y, and z church members have "eternal security"—so why waste his time on them? But, you see, he knows that we do not have "eternal security"; and, if he can turn us into apostates, then he has done a good job (from his perspective).

This was the atmosphere that Peter was writing in. The people in the first century church were coming upon a time of false teachings, false teachers, and apostasy; and he needed to warn them. The reason that he felt such urgency in doing this is because he was getting to be an old man.

Now look in chapter one again, and verse 12. He says:

II Peter 1:12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

Evidently, he was speaking to people whom he felt were quite 'with it.' They were established. They knew the present truth, meaning the truth that had been brought in the present time as it was then by Jesus Christ. They were firm in the gospel.

II Peter 1:13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent [meaning, in this present form as a physical man. The King James says, "in this tabernacle."], to stir you up by reminding you, . . .

He wanted to get them motivated, by giving them something that they already knew; but that would prod them into action. This is why he did it, particularly urgently, then.

II Peter 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

You might want to jot down John 21. In fact, let us go ahead and read those verses. Let us begin in verse 17, so you get the background of this. Jesus had been resurrected now for some time and He is talking here to Peter.

John 21:17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

This is very interesting in the light of what we have been going through, because this is exactly what Peter was doing in II Peter. Part of feeding the sheep is tending them, and guarding them, and keeping them, and commanding them to do the things that will make sure that they are good sheep and live long lives—and, in our case, (spiritually) have eternal life. In verse 18, Jesus goes on:

John 21:18-19 "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God. And when he had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

"Even though I've just predicted that you are going to be martyred, Peter, feed My sheep and follow me." This is what Peter was referring to back there in II Peter 1:14. He knew—because he was an old man and he had not yet been martyred (and he only figured that he was going to live his three score and ten)—it was going to be very soon that somebody was going to take him where he did not wish, and kill him. And he had to make sure that he got this warning out as soon as possible, because this death could happen to him tomorrow. So, he says then that "Yes, I think it's right to stir you up and warn you about these things."

II Peter 1:15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease [death].

It is kind of interesting that the word "deceased" in verse 15 (the one I paraphrased as 'death') is actually the word "exodus". So he is saying, "After my exodus." That is the same word, I believe, that Jesus used in Luke during the Transfiguration when He was telling them that He would have to die—that He would "exit." (Just a little sidelight there.)

Anyway, he knew that he only had a short while and that he had to get the warning out fast. He also knew that the church would go on, and that Christians would need this warning at all times. And if he was to die soon, the people that lived on would need it, especially, in the near future. So he said, "I will ensure that these words stay behind after I die, so that you can always go back and refer to them and get encouragement and a reminder that we need to 'keep on, keeping on'—to make our calling and election sure.

In verse 16, what he does here is give them evidence—give them assurance—that what he was saying is true and trustworthy. They needed this so that they would have something to fight the false teachers that would come.

II Peter 1:16 For we [He is using this first person plural pronoun because he is including all the apostles.] did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitness of His majesty.

He wants everybody who reads this to make sure that they understand that these were words from persons who were 'there'—who had seen it, who had heard it, who had felt emotions at that time, who

had had very intimate relationships with all the key players in this drama—and especially with Jesus Christ Himself. So you could trust His eyewitness account.

II Peter 1:17-19 For He [Jesus] received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [He is specifically speaking of the Transfiguration—recorded in Matthew 17.] And we [being the apostles, specifically Peter, James, and John] heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. [And then he switches gears just slightly.] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Now "the prophetic word" is the Bible—the Scriptures. Quickly, let us go to Hebrews the first chapter and the first verse.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

We do not need to go any farther than that; but this is exactly the same thing that Peter is saying in II Peter 1—that God spoke the prophetic word through the prophets and the men of God, by the Holy Spirit, in times past. At this particular time, He revealed all those things through Jesus Christ, who sent out the apostles with that same word. What Peter is saying is that all these things have equal authority. They have been made 'more sure' because they were eyewitnesses; and it was God's own Son who verified all these things and stamped them as God's truth.

II Peter 1:20-21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

That sounds almost exactly like Hebrews 1:1-2. So he was advising them, first off, that the apostles' accounts of Jesus' life (and their letters they wrote based on that life, and the teaching that they had been given by Jesus Christ) were just as authoritative as the Old Testament scriptures that were given to the holy men of God—the prophets—through the Holy Spirit. And the people then could rely on the writings of the apostles and the prophets, who are the foundation—with Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone—of everything we know. Right? Of the church?

So Peter is making sure that they understood that, when the time of apostasy comes, they could have these writings to rely on for the truth. They could always go back there and find the truth, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

That begs the question: Why did Peter make this command for them to make their calling and election sure? If they had the truth, and he admitted that they were established in it, why did they have to go and make it even more 'sure'? The reason is that, because in doing that (in making their calling and election sure), they were doing the one thing that would keep them on the right path. With the passage of time, if they were just where they *were* (if they did not do anything more), they could fall off that path. So this 'making their calling and election sure' was the one thing that would keep them in the middle of the road and not falling into any ditches. And it was that 'making their calling and election sure' that would "qualify" them for God's Kingdom.

This was the way, then, that Christians could keep themselves from falling into deception, and error, and sin—and how they could guarantee that they would not fall away from the truth, apostatize, and lose their salvation. That is what Peter was concerned about. "Look, the time is coming. This is how you stay straight and fly right."—by making your calling and election sure.

Now, how are we supposed to do that? What are we supposed to do? What are we actually doing when we make our calling and election sure? I would like to paraphrase this verse (I Peter 1:10), just so we can put it maybe in a little bit plainer language and use different words that might help us understand the process here. He says—"So, brethren, be urgent in firmly validating your calling and election, for in doing these things you will never fall away." The important word here is "validate." It is a fairly good translation of the word "to make" (in the Greek). It can also be the word "ratify." If you add the word "sure" on there, it could mean to make firm, or solid, or steadfast.

When you validate something, we are not talking here about validating a parking ticket or something like that. But when you are actually validating something (let us say something that somebody told you). Let us say that somebody told you that so-and-so had just gotten married; and what you wanted to do was validate that was true. So, you would go to the Office of Records, maybe; and you would get proof that this wedding had taken place. That is what you do when you validate a fact.

So, when you validate something, you are objectively determining that something is genuine; or something is true; or something is real; or something is legal. You are trying to make sure that whatever-it-is is authentic. You want to make sure that everything is hunky-dory, copacetic, or whatever. You are making sure that everything is right.

Now how do Christians do this? How do Christians *validate* their calling and election? The answer is really very simple. It is something that we speak about, and read about, and study about quite a bit. It is back there in Matthew 7, and we will read verses 15 through 20.

Matthew 7:15-20 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

The way we validate our calling and election is by producing fruit. Let us go to John 15, where Jesus expounds on this in His Passover message. While they were all there reclining around the table, after they had eaten the Passover meal, He was giving them final instruction—and this was part of it.

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away . . .

Now this just blows the "eternal security" thing on its head, or up. It just blows it to smithereens. Our Savior, Jesus Christ—our Judge—says that if you do not bear fruit, He gets rid of you (speaking more specifically of the Father). He takes it away. He does not want dead wood.

John 15:2-5 . . . and every branch that bears fruit He prunes [He gives it trials and tests. Why?], that it may bear more fruit [by discipline, that fruit is produced in our lives.] You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in

you. [Stay hooked to the vine.] As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine [Jesus says], you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit . . .

Obviously, this connection to the vine is *very* important! But remember that Peter (in II Peter 1) assumes that they are connected to the vine. He says, "You are established in this present truth." So, what he is telling them to do is to maintain their dwelling, their abiding, their continuing—in Christ (the Vine).

John 15:5-6 "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. [That link needs to be there.] If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered . . .

If you do not make your calling and election sure, you will surely stumble; and a place will probably not be made for you in the Kingdom of God.

In another parable, He is talking about the angels gathering the bad things and throwing them into the fire and they are burned. It sounds to me an awful lot like the Lake of Fire.

John 15:6-7 . . . and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

He is promising that, if we continue with this, we will have the help we need. We ask for wisdom, James says; and God will bountifully give us the wisdom we need. He is not slack in these things.

John 15:8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

So you will *really be* Christians—if you bear fruits. That is what Peter is talking about. The way you 'make your calling and election sure' is to keep on producing fruit. *Much fruit!* That keeps us centered on the road. That keeps our eyes fixed on the goal. This is how we validate our calling—by considering the fruit (the good works, the growth) that we do. If we are learning; if we are showing our love to the brethren; if we are serving as opportunities permit; if we are deepening our relationship with God—we can be certain that our calling and election are still firmly in force.

God says, does He not, that when He starts a work in us He is going to finish it. So His side is always going to be there, unless we are *not* pulling our end of the load. And God will do everything that He can to get us to change that. But there may come a point where He has to say, "So long."

Now, He is a God of mercy; and I am sure that those He has called back from the brink (as it were) He has given quite a lot of rope to. And we can be very thankful that He does that. If He were to do that at just any old slip up, we would be all grease spots. He would have left us all a long time ago. But He is a very merciful God—one who is *abounding* in mercy, and who gives us more grace than what we deserve.

This thought of bearing fruit, and growth Peter continues to go back to; and he closes his epistle with it in II Peter 3. He goes through chapter 2, where he is talking about false teachers and the false teachings, and how bad they are—what kind of deceptions they are going to bring.

Then he goes into chapter 3 to tell the reader that God is faithful. Down in verse 9 of chapter 3, he tells us how longsuffering God is with us; and He wants to grant repentance to everybody. He does not want to lose anybody. But there does come a time when He has to say, "This is as far as it goes."

Then Peter goes into the Day of the Lord, in verses 10 through 13. There he says that there is a great fiery indignation—a great fiery judgment—coming, where all the elements will melt. This fiery judgment will dissolve those who do not come up to the standard. So he says, "What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." (Verse 11) Because of this great judgment that is coming, it should scare you (if nothing else) into doing what is right and godly and holy before God.

II Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things . . .

I do not know if they were really looking forward to them, or not. We should be, because that is the time of our reward and our change! So, if we are staying on the beam, they are good times that are coming. That means that our judgment is up and we have been accepted and glorified with Him. But He also does not want us to forget that the judgment is also there.

II Peter 3:14 Looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

Now, this is the negative side of 'making our calling and election sure'—that is, taking out the spots. The removing of sin, taking out the things that are blameworthy. As in the Days of Unleavened Bread, in the negative aspect we remove leavening. We remove sin. The positive aspect of the Days of Unleavened Bread is being unleavened and growing.

Remember that these festivals have agricultural principles tied to them. The spring holy day season is when the wave sheaf was cut. That was the beginning of the barley harvest; and barley has to grow to be reaped. So, on the one hand, there is the removing of sin, getting the spots out, and taking out the things that are blameworthy; and, on the other hand, there is growth.

II Peter 3:15 And consider [account] that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—

Yeah, are not we glad that God is longsuffering? We can account our salvation to the fact that He is merciful and faithful.

II Peter 3:15-16 as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

This is another warning from Peter. Just because they have God's Word, they have to be careful of those who are teaching from it—to make sure that they are not twisting the scripture. Especially Paul's writings could lend themselves to people twisting them, because they are on a higher plane than some of the other, plainer, scriptures. Paul is trying to deal with rather difficult theological concepts. And, if you get someone in there with a very cunning mind, they can twist these things. So you have to use the rest of the scriptures to even that out; and, as we have always said in teaching people about Bible study, interpret the more difficult scriptures by the more simple ones.

II Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand [I have warned you.], beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

Watch out! These days are coming. Those people are out there. Those teachings exist; and they will try to use them. So, be careful; and do not fall.

II Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That *growth* in grace and knowledge is the thing that is going to keep us balanced—to be able to see the error and to reject it.

II Peter 3:18 To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

This is how Peter ends the epistle. It is the same thought that he had in the first chapter. "Dangerous times are coming. The way to stay on the beam is to keep on growing." If you grow, your salvation is assured. Your calling and election are sure. God is faithful, if we are faithful. He is faithful far beyond when, sometimes, we are unfaithful. But He has promised this. It is a sure promise *if* we keep up our end of the bargain.

Let us go back to the first chapter and see what has led up to what Peter told them to do. This is how you grow (in verse 5). He had just told them that they would partake in the divine nature.

II Peter 1:5-7 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence [There is that word again. We have to be diligent. We have to be urgent. We have to really, earnestly try.], add [This word "add" means supplement, or accompany, very generously.] to your faith [That is what we start with—faith, or belief in Jesus Christ and the salvation that comes.] virtue, add to virtue knowledge, add to knowledge self-control [That is a hard one. The last of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, because it may be one of the hardest things to do—to have real self-control, the kind that Jesus Christ had.], to self-control add perseverance [Endure to the end and you shall be saved.], add to this godliness [the character of God, the way that God would act], add to this brotherly kindness [service to one another, love and genuine concern and affection for one another], and to brotherly kindness add love [the 'agape' type of love—the hardest love to learn.]

We have to keep adding all of these things. We cannot just rely on the simple faith that we had at our baptism. We must continue to grow—in all these areas—diligently!

II Peter 1:8 For if these things are yours and abound [He does not just leave it at a surface understanding of these things.], you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." This is how you do it—by adding, diligently, all these things and growing and bearing fruit. Look at the flip side.

II Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness. [They are myopic. They do not see the big picture. They are blind.]; and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Remember what we read back there in Hebrews 10? That the blood of Christ applies once. If a person lacks these things, he is on his way to making the blood of Christ of no account. He is forgetting what has been done for him. If he keeps on that course, he may reject it.

Let us conclude in Colossians 1, where Paul says a similar thing. This is really very simple. God says that *if* we continue in the way, *if* we are diligently seeking Him, *if* we are diligently trying to put on the new man—that is, the character and the righteousness of God—*then* deception cannot touch us. We *will* get our reward; and we *will* gain an abundant, triumphant entrance into the Kingdom of God. Notice what Paul says:

Colossians 1:21-22 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

My Bible has a little dash there. Usually a dash in writing says something like, "Wow! Listen to this, because this is something that is going to be important." You are setting it off with a dash. There is something there that is important to understand. Continuing in verse 23 (the biggest little word in the English language)...

Colossians 1:23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.

God (Jesus Christ) earnestly wants to present you, before His Father, holy and blameless and irreproachable to the Father; but we have a part to play too. *We have to continue in the faith. We have to remain grounded and steadfast. We have to keep learning the gospel. We have to continue to have the hope of our resurrection and eternal life in front of our face.*

So let us take Peter's admonition seriously and do our best—be diligent, be urgent—to make our calling and election sure!