

Giving All Diligence!

Make Your Call and Election Sure

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The Apostle Peter probably wrote his second epistle (called '2nd Peter') from Rome not too long before his martyrdom, sometime during A.D. 64-67. Elements within the letter indicate that Peter wrote during a time of persecution by Rome (perhaps during the persecution by Nero, who died in A.D. 68), while Peter himself was in a Roman prison awaiting imminent execution.

Second Peter teaches that the grace of God, in Christ, truly transforms and empowers Christians to live righteously, even in the face of opposition. We are seeing opposition to the name and teachings of Jesus Christ, and His apostles, increasing on an almost daily basis, making this letter very applicable today.

This grace of God, in Christ, serves as the foundation for Peter's exhortations. The indwelling Holy Spirit, which characterizes Christians as "partakers of the divine nature," produces virtuous "qualities" in followers of Christ, which in turn result in fruitful lives.

Peter writes this brief, final reminder to the churches so that we will, by God's grace, live a life that is pleasing to Him. In addition to teaching this, Peter also has to combat the false teachers who were apparently putting pressure on the churches to depart from the true knowledge of Christ.

These false teachings are not only theological challenges but also moral ones, because of the promotion in the church of some form of sexual permissiveness as a legitimate Christian lifestyle. Things were deteriorating, and becoming somewhat perverse in some peoples minds.

II Peter 1:1-2 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: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

In his initial blessing of those to whom he writes, Peter mentions a recurring idea in the letter: true knowledge of God and of Jesus. Verse 2, like verse 1, points to the deity of Christ, because both God and Christ are the object of this knowledge.

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In II Peter 1, the apostle Peter tells us to pursue the development of Christian qualities. He named essential virtuous qualities that have to be added, in order for our character to be an effective witness of God's way of life. God calls us to become like Him and to share His glory and virtues.

In this first main section of his letter, Peter emphasizes that God's grace results in godliness.

II Peter 1:3-4 ...as His divine power [the Holy Spirit] has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue [*arete*], by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

We have the same blessing on us today, as God's people.

The English word "virtue," in verse 3, is the general meaning of the Greek word 'arete.' This word refers to any mental excellence, or moral quality. It is moral excellence. The end of verse 3 is literally, "*by His own glory and virtue.*" God's glory emanates His natural attributes, and His virtue emanates His moral attributes. God's power is manifested in His glory and virtue.

In verse 4, we are told that since we have been given such wonderful promises, we have a responsibility to develop these virtues. The word "escaped" indicates that we are pursued by Satan, and our own human nature, to draw us back to the corruption of the world. So we do indeed need this blessing that is placed upon every member of God's church.

II Peter 1:5-11 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 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.

Here, in this first chapter of his second epistle, the apostle Peter deals with a cause of spiritual depression. He is writing the letter to encourage people who are discouraged to such a degree that they seem to have doubted the faith that they had believed and accepted. Similar to what pressures people in God's church are under today.

It can be a real danger in this state of depression; if the condition persists and continues. Spiritual depression invariably leads to doubts and uncertainty, and to a proneness to look back to the old life from which we have been delivered.

Providentially for us, Peter in this instance gives us a very clear description of the condition. He tells us indirectly a number of things about the people to whom he is writing. For example, he puts it like this. Having given his exhortation, he says in verse 8, *'For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

If these things are in you and are plentiful—are flourishing, are thriving—you will be in a positive state of mind, rather than a negative one. Why? Because then you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord, implying that their condition was *'barren and unfruitful.'*

But not only that, he says that they *were 'blind and could not see very far and that they had forgotten that they had been purged from their old sins.'* It appears that they were falling, because he tells them that if they do these things they will *'never fall,'* and not only that, but if they do these things they will *'make their call and election sure.'* It is clear that, at that time, they were not very sure about these things, and he was trying to strengthen them.

Peter was writing to Christians. And although these people are Christians they are unhappy, they are ineffective in their witness of God's way of life. Their lives do not seem to lead to anything, and they are not helpful to other people.

Here is this tremendous knowledge and understanding that is available—but they just did not get it. They have not advanced in it, they have not grown, and they are unfruitful in that respect. In fact, though they are Christian they seem to have very little to show for it. This is what happens to members of God's church at times when they are under severe persecution, if they take their eyes off God Himself.

Also, they seem to be failing to understand the meaning of conversion; they seem to have forgotten the fact that they have been *'cleansed from their old sins,'* and they are

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living as if that had not happened. So their mental state was a serious one, and Peter needed to remind them of the promises and the blessings that they had from God.

Now all these things always and inevitably go together. When there is a lack of understanding and fruitlessness in this matter of comprehension, you will generally get a corresponding failure in life, both with respect to righteousness and usefulness, and value to other people.

So this is the description that Peter gives these people. They have little left in their lives to show that they are Christians. They are bound in shadows and miseries; they do not give the impression of being 'Christians' who have God's Holy Spirit. I am not speaking about every last one that existed during the time of Peter, but those who were declining, and there were many.

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Sadly, the impression that they give is one of barrenness and unfruitfulness; little to almost nothing is being produced in them. They are of little benefit to others. They are personally weak and do not seem to be increasing and developing spiritually. Their whole life seems to be totally ineffective, and they are somewhat downcast, unhappy and shaken by doubts.

They do not seem to be able to give 'a reason for the hope that is in them.'

I Peter 3:15-16 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

The people that Peter is trying to encourage say that they believe, but they are always in this position in which the very foundation of their faith seems liable to be shaken. So that is the condition that the apostle Peter deals with in the first chapter of II Peter.

The first thing that we have to consider is the cause of the condition. How do people get into such a state? Why are they unlike other Christians who are fruitful, and whose lives are effective and living and life-giving—what is the difference? There is only one

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ultimate cause for all the manifestations of this depression, and that is a lack of discipline.

That is the real trouble; it is sheer absence of discipline and order in their life. But, Peter does not leave it at a general statement. The New Testament writers never stop at generalities, they always go further and bring out the details, and they consider the problem point by point; and so does Peter in this particular instance. Why are these people lacking discipline in their lives? Why is this laziness so apparent in their lives?

The first cause seems to be that they have a wrong view of faith. Now this we find in the beginning of the fifth verse, where he says, '*And beside all this—for this very cause—giving all diligence add to your faith.*' He says to supplement your faith, finish out your faith with the things that he then goes on to mention.

Peter seems to suggest that they have a wrong view of faith. This is something that is very common, so it is not a surprise here. They seem to have had a magical view of faith. In other words, that as long as you have faith all is well, that your faith will work automatically in your life, and that all you need to do as a Christian is just believe the truth.

You have to accept the faith and having done all that, all the rest will automatically happen to you; you just take one step, you make a decision, or whatever it may be called, and that is all that is necessary. That is what mainstream Christianity believes is the definition of faith, but not so for us. It is almost a magical view of faith, or an automatic conception of faith.

Let us look at this in a slightly different way. Often there is what we might describe as a mystical view of faith. This certainly accounts for the trouble in many people. By a mystical view, I mean a conception of faith that always thinks of it as a whole and complete element, needing nothing else.

Putting it negatively, I mean that such people do not realize that faith needs to be supplemented by virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, as Peter shows here.

They have one formula only, and the one formula is that you must always be looking to God the Father and Jesus Christ, and as long as you look to Them there is nothing else to do.

In mainstream Christianity, they say that any attempt to do anything else is dropping

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back to the 'salvation by works' position. So if you have a problem in your Christian life they say to you: 'Just look to the Lord, abide in the Lord'. This is a very common error of mainstream Christianity. You will find it in the case of expositors who hold this view.

In expounding certain passages of Scripture where much emphasis is put on details they are obviously struggling, because from their standpoint you must not be concerned about details. There is only one thing to do, you 'abide in the Lord and look at Him' and as long as you do that there is nothing more to be done. As I said, it is a kind of mystical view of faith.

This is the most productive cause of this kind of spiritual depression and lethargy with which we are dealing. People like this spend their time in this unhappy condition. All along they are trying to apply this exhortation to 'just abide in the Lord,' and for a while all seems to work well, but then somehow or another something seems to go wrong, and they do not seem to be 'abiding' and they are unhappy once again.

The problem returns, and the whole of their life is spent in trying to maintain this one position that they recognize. We must be sure that our view of faith is the true spiritual perspective, and that we realize what Peter means here when he goes on to say that we have to 'add' to our faith, to 'supplement' our faith, with certain other things for it to be effective.

The second general cause of this condition is undoubtedly nothing but sheer laziness, or to use Peter's wording, a lack of diligence.

He says, '*Beside this, giving all diligence.*' He is very concerned to impress that upon us, and so he repeats it again in verse 10 '*be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.*'

There is a kind of general laziness that afflicts us all, and is undoubtedly produced and used by Satan himself. We have all noticed that, and when it comes to spiritual things in life we do not seem to have the same zeal and enthusiasm, nor do we apply the same energy as we do with our secular calling or vocation, our profession or business, our pleasure, or something that we happen to be interested in.

We have all noticed that when we have been enjoying our work that somehow if we shift gears to have a time of prayer, we suddenly feel tired and fatigued. It is curious that we often become tired and sleepy when we want to read the Bible, especially at the end of the day, or the end of the week?

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We are positive that it is something purely physical, and that we really cannot help ourselves, but it is as certain as anything, that the moment we begin to apply ourselves to spiritual things, we will immediately come face to face with this problem of laziness that afflicts us, however alert and energetic that we may have been previously.

Or think of it as it assumes the form of procrastination. We want to read the Bible, we want to study it, but we do not feel like it at the moment; we think it is a bad thing to try to do these things when we do not feel up to it, and we are better putting it off until we feel better. There will be a more appropriate opportunity later on, or so we believe. Or we do not have the time, or we lack the opportunity.

How often have we all experienced this kind of thinking? I think that everyone in the church has at one time or another. Then when the time does come, in a strange way we still find we cannot apply ourselves. It is beyond dispute that most of us are living lives that are seriously lacking in discipline, order and arrangement, especially when it comes to our relationship with God and Bible study.

With regard to time, life has never been quite as difficult for the follower of Christ as it is in this end-time period. The world and the organizations of life around us make things seem almost impossible; the most difficult thing in life is to organize your own life and to manage it.

The reason for this lack of organization and management of our lives is not that these external things really compel us, but that if we do not realize the danger of drifting and make a stand against it, we will have failed without knowing it. There are so many things that distract us: the Internet, newspapers, radio, television, telephone and incidents that arise.

The thing is put in front of us, and without our realizing it, there is something occupying our time. The fact is that every one of us is fighting for his life at the present time, fighting to have power over, master and live our own life. It is very common for people to think that they do not seem to have time to read their Bible and to meditate as they would like.

Now the simple answer to that is, that it is sheer lack of discipline, it is sheer failure to organize our life—to prioritize appropriately. It is no use complaining about circumstances. It simply comes back to this, and there is no need to argue about it—we all have time!

If we have time to do these other things, we do have the time; and the whole secret of

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success in this respect is to take that time and insist that it is given to this matter of our spiritual health instead of these other things. That is the second cause of the trouble—a sheer lack of discipline in life, a failure to organize our lives, to command and to control our lives as we know in our heart of hearts that we should.

That being the cause let us turn to the treatment. What is the treatment prescribed by the apostle Peter for this condition? As you probably guessed, it is the reverse of the cause of the trouble.

II Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

First and foremost, Peter emphasizes 'all diligence.' 'Make every effort,' according to another translation.

That is it! Peter is saying: 'besides this,' 'in addition to this,' 'for this cause,' 'in the light of these things,' 'but also for this reason' make every effort.

The exceedingly great and precious promises that are given, with all the things that pertain to life and godliness, and because you have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust—because all these things 'make every effort,' 'give all diligence,' or as it is translated in verse 10, be even more diligent! Even more zealous than ever before to do these things, it cannot be emphasized enough.

Here is the treatment then, the exercise of discipline and of diligence.

Maybe the best way of putting this matter is to put it in a simple historical manner. In the life of the faithful saints that stand out, one of the greatest characteristics they evidence is discipline and order. They have all disciplined their lives and have insisted on the need for this; obviously it is something that is thoroughly scriptural and absolutely essential.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We must be diligent in our seeking, and be more zealous, and be more active in our effort for spiritual things. Some have mistakenly called this justification by works. The

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error of justification by works is in trusting in the discipline of your own efforts to save you; but the opposite of trusting in your own works is not to do nothing, it is to do all that you can, but not to put your trust in any of your own efforts.

It is not the works that are wrong; it is the faith in your works, trusting in your works to save you. But what a subtle danger this is. The opposite of a false trust in works is not laziness, lack of discipline, and doing nothing—it is to be diligent and more diligent, to be zealous, and to add to your faith.

But the whole time you have to realize that your action alone will never be enough, but God is certainly a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. So many people say that they would give anything to have but a vestige of knowledge that the heroes of faith had, "If only I had that joy, that zeal!" they say.

The answer is that these people that lack diligence and discipline never really sought it. Those faithful saints gave a tremendous amount of time to scripture reading, prayer, various other forms of self-examination and spiritual exercises. And it was because they did so, that God rewarded them with joy in the present life.

So we put first the sheer necessity of discipline and order. If claiming time and ordering our daily lives is so important, we must realize that at all costs certain things must be done. In other words if we really believe that the Bible is more important to us than the Internet, radio, television, our phones, we must read our Bibles before we do the other far less important things.

Whatever else we may leave undone, we must see to it that this is done. Our prayer time must be insisted upon, we have to have time for meditation, even if it means something of less importance is left undone, we still have to make time for the spiritual things.

That is the beginning, that is an illustration of an element of order coming back into life. So many people fail at this and become miserable and depressed, simply because they have not organized themselves. It is something that has to be done yourself; it will never be done for you, because nobody else can do it for you. It takes self-control.

If we do not attend to these things in detail ourselves, we will remain depressed. 'Give all diligence,' 'make every effort,' 'be more than zealous,' 'see to it at all costs' is the point that Peter is making.

II Peter 1:5 "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your

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faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."

The second principle is that we have to supplement our faith. The apostle Peter says, '*Add to your faith.*'

"Add" is used in the sense of supplying or providing. Paul uses the same word in Galatians 3:5: "...*He who supplies the Spirit to you...*"

Many translations say "to add" one virtue to another, but the Greek says "to develop one virtue in the exercise of another." Each new quality springs out of and perfects the other.

Peter's chain of eight virtues starts with faith and ends in love. We are expected to have faith and out of it must grow other excellencies.

In addition, the Bible word studies tell us that this word 'add,' or 'supplement,' or 'furnish,' (depending on your Bible translation of II Peter 1:5) is a Greek word that was used in connection with the performance of a drama. It carries the indication of the providing of a kind of orchestra or chorus.

You add to, supplement or furnish the performance with this orchestra, this chorus, so that it may be complete. It was something that rounded off the performance and made it a perfect performance. That is the meaning of the word—add to it, supplement it, furnish it, make the thing complete—and let it be a complete faith. What do you add to faith? Peter gives us this list that we are reading here.

The first thing he says is: 'Add to your faith virtue.' What does he mean by that?

Over the centuries, use of the English word "virtue" has changed very little. According to Webster's Dictionary of Word Origins, the Romans derived the noun *virtus*—from which we get our word virtue—from their word *vir*, meaning 'man.' *Virtus* meant the sum of the excellent qualities of men, including physical strength, valorous conduct, and moral rectitude.

By the fourteenth century, the word 'virtue' in English came to be applied to any characteristic, quality, or trait known or felt to be excellent.

By the end of the 16th century, the sense of 'chastity and purity' appeared, especially in reference to women.

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The meaning of the word virtue has changed slightly since the King James Version of the Bible was produced in 1611 A.D. Today, "virtue" is defined in Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, as general moral goodness; right action and thinking; uprightness; rectitude; morality.

It does not mean 'virtue' in the sense in which we commonly use it today, because each item in the list is a virtue in that sense. Its meaning here is energy—moral energy—it means power; it means vigor. Now this is very important, because this contradicts laziness.

The condition that Peter is dealing with is this lethargic, undisciplined, slack kind of Christian life. He begins by reminding us of that, '*Now you have faith, you believe the truth, there is no doubt about that, you have the same faith with us*' (the apostles.) So what else do they need to do about it?

He tells us that in addition to the faith that they had, and that we have, we have to cease from being undisciplined. In other words, add to your faith moral energy, pull yourself together, and do not shuffle through life. Walk through it as you should do with vigor, add to it that kind of strength and power that ultimately comes from God, through Jesus Christ in us.

Do not be an undisciplined Laodicean Christian, where you are at the point of fainting, ready to fail at anytime. Peter says, 'Do not be lethargic. Supplement your faith with vitality, energy, and enthusiasm.

The Laodiceans, as we will see later, have enthusiasm for what they want materially, but that is the wrong kind of enthusiasm.

Is this exhortation really necessary? Every member of God's church should understand this. Compare and contrast the typical average Christian with the typical average person of the world. The Christian claims that he is interested in spiritual things, and in the Kingdom of God, and in the knowledge of God and of Christ. He says that he has faith, and that is what faith means.

Yet compare him with the average person who is interested in various games and the things that happen in the world of sports. You see the difference; there is nothing lethargic about the person who is interested in these things. Look at their excitement and their energy when they are anticipating a game.

Then look at the professing Christian by contrast, how lethargic he often is, how

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apparently lackadaisical he is. And the reason may be that this type of Christian has failed to add to his faith. He says that he is a Christian and believes the truth, but he fails to 'supplement' his faith. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with playing sports or watching sports, I am just saying that you can look at the people in the world and there is an obsession with it, and they are not asleep when they are dealing with their obsession.

The next thing on the list is in II Peter 1:5: *'Add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge.'* This does not simply mean knowledge of doctrine. We have a certain amount of that; otherwise we would not have any faith at all. This means a kind of insight, it means understanding; it means enlightenment.

Obviously, we do not know everything when we begin to believe in Christ, we do not understand fully then; that is only the beginning. There are constant appeals and exhortations in the New Testament epistles to grow in understanding. The Apostle Paul says, *'that your love may grow...in understanding,'*

That is what Peter is saying at this point. He says that we must not stop believing. We are already Christians, but we have to understand God's way of life. We have to come to see the subtle dangers that surround us, we have to understand: 'so add to your faith, ' strive for this insight, this apprehension, and this enlightenment.

It is essential that we spend time diligently reading the inspired written word of God. A student never becomes proficient in any subject without diligence, hard work; and that takes discipline. Without true knowledge, a person can never have this true understanding.

It needs discipline and application; it is very hard work to supplement your faith with knowledge.

True knowledge results in insight and understanding. The "knowledge" that is to be added to faith is insight into the will of God. Moral zeal must be guided by right knowledge, or it will result in a zeal for a false God because of false knowledge.

Romans 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Here, zeal for God means passionate dedication in the things pertaining to God. Many Israelites may have been sincere; but sincerity does not of itself constitute true faithfulness.

John 16:2-3 They [Israelites, more specifically Jews] will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

This misguided energy is an instance of extraordinary zeal in which they are sincere; but of course, persecution to death of the saints cannot be true dedication to God. Saul, who later became Paul, was guilty of this same thing.

Acts 26:9-11 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

So many people convince themselves that provided they are sincere and zealous, they must be acceptable to God. But the zeal that is acceptable glorifies God, and is founded on love. It is not motivated by self-righteousness, or to promote one's own form of religion.

Often zeal for God is not according to knowledge because it is not founded on God's Truth; it is founded on one's own personal view of religion. Such zeal is wrongly directed enthusiasm, and often results in persecuting those who give a true witness of God's Truth.

Many have left the Church of God, and have formed their own organizations on this very same type of zeal and sincerity, not all but many.

II Peter 1:6-7 ...to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

In II Peter 1:6, the next thing is self-control, and here it does not simply mean that you control your life in general. This self-control is a much more detailed and specific thing than that. It means that you will have to control every single aspect of your life. It means you even have to control your eating and drinking.

The authorities are constantly telling us that many people are in a poor state of physical health because they eat and drink too much. There is no doubt that this is true, and that there is an increasing tendency to it in this present society. It is thrust on us at every turn, and made attractive.

There are people who suffer from tiredness and lethargy very often simply because of a lack of self-control. They do not control their appetites, their lusts, their passions, or their desires; they eat too much, or drink too much, or even sleep too much.

The way to get an insight into that is to read about the lives of the saints, to read what they did with themselves, and how they controlled their lives. How fearful that they were of these very things, and how clearly they realized that they had to avoid them at all cost.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Self-control is the exact opposite of the covetous and lustful excesses of the world. One can even do it with their telephone or the internet as well; they can be a glutton for anything.

In II Peter 1:6, 'perseverance' or 'patience' means patient endurance, to keep on going through everything that discourages you. We have to do that, and we have to push ourselves. We have to rise above the way we feel, especially when we are feeling down. We have to add this to our faith.

It does not mean passively 'looking to God.' We personally have to exercise patience, and go on steadily doing this day by day. God gives us the strength if we do the work.

This virtue views time through God's eyes, while waiting for Christ's return, and for the punishment of sin. II Peter 3:8 says that, "*with God a thousand years is as one day.*" Patient endurance is the ability to continue in the faith and resist the pressures of the world indefinitely, forever if need be.

And then again in II Peter 1:6, 'godliness,' which at this point means concern about and carefulness in maintaining our relationship with God. Godliness is devotion to God first and foremost. It is a very practical awareness of God in every aspect of life. Godliness is reverence toward God. It also means right respect and proper regard for others. It is love toward God first and then to man.

Then in II Peter 1:7, in the last two items in the list, Peter is concerned about our attitude towards our fellow human beings: 'Brotherly kindness' (Philadelphia) is warmth of affection. Personal relationships are not a nuisance when we have brotherly kindness toward one another.

'Love' (agape) is godly love, and is self-sacrificing action on behalf of another. It is outgoing concern and sacrificing for others even if they are outside the faith. Simply put: love is the keeping of, or fulfillment of, the commandments. We must love as a way of life, and that is what the commandments teach us. Although the last two items are of the utmost importance, I do not have time to cover each of them in detail.

The apostle Peter has taken us through all of these various steps and stages, and he starts and ends by giving us encouragement to do all that he has told us to do. What is the encouragement?

Just prior to his list of qualities of spiritual excellence, Peter first reminds us of what we are. He tells us that we have become '*partakers of the divine nature.*'

II Peter 1:1-4 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: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

By being 'partakers of the divine nature', we have received God's Holy Spirit to help us add these virtuous qualities to faith.

Second, Peter reminds us that for this cause then '*give all diligence!*'—Peter says, 'Surely you have not forgotten that you have been purged from your old sins.' What a

tremendous encouragement that is, as we add to our faith.

II Peter 1:8-9 For if these things [i.e., Peter's list of qualities] are yours and abound, you will be neither barren [useless] nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things [faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love] is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

So Peter both warns and encourages us. He encourages with the fact that we are partakers of the divine nature, and that we are cleansed from our old sins. He warns that the lack of these things added to faith, and connected with each other, is a lack of vision. It is shortsighted at the very least.

A nearsighted person can see only the objects that are near him, but he has no proper understanding of things that are more remote. Spiritually, he sees only a short way into God's truth and way of life. Because of a lack of diligence and discipline, he is unable to see and comprehend the true big picture of where life is headed for him and the rest of humanity. He has little or no clue as to how to help add these virtues to his character.

Notice what the angel of the church in Philadelphia wrote is the result of those who add these things:

Revelation 3:10-12 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

The person with the Philadelphia attitude toward these things will be protected in the Great Tribulation, and will receive the name of God as his new family name, as a member of the family of God.

Progressive growth in these qualities is a sign of spiritual growth. And this growth in Christian character thwarts the Laodicean attitude. Notice what the angel of the church

of the Laodiceans wrote is the result of those who lack these things:

Revelation 3:15-19 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm [lackadaisical, lazy], and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

If these virtuous qualities are developed in a piece-meal way or not added to one another, they are like 'fabric' that has never been attached by thread to a piece of incomplete clean clothing to complete it. The fabric is useless by itself, if it is never added to anything functional. As a result, the wearer is left partially or totally naked. We must add to our faith.

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.

'Be even more diligent'—be eager—'make every effort' to make your call and election sure. This focuses on the confidence we have about our standing with God. We do not have the authority to assure God of our status; in reality the opposite is true.

The Greek word for "sure" is used in reference to confirming something as in the legal terminology of validating a will. It means to make the will binding and valid. We are assured of having been called and elected by God by continually pursuing and developing Christian qualities. We cannot earn salvation with it, but we are certainly rewarded for it.

The Greek word for 'sure' was used in classical Greek to refer to a warranty deed somewhat like people use today on houses and other pieces of property. A saint's godly behavior is a warranty deed showing that Jesus Christ has cleansed him from his past sins, and therefore that he is in fact called and elected by God.

In Matthew 22:16, Jesus says, "*Many are called but few are chosen.*" A 'calling' refers to God revealing a glimpse of His truth to a person and giving him the opportunity to seek and submit to His will. Many receive this offer, but few actually pursue it with discipline and diligence.

Those who do are 'chosen' or 'elected' by God the Father and Jesus Christ, and become 'the elect.' Those elected in this 6,000-year period are among the first-fruits of the Kingdom of God.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

The chain that begins with the word "foreknew," in verse 29, cannot be broken. Those who are predestined by God are also called effectively to faith through the Word of God. And all those who are called are also justified—that is to be declared to be right in God's sight.

Since not all who are invited to believe are actually justified, the "calling" here cannot refer to merely a general invitation but refers to an effective call that creates the faith necessary for justification. Many are called but few are chosen. Many are called and fall by the wayside. There are different uses for the word 'called.' All of those who are justified will also be 'glorified' (i.e. resurrected to eternal life). Paul speaks of 'glorification' as if it were already complete; since God will certainly finish the good work that He started, it is certainly a true statement.

We have to be conscientious to make our 'call and election sure.' Our election is the gracious and free act of God, by which He calls us to become part of His kingdom, and to receive special benefits of His love and blessings.

The Bible describes the concept of election in three distinct ways. Election sometimes refers to the election of Israel and the church as a group of people for special service and privileges. Election may also refer to the election of a specific individual to some office or to perform some special service. Still other passages of the Bible refer to the election of individuals to be children of God and heirs of eternal life. Paul writes about this third way in Romans 11:5.

Romans 11:1-8 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest [all other people on earth] were blinded. Just as it is written: "God has given them [physical Israel] a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day."

Although we have an election of grace and not of works, we show by our righteous actions—by our true witness and our growth in the qualities mentioned in II Peter 1:5-7, that we are God's chosen.

Election is not to be a source of complacency on the part of Christians, but a motivation to walk diligently in God's way of life. But many in the world look on it as a once-saved, always-saved election, which it is not.

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.

Neither is election to be a source of presumption on our part. We are to make our calling and election certain by growing in godliness as we respond to God's electing love with gratitude and thankfulness.

God has chosen us to bear the image and glory of Christ. We have been elected to be holy in conduct, like Christ. Like Him, we are also to be glorified in our whole being in the life to come. The ultimate goal of our election is that we might bring praise and glory to God.

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on

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tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Paul calls us to a holy lifestyle, consistent with our new identity. We have been chosen by God and stand before him as His beloved holy ones. We are to live up to what we are in Christ.

He tells us that we must bear with one another. In 'bearing with one another,' we have to tolerate idiosyncrasies and offenses. Righteous tolerance is a virtue, but we are clearly not to tolerate false teachings and flagrant sin in our midst.

Even so, '*bearing with one another*' is not enough; we must also forgive one another, as God has forgiven us. When wronged and betrayed, we are called to forgive others, even as we have been forgiven for our previous sins against God. Above all else, we are called on to love one another. Love binds together—love unites all the virtues.

II Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

The promise is IF we produce these qualities, we will not "*stumble*." This word '*stumble*' does not suggest that we lose our salvation, because salvation is not earned by works—it is not earned by personal effort.

The Greek word for '*stumble*' means 'to trip up' or 'to experience a reversal.' Certainly one who is maturing in Christ will not trip up in his spiritual life as readily as one who is immature and nearsighted.

If we want to make our calling and election sure, we have to give all diligence to do all of these things that the apostle Peter lists, and as we do we will have great joy and peace and happiness. We will know where we stand and we will reap these blessings of the glory that awaits us.

Peter says that if we do these things we will never fall. Nothing is more discouraging than our various fallings. We fall and then we are miserable and unhappy and down,

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then comes depression which tends to make us feel totally hopeless about everything.

Obviously, the thing to do is to avoid falling; and if you do these things you will never fall. It does not mean that you are being kept and that you are doing nothing. Peter says, *'Do these things, and you will not fall.'* So give all diligence to all of these things so that you may not fall.

And finally Peter says in verse 11: *"for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

Peter is talking about the ultimate entrance into glory. Notice the word 'supplied' or 'ministered' or 'richly provided' or 'richly welcomed' depending on the translation. An entrance will be 'supplied' to you.

That is exactly the same word as the word previously translated 'add.' You richly provide these things to your faith, and an abundant entrance will be richly provided to you.

It works reciprocally. In other words, 'if you do these things, if you discipline your life, if you order your life and supplement your faith in this way and with these various qualities,' Peter says, 'you will never fall,' and you will have great joy. The problem is that none of us do all of these things perfectly.

The strength of our excellence in character cannot be measured by our extraordinary accomplishments, but by our daily life. The real value of virtuous qualities consists in putting them into practice from a righteous character on a daily basis.

A person with the faithful qualities of: faith, virtue, true knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love—is a true and reliable witness in representing God the Father and His Son's way of life.

If we are unhappy and depressed, it is more than likely that it is due to a lack of discipline. So we must remember to be giving all diligence and supplementing our faith with righteous qualities. Of course, it is understood that we have God's Holy Spirit to do all of these things.

We have to be clear about having the right priorities and then putting them into practice with all diligence.