

## Living As Elect

2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1-15

April 15, 2018

***<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.***

This morning we are starting a new sermon series in the book of 2 Peter. This is a letter that was written by the apostle Peter in 67 AD from Rome, shortly prior to his death. Peter had written his first epistle to the churches about four years previously. Its purpose was to warn them of the impending persecution that was coming. Now, the Roman Emperor Nero is near the end of his bloody reign and Peter is likely writing from prison, as he awaits his execution. He has a different concern on his mind this time. Peter is concerned about the false teachers who had infiltrated the churches and were leading congregations into heresy and false teaching. That is the overriding theme of 2 Peter. Be warned... false teaching will arise in your midst and it will tear you apart if you are not firm in your knowledge of God.

But prior to expressing his concerns, Peter is going to outline a short but very important sermon. He wants his readers to understand the importance of living out their calling and election.

This opening sermon is extremely pointed and blunt. Peter is near the end of his life and he has a very clear message he wants to send to the Christian churches... “Confirm your election with your lifestyle”

## **Introduction**

*Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

It is so important that as you read scripture you don't skip over the parts that seem to be either introductory or unimportant. The Holy Spirit breathed out the Word of God. Every word is chosen by God. It is all important. And that is especially true of the introduction to Peter's epistle. Look at verses 1-2. First Peter introduces himself. He is Simeon, or Simon, Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Apostle is a huge claim. The office of apostle in the early church requires that a person be an eye witness of Jesus' ministry and be taught and sent by Jesus himself. The office of apostle ceased to exist in the church when these men died. Peter is claiming to be a sent one of Jesus Christ. And his message is written to those who have obtained faith in Jesus. It is not an inferior faith to Peter's, even though he holds this select office. Peter makes it clear that no matter who you are, all who have obtained faith in Jesus through his righteousness have the exact same standing before God. Then, he ends

the introduction with a prayer for the reader... may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Stop here for a minute. The whole world is seeking peace... but no peace is to be found. The whole world wants a place that is filled with grace, undeserved favor and mercy. But who finds this? Only those who have it multiplied in their lives through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. You probably have seen the bumper sticker, “No God, No Peace. Know God, Know Peace.” Peter’s prayer for his readers is that they would find grace and peace, then have it multiplied in their lives through knowing Jesus. Jesus is the only source of grace, the only way to find peace.

These two verses set up what is to come in Peter’s short sermon. He has prayed that they would have grace and peace multiplied in their lives and now he is going to show them how that looks in daily life. I want to take this passage out of order this morning. Before we walk through the application part of the passage, I want to go to the end. I want us to get a clear feeling for the urgency of Peter’s message. Look at verses 13-15.

### **The Reason for Peter’s Urgency**

*<sup>13</sup> I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, <sup>14</sup> since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. <sup>15</sup> And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

Peter does not have any time to waste. Nero is attempting to decimate the Christian church. Peter is awaiting his execution, which will come soon. Tradition says that Peter was crucified and that he requested to be executed upside down, as he did not consider himself worthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus. That may or may not be true, but Peter's life is coming to an end and he knows it. Jesus had made it clear to him... he doesn't explain how. So, he tells his readers, "I will make every effort to stir you up, to remind you, to challenge you to live in the way that I am commanding you... because these are not my commands, they are the commands of Jesus." Remember what Jesus said in the Great Commission. Make disciples of all nations, all peoples. How do we disciple? By baptizing those who respond to the gospel and by teaching believers to obey all that Jesus commanded. Peter is showing us here how to live out the great commission. He is stirring them up to obedience. He is stirring us up to obedience as well. It is urgent. Life is short. Respond while it is still today... tomorrow could be your last. There is no time to wait. That is the urgency of this passage. That is the urgency of Peter's second epistle. So, what was he so passionate about making sure they remembered after he died? Let's go back to verse 3. Peter is going to give us an urgent and practical lesson on how to live as the elect of God.

### **Living as Elect – You Have Everything You Need**

*<sup>3</sup> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and*

*excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

This passage starts out with an incredible claim. Peter tells us that Jesus' divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness. This is a gift, it is given to us. We do NOTHING to earn it. That is incredibly important to remember as we go through this passage. We have been granted everything we need for life, everything we need to be godly. Nothing is missing in the life of any person who is a true believer. John 3:35 tells us that God the Father loves the Son and has given (same word) all things into his hand. Now the Son, who has all things turns around and grants to us all we need for life and godliness. Amazing. And how is it that we acquire all that Jesus has granted us? Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. Jesus gives us himself... and in that gift we receive everything we need for life and godliness. Do you see that? Nothing added. No works... no requirements, just a gift, a grant. Then Peter goes on in verse 4 to say it is through the glory and excellence of Christ by which he grants us his precious and very great promises, so that we may be partakers of the divine nature of God, sinless and perfect... having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. Now I want to stop and look at application here. Peter is preaching a powerful message. As a people we spend so much of our lives and our

money trying to figure out who we are and how we fit into this world. Counselors are sprouting up at record pace. Self-help books sell in the millions. I counted twelve separate categories of self-help books on Amazon alone, ranging from Happiness to Self-esteem and Stress Management. But Peter is clear. In the glory and excellence of Jesus we have all the help we need. Jesus is all we need. He has given us all we need for life and godliness - himself. That is not a qualified statement. All means all. We who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb are partakers of the divine nature of God. This is imputed righteousness. It is not ours, we didn't earn it or develop it. It is a gift that has been given to us, granted to us... through the love and mercy and grace of God. The promises of God are ours, and they are described here as "very great", the Greek is "mega". WE stand on the mega promises of Jesus himself, so how then should we live? That is the great implied question, and now Peter is going to answer it. Having set the stage, Peter is going to show us how our faith should be directing our day to day life. This is the application, it is for those who through the knowledge of Jesus have escaped the corruption that is in the world. Look at verse 5.

### **Living as Elect – You Must Pursue Spiritual Maturity**

*<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

Paul has already told you that you have everything you need. All things pertaining to life and godliness. So here is the picture of godliness. These are not in any particular order. It is not like Peter is trying to say we acquire these one at a time in chronological order. They don't necessarily build on one another, but they are all complimentary. Added together they represent the image of God within us and our desire to be like Jesus.

The first trait of a redeemed person is virtue. Virtue is defined by an excellence of character, a goodness that exceeds expectation. Peter likes this word. He is the only New Testament writer to use it. In 1 Peter 2:9 he uses this same word when he says, *<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* We declare the "virtue" of God. The excellent goodness of God and we do that not only with our words, but with our lives. We live as people of virtue. People who consistently show others that we have an excellent character. This means we always do what is right. We never lie. We never cheat. We always live to serve others before ourselves. That is virtue.

The second trait of a person who has escaped the corruption of this world is knowledge. Peter is not urging you all to go to college here. This is not general knowledge of which he is speaking. If you want to understand what Peter means when he says, "make every effort to obtain knowledge", all you have to do is look back at verse 2. It is the knowledge of God and

Jesus our Lord that leads us to have grace and peace multiplied in our lives. Peter is saying, “Know God. Not in an academic way, but in a way that directs and shapes your entire life.” Knowledge is useless if it is simply something you know but it does not inform your life. Pursue the knowledge of God through Bible study, involvement with Christian friends, attendance at church... there are many means through which to obtain knowledge. But never consider it an academic exercise. Put that knowledge into action. It requires work, hard consistent work. It requires a commitment to fight sin and to take what you know and allow it to change who you are. Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, knowledge... and next, self-control.

Noooooooooo... not that! This word that we translate self-control comes from a root that indicates “lordship or power over oneself or something.”<sup>1</sup> Now, connect the dots here. Peter has already told you and I have said it several times. You have everything you need to have self-control. You have all you need, as a redeemed believer, to exercise lordship and power over your base instincts and desires. When you lack self-control, it is NEVER someone else’s problem. It is never Satan causing you to sin. It is never the actions of your spouse. It is never the disobedience of your children. Living out your election is an exercise in self-control. Being partakers in the divine nature of God means we fight for lordship over our fleshly nature. God has given you the means, now you must cooperate in the effort and fight your self-will, your desire to please your flesh. Oh,

my... this is a big one. We are told by everyone that we have a “right” and a “need” to express our thoughts, to own our lives, to look out for ourselves, even when it means we must get into someone’s grill to do it. Peter says, “bologna” to that. Virtue, with knowledge and self-control... that is how we are to live as people who share God’s image. And there is something that attaches to self-control... steadfastness. It’s there in verse 6. This Greek word goes perfectly with self-control. It is the ability to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances. How about that! Fight for self-control and continue to do so even in difficult circumstances. Now that is really practical advice. Hang in there. Don’t let your circumstances wear you down. Don’t throw in the towel and go off at someone because they continue to do the wrong thing, to not respond, to be annoying. Fight for self-control over the long run. That is what Peter is saying.

And you know, that means you need to be godly. Now I find this to be an interesting part of the list of traits, because it seems that “godliness” sort of defines the whole list of virtues. I like Doug Moo’s comment on this verse. He says, “While God gives us the ability to become godly, it is our responsibility to use the power he has made available to us and actually work at becoming people who please God in every phase of life.”<sup>2</sup> Peter wants us to understand that godliness doesn’t just simply happen because we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. It is something we need to work at. Another word we use for this same concept is piety, living in a godly manner. Several years ago, it was popular to ask the question, “What

would Jesus do?” I was never a big fan of that question, but in the sense of living a godly life, a pious life, it serves a purpose. A better question would be “in light of Jesus, what should I do?” You are not Jesus, you cannot do what he would do. But you can imitate him and live according to his commands. That is what Peter means when he says, “pursue godliness.”

Now the list turns to how we treat our brothers and sisters in the Lord. The word here is “Philadelphian”, brotherly love. Because we are adopted into God’s family, as brothers and sisters of Christ, we are also all brothers and sisters. We are co-laborers in the cause of Christ. We have a special relationship that is different than the relationship we have with the general population of the world. We are to love all people. God so loved the world that he sent his son to die for them. But we are to have a special kind of affection for our brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is the kind of love and affection that God shows us. It isn’t human love, it is godly love. The kind of affection that denies your self-centered desires and seeks the best for those who share faith with you.

And finally, Peter concludes his list with “love”. Agape. How does this differ from “brotherly love?” Well, it doesn’t differ. But it is a broader and more inclusive way to express love. In 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, we are told that of all the fruit of the Spirit it is love that is the greatest. This is no accident that Peter concludes his list of virtues with love. Live your life with a love for others, the way God loves them, and you will find the character and nature of God growing steadily in your life. Love covers

over a multitude of sins against us. We exercise self-control, we live lives of virtue, we are more steadfast, we gain a deeper understanding of God's character and nature when we love those around us. Even when they don't deserve it, even when they are difficult and nasty... it is no easy task. Godliness demands hard work on our part to actively live out our faith.

### **Living As Elect – Confirming Your Calling**

Finally, Peter's sermon is drawing to a close as he makes his application. Why should we live this way? What is at stake here? Look at verse 8.

*<sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.*

These are strong words, this is a very personal warning to every one of us. Why should we live this way, because it keeps us from being ineffective and unfruitful. But don't think this simply means unfruitful in the sense that you aren't growing but have an assurance of salvation. Peter goes on

to say if these qualities are not present in your life and growing, then you are ineffective and unfruitful which means that you are blind to the truth and have forgotten... or never have known, the forgiveness from sin that is found in redemption. Being called blind in scripture is a very bad thing. Jesus called the Pharisees “blind guides.” They were spiritual but blind to the truth of the message of the gospel. This is exactly what Peter is warning us about here. Remember, this letter is written to warn the church about false teaching that will lead them away from the truth of scripture. It will come from within the church and be taught by people who profess to be believers. If your “faith” does not produce godliness, Peter says that you are blind and will not be able to see the deception of the false teachers. Your unproductive, ineffective life is a serious problem. Not for God, but for you. Peter summarizes this thought in verse 10, which is the big idea of the passage.

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.* It is this lifestyle that confirms your salvation and prepares you for a rich entrance into the kingdom of God... into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Living this way is not how you are saved, it is proof you are saved. It is the confirmation of your calling and election.

I cannot emphasize this point too strongly. Peter has outlined for us the practical implications of a proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives. If we say we know Jesus, this is how we will live. Period. No debate. Many

in the church today believe that it is possible to have Jesus as savior but not Lord. That somehow those are two separate transactions. That is not true and very dangerous. Salvation and Lordship are one and the same. If Jesus is not Lord, you are not saved. Period. Here is what Peter knows, as he is writing at the end of his life. We are imperfect sinners. We will make mistakes and at times do things we should not do. But those who are called, those who are elect and truly saved will have a desire to live their lives in a way that glorifies God and partakes in his divine nature.

This is our assurance... you love God and want to be like him. His nature is becoming your nature. His virtue is becoming your virtue. His self-control is becoming your self-control... this is how you confirm your calling and election. This is how you are fruitful and effective in this life. This is how you know that Jesus will richly provide an entrance into heaven for you.

So now I close by joining Peter saying that I know it is right and I intend to remind you of these qualities, even though you already know them and are established in the truth. I must stir you up as a reminder so that you will always, at any time, be able to recall these things. They are that important. Confirm your election with your lifestyle.

## Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> Grundmann, Walter. “Ἐγκράτεια (ἀκρασία), Ἐγκρατής (ἀκρατής), Ἐγκρατεύομαι.” Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, [2 Peter, Jude](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 46.