

Confirm Your Election

by John Piper

We confirm our election by making every effort to advance in the qualities of virtues listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7, such as moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

Duration: 29:24

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5

Topics: "Election"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by reviewing the previous week's text, which emphasized the importance of God's divine power and the role of knowledge in enabling believers to resist temptation and pursue godliness. The speaker then shares a story about a couple named Glenda and Robert who risked their lives to save each other, illustrating the need for believers to confirm their election and call by actively striving to grow in moral excellence and other qualities. The speaker poses seven questions for self-reflection, challenging listeners to assess their efforts in areas such as increasing knowledge of God's will, practicing self-control, and cultivating godliness. The sermon concludes by highlighting the importance of brotherly affection and love in the pursuit of godliness.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org The text this morning is found in 2 Peter chapter 1. We shall be reading verses 1 through 11. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, may grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

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, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. If these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever lacks these things is blind and short-sighted, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election. For if you do this, you will never fall.

So there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Last week we began our series in the second epistle of Peter, and so I hope that you'll look at this first chapter with me. Let me review in just a moment what we said last week.

Our text last week was verses 1 through 4 of 2 Peter chapter 1, and the thing that we saw first of all was that God's divine power has been given to all who have obtained like precious faith with the apostle Peter, and that this divine power becomes active or effective through the knowledge that God has called us to his glory and excellence. Or to put it another way, using verse 4, if we will hang in front of us the carrot or the DQ hot fudge sundae of the promises of God, then we will be enabled powerfully to avoid the temptations coming from the side and will be allured in paths of righteousness and love right on into eternal life. In other words, the point of the text was that the goal is godliness and life.

According to verse 3, the source from which we gain strength to reach the goal is divine power. Verse 3 and the channel or the connection that links up divine power and the goal of godliness is knowledge of and confidence in the promises of God. Or to change the image one more time, we're light bulbs in our neighborhoods and God is the generator off there in the distance, the Hoover Dam, and the cables connecting the generator and the light bulb are the promises of God.

Now today, we go one step farther in verses 5 through 11, and I want to begin with verses 5 through 7, which are a clear unit, and read them with you from the Revised Standard Version. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. Now the most important thing to see here is the words with which the text begins to show the connection between verses 3 and 4 and verses 5 through 7. It's missed in the King James, which simply says, besides this, the other modern translations are correct to say, for this very reason, add these things to your faith.

In other words, the command of verses 5 to 7 is based on something that God has done and is doing for us in verses 3 and 4. God's divine power has given to us things that lead to life and godliness. Therefore, make an effort to be godly. See the connection there? Don't miss it.

God has acted, therefore you act. That's the very heart of New Testament ethics, and you've got to keep that connection in mind. If we turn them around, we believe in another gospel, which is no gospel.

Never say, I will work out my salvation with fear and trembling in order that God might work in me. That's another religion. But say with the Apostle Paul, I work out my salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work within me to will and to do his good pleasure.

Never say, I press on to make it my own in order that Christ might make me his own. But say with the Apostle Paul, I press on to make it my own for he has made me his own. There's a world of difference between a marriage in which a husband doubts that his wife loves him and therefore labors to earn it back, and a marriage in which he is absolutely confident that she loves him and takes joyful pains not to live unworthily of it.

A world of difference. Two different religions. And so what Peter is saying here in verses 3 through 4, God is for you with power unto godliness.

Verses 5 through 7, therefore, for this reason, you labor to become godly. Now, verses 5 to 7 lists eight specific things that we should make every effort to have. Faith, virtue, which could be translated moral excellence or sometimes fortitude, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness or patience, godliness or devoutness, brotherly affection and love.

Now, a couple of things to notice about this list. It begins with faith and ends with love. And that's what we would expect.

That is New Testament. The root, the stream or the spring and the basis of all the other developments of the Christian life is confidence in the promises of God. That's faith at the root.

And the goal, the climax, the summation, you might say, of all of them is love. And I don't think that Peter means that these other six in between are to be added sequentially so that when you're done getting one, then you get the other. When you're done getting that, then you get the other.

I don't think that because there's so much overlap between them. For example, patience and love. Paul said love is patience.

So once you've arrived at patience in the sequence, you're already loving. So I don't think he means when you're done getting one, get the other. Here's what I think he's doing by saying this to this and this to this and this to this.

I think what he's saying is true Christians don't stop growing in Christ likeness. True Christians are never content with what they presently have by way of spiritual attainments. He is calling us to a kind of holy dissatisfaction with where we have come in the Christian life.

Now, I think the literal translation of this sequence would get across this idea better than what we have in the RSV. The New American Standard Bible probably does best. It is not so much add to your faith this, this and this, but rather furnish yourself in your faith.

Let me try to translate this for you in this way so that you can see the the surging forward, forward, forward. I think it would go like this. If we stand in faith or stand in your faith, which you have obtained back in verse one.

And as you stand in faith, apply yourself in this faith for moral excellence. And as you stand in that, don't be satisfied with that, but strive forward to increase your knowledge of God's will. And as you stand growing in knowledge, don't be satisfied with that, but strive forward and make every effort to have self-control, to gain mastery over your passions.

And as you stand in that growing, don't be satisfied with that, but strive forward to grow in patience and serenity. And as you stand in that growing, don't be satisfied with that, but strive forward to godliness, devoutness, a heart that yearns for God. And once that is beginning to be cultivated and kindled and is growing, don't be satisfied with that, but press on and add to it affection for all these other people sitting around you in the pew.

And as that begins to grow warm and you advance, don't be satisfied with that. Go on until you love all men, even your greatest enemy. You see, onward, forward, advance.

Don't be satisfied in the Christian life. I think that's the point of this sequence. Last week, Karsten brought home a book from the library, Glenda's Long Swim from the Incredible series.

This is a fantastic series of books. You've got to get these for your kids or for yourself. So I assembled my triumvirate around on the couch, Benjamin here and Karsten here and Abraham right here, and read this book.

Now, here's what the story says. Glenda and Robert, what's their last name? It's Lennon. It's a true story.

We're four miles off the coast of Florida in the Gulf of Mexico fishing in their yacht by themselves. And it's a beautiful afternoon, so Glenda decided she'd take a swim in the water and do some spearfishing with a mask and snorkel. All of a sudden, she realizes she's 50 yards from the boat in a current taking her farther out.

And she calls to Robert, and Robert, without thinking, dives in to go to her. And he gets there, and they both realize they're being carried out fairly quickly. He's a champion swimmer.

She's not. What are they going to do? She can't make it to the boat against this stream. He can't carry her.

The plan is this. Don't swim, Glenda. Tread water.

I'll drive against the tide, keep swimming, and when it breaks, maybe I'll make it to the boat. If I can swim hard enough, I can keep the boat in view. Six hours, he swims.

And just as it's getting dark, the tide turns. He can still see the boat appearing above the waves. He turns.

He swims to the boat. Starts making cuts. Gets shrimp boats in to help.

It's dark. They don't find her. He returns to shore.

The next morning, the motel owner where they're staying says, I know these currents well. Let's make one more attempt. Out they go.

20 miles, and they find her. 20 miles out. It's a very tearful book at the end.

My heart's beating fast. Now, here's what that story illustrates from 2 Peter 1. Christians who just float never stay in the same place. Christians who disobey verses 5 through 11 of 2 Peter 1, and do not apply themselves with all diligence, drift into grave peril.

We have to strive just to stand still in the Christian life. The effort towards virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection, and love is not dispensable icing on the cake of faith. If Robert had not swum, he would have drowned with his wife.

I've said before in this pulpit, and I'm sure I will say it again. We do not judge a person's spiritual genuineness by how close they are to heaven. We judge by how hard they are stroking.

And so does God. The evidence of God's power unto godliness in your life is not that you're perfect, but that you're stroking against the stream, even if you're standing still, as it may feel sometimes. Verse 8

warns us of what I've just been saying.

If these things, referring back now to verses 5 through 7, if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now you recall from verse 2 that it is in the knowledge of Christ that grace is multiplied to those who believe. But here we learn that there is a knowledge of Christ that can be utterly ineffective and fruitless.

We learn that it is possible to make a sort of start in the Christian life and then begin to just float and drift to destruction. Look at chapter 2, verse 20. If, after they have escaped from the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

In other words, if the glorious promises of God do not spur us on to stroke, we will drift to destruction and it will be worse than if we had never heard the gospel. Now verse 9 describes what's happening in a person in whom that happens. What's going on in a person who seems to make such a good start with the Lord and then just seems to quit swimming.

For whoever lacks these things, that is, whoever isn't making any effort towards these things, is blind and short-sighted and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. The problem with the person who is not stroking with all his might is that he's blind in two directions. When he looks to the future, he's short-sighted and the promises of God that extend out there as glorious and attractive are just a haze of worldly longing.

And when he looks back to the time when once he was so exhilarated and excited about what Christ had done for him, it's as if he doesn't remember a thing. He's trapped in the now and feels nothing of what Christ has done, nothing of what Christ promises and therefore is utterly powerless, limp in the water and drifting to destruction. That's what's wrong in the person.

And verse 10 now makes it crystal clear for us what's at stake. Therefore, the logic moves back to the command of verse 5. Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election. What's at stake, in other words, is not that we might slip into the kingdom without any rewards, but that we might not get there at all, that we might not be saved.

When Peter says, be zealous to confirm your call and election, he means that our lack of diligence in pursuing Christ's likeness may signify we have not been called, nor are we among the elect. Now, I don't know how you have been instructed over the years concerning election, but heed verse 10 at least. Hear what I think is the assumption.

The assumption is that the whole world lies under a just and righteous sentence of condemnation because of sin from a holy God. But God, in his great mercy, has willed that a people for his own name be saved. And that group of people are called his elect, his chosen, whom he has predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, according to Romans 8, 29.

And those whom he has thus predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, he called. And whom he called, he justified. And whom he justified, he glorified.

And therefore, there is no doubt that the sheep of the good shepherd will be saved and are eternally secure. No one will ever pluck them out of his hand. The big question is, are we a sheep? Are we among the elect? And if we are, God wants us to know that we are.

He wants us to experience the exhilarating joy of assurance because out of assurance flows the mighty power of sacrificial loving service in the world that gives glory to God. God wants his people to be assured. And therefore, Peter commands us, confirm your election.

Make it sure. Be assured that you are called. How? That's what the whole text is about.

Verses five through seven. By standing in your faith and pressing on to virtue and knowledge and self-control and patience and godliness and brotherly affection and love, love. John said in his first letter, we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

The confirmation of your election is your progress in sanctification. That's the teaching of this passage. God predestined, according to Romans 8, 29, God predestined that all the elect become like Jesus.

Therefore, the reassuring confirmation that we are among the elect is that we are becoming like Jesus. We are stroking by the power of God. And therefore, verses 10 and 11 conclude like this.

If you do these things, referring back to verses 5 to 11, it's not singular as the RSV has it. It's not if you do this. If you do these things, you will never fall.

On the contrary, thus, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly affection and love are not the wages that we pay to our employer to earn our way into heaven. But they are the indispensable evidence that we really are trusting in the promises of God and that we really are among the elect.

Now, let me just close before we sit at the Lord's table by applying this to our lives here. The point of the passage very simply is this. We ought to earnestly confirm our election and our call.

And the way we confirm it is by making every effort to advance in the qualities of verses 5 through 7. And so the application is simply this. Are you making every effort to grow in moral excellence? You answer yes or no in your heart after each of these seven questions. Are you making every effort to increase your knowledge of God's will? Are you making every effort to strengthen the power of self-control by which you gain mastery over those passions that would lead you away? Are you making every effort to enlarge your capacity for patience, every form of patience with every person? Are you making every effort to become more godly, that is, to get a heart for God? Yes? No.

Are you making every effort to increase your warmth of affection for all the people in this room and the Christians who live around you? And finally, are you making every effort to instill and kindle in your will a love for the person you dislike most? I know some of you are because Olive told me about a prayer meeting in which they prayed just that sort of thing the other night. But I bet you that many of you here had to answer no to some of those questions. If those things are yours and increasing, the text says you will not be fruitless, you will never stumble, and you will have access into the kingdom of the Savior.

And if those things are missing and you are not moving, stroking towards those things, then you're blind. The promises of God hold out no attraction to you, evidently. The cross of Jesus Christ is neither here nor there, and the forgiveness He holds out is not exhilarating anymore.

And you are simply floating and floating away and must needs take heed this morning to be diligent in applying yourself to add these things. The text is a warning and an encouragement. It warns against laziness and lack of diligence in the pursuit of sanctification, and it encourages us to fight the good fight of

faith and lay hold on eternal life.

It encourages us to lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely and run with perseverance the race that is set before us. It encourages us with the Apostle Paul to press on to the mark of the goal of the upward call of Christ. It encourages us, like this text says, to go forward, on, advance in all the virtues of Christlikeness.

And in that way, to find reassurance that we are indeed among the elect and that we are called, as verse 3 says, to God's glory and excellence. And now may the Lord make you to increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, and so may He confirm to you your calling and election to His great glory forevermore. Amen.

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