

2 Peter 1:3-11 – Make your calling and election certain: how to live the Christian life

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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Peter saw a great challenge for the Christians reading his letter. 2:1 tells us that there were many false teachers. They changed God's truth – and they lived ungodly lives, e.g. 2:10. Those two things always go together. Those who destroy God's foundation of truth also destroy the house of godly living. It is the same today – false teachers lead Christians away into sin. We need to lay a better foundation. To stop the Christians being led away, Peter taught them the truth about Christian growth, in this passage. They had begun by believing, and coming to know God (1:1-2). Now they need to know how to continue the Christian life the safe, true way.

The goal of the Christian life : sharing in the life of God (v3-4)

What do you want from life? A good job, a big house, a car and big meals every day? A rich husband? A beautiful wife? There is something much greater than any earthly thing. It is to share in the life of God, v4 – to be sharers in his divine life. This does not mean becoming God – it means sharing in his life through his power and presence being fully in us. It means knowing his glory and excellence. If we saw God as he truly is, then we would realise how foolish it is to love sin and to give our lives to anything less than seeking to know him. He is worth more than all.

What can guide us into this life? Answer: the great and precious promises of God (v4). He has promised us awesome, amazing things. His word tells us truths that we cannot learn anywhere else – and which we cannot live without. He tells us about his promises to keep us safe into heaven. He tells us about the love and prayers of Jesus Christ for us. He tells us that the devil cannot drag us back into hell because Jesus himself is watching over us. He tells us that we can always say “No” to sin and trust in him. So many people go wrong here. They do not listen to God's promises, or they do not believe them. They see them as small things. They walk past them. But we must hold on to them. Do you value God's words as precious, more than silver and gold?

We need to avoid a life that is lived without God. The unsaved are led by their own desires, which are corrupt (v4). Many people blame the devil, but actually the devil only tempts us using sinful desires that we already have. What is stronger in your life? God's word, or sinful temptations? Do you seek and desire God's glory, to know him and enjoy him – or do you just live for your own pleasure? Turn to Christ and taste his glory!

The way of the Christian life : fighting to grow in holiness (v5-9)

How do we grow as Christians? First, Peter says that we must “make every effort”. To grow, you must try – your hardest, always. Growth is not automatic. It does not just happen when we go to church or are with other Christians. It does not happen as we sit back and wait for it. It is a struggle that is for all believers until the end of their lives. God has promised: but we must believe and act. In what areas must we try to grow? All of them! Peter tells us about the need for goodness (all virtue and kindness), knowledge (understanding, wisdom and discernment), self-control (to bring our lives more and more under the control of God's word, not our sinful desires), perseverance (to keep going, steadily and strong – not just to live as Christians in short bursts), godliness (to be like God, separate from sin in all things), brotherly kindness (to be wanting, praying for and doing good to others, even if they are difficult or want to hurt us) and love – which is the crowning virtue, over all; to readily lay down our own interests and needs for the good of others just as Jesus did when he loved his people and gave his life on the cross for them. These are not steps (we do not start with goodness, and then move on to knowledge after we mastered goodness, then move on to self-control) – rather, they are fruits to all look for in our lives. So, Christian living is not just stopping sinning – we must not just avoid darkness, but seek to have more and more light in our lives. Peter tells us (v8) that this is the way to be useful and fruitful in our Christian lives. It is not being clever or rich; but seeking personal holiness. Then God will bless our service to him. Peter warns us (v9) that otherwise we will be backsliding. You cannot stand still in the Christian life. If you are not struggling to be more holy, then you must have forgotten what Jesus has done for you and you are in spiritual danger.

The results of the Christian life : assurance and glory (v10-11)

Peter says (v10) that if we do those things, then we will not fail. This does not mean “no problems”, but that we will be in spiritual safety – we will not fall out of the race and miss the prize at the end. Moving forward, we will be safe. We will make our “calling and election sure”. How can we know if God has chosen us for eternal life? We cannot read his book in heaven. But, if we are growing more and more godly as we follow Christ, then we will gain confidence of it from the signs of his work in our lives. If he is making us more holy then he is preparing us for heaven. His Holy Spirit himself will comfort us when we are tempted to doubt his love or interest in us. Then after this life, we will be welcomed into eternal glory (v11). The Christian reward is not in this life, but in the world that is to come when Jesus returns. He is making all things new. He will make us kings to reign with him in that world. Now there may be trouble, but then there will be rejoicing forever. This is much better than the way of the false teachers. They live unclean lives now, and then will be condemned forever. But if we seek to grow in every good thing now, then he will dwell with us forever.