

Make Your Calling and Election Sure

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[0 : 00] What we think is going to happen in the future affects how we live in the here and now, in the present.

We live and act in light of what's to come. This isn't a particularly revolutionary idea I'm sharing with you, and it's certainly not one that only applies to Christians.

Living in light of the future is as universal a concept as to be one of the main themes of one of Aesop's famous fables. Have you heard the story of the ant and the grasshopper?

A hard-working ant, fully aware that winter is coming, collects food through summer and autumn, while his pal the grasshopper makes music and laughs and isn't prepared for winter.

Winter comes, and well, our grasshopper hasn't prepared, the ant has, and only one of them lives happily ever after. And the moral of the story is often summed up as work today to eat tomorrow.

[1 : 04] And it's good in our own context to do some financial planning or to save up for a deposit on a home or for our retirement or for a new toy.

I used to work with children, many of you know that, and I used to love the forward thinkers who would put together Christmas and birthday and all their pocket money to get something down the line. And beyond money, we invest in the future by teaching our children to be good citizens, by choosing a spouse to be our life partner, or picking a degree or a career path based on future earning potential.

But what about living in light of our eternal futures? How does the future beyond this life influence how we live?

This is the big theme of 2 Peter. Peter writes this letter to believers so that they might live in light of what's ultimately to come.

Peter writes a hugely encouraging exhortation as he's about to die for Christians to guard against error that can knock them off course and for them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

[2 : 24] And why does he teach them these things? Because of what the future holds. And what is that future to come? Well, it's the certain reality of Jesus' return.

Peter's big message is, Jesus is coming back, so live in light of his return. This morning, we're going to begin with the opening of the letter and Peter's first encouragement.

That in the first instance, we are to live godly lives as we wait for Christ's return. In our section that we've read, I hope we'll see three things together.

One, what God has done. One, he has given us everything we need for a godly life. Two, what we are to do now. We are to make every effort to add to our faith.

And three, our future motivation. A rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. If it helps you remember them, past, present, future. One, two, and three.

[3 : 24] So first, will you turn with me to verses three and four once more? What does God do so that we can live godly lives as we wait for Jesus' return?

Verse three says, So what has God done?

Well, first, our Christian life itself is a gift from God. Do you notice the repetition in verses three and four of the word given? Or if you're reading it in a different version, granted.

The point is made all the more clear right from the very beginning in verse one, when Peter addresses the letter to believers who have received a faith of equal standing as the apostles.

God himself, through the Lord Jesus, is the source of our faith. We have obtained, we have been granted, we have been gifted a faith as precious as the apostles.

[4 : 47] And that's incredible, I think. Those who lived with Jesus, who witnessed his miracles and heard his life-changing teaching in person, the ones who saw him die and rise from the dead.

Our faith is of equal worth, as precious as theirs. This means, and this is a bit of a side note, but that there are no second-class Christians.

There's no spiritual status hierarchy. Peter, as he opens, is reminding us that our faith, the godly life that we are to live as we wait for Jesus' return, is a gift from God himself.

What do I mean? How does that work? Well, verse three begins, his divine power, pointing back to Jesus. And at the heart of what he's done is this.

He has given us everything we need for a godly life. So not only is our faith a gift, God has also given us everything we need to live a godly life.

[5 : 55] What does that look like? Well, we're told through the knowledge of him who called us. Our faith is in a person.

What Peter is saying is that the gifts that we need for living a godly life are all encapsulated in Jesus himself, in knowing him, the verse three, in having a living and personal relationship with our Savior. And why wouldn't we be attracted to the one described as excellent and glorious? Jesus' whole life was marked by moral excellence.

Ours isn't. His life was marked by glory reminiscent of the epic stories of God in the Old Testament. The apostle John knew Jesus and he is able to say of him, We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father.

It's in getting to know Jesus that we are empowered to live godly lives. Incredibly, our passage goes on to say that in God giving us everything we need for a godly life, we partake in the divine nature.

[7 : 16] Now, this is one of the great mysteries and yet beautiful realities of the Christian life. As believers, we are united to Christ.

This verse doesn't mean that we become God or that we are we gods in our own right. Rather, Peter means that by becoming, by knowing Jesus and having an intimate relationship with him, we become like Jesus.

And that's quite amazing. That one day we will be perfectly like Christ. Immortal, morally perfect, forever happy.

This is a promise like nothing else. John Calvin on this verse says, Nothing more outstanding can be imagined. Did you notice that in order to live this godly life as we wait for Jesus' return, we're also told that we have been given his precious and very great promises?

I wonder what instinctively comes to your mind when you think of God's promises. Many of us in the church here have a mutual friend who has a business, making stickers and posters and cards, beautifully adorned with different promises from God's word.

[8 : 37] While you rack your brain for your favorite promises, let me say this. All of them are in view here. However, what Peter has most in mind is the promise of Jesus' return.

Peter wants us to zone in on the promise that one day, Jesus will return to judge all peoples and to take those whom he has called to heaven, where they will be like God perfectly.

How do we know that Peter has Jesus' second coming specifically in mind? Well, a couple of reasons. First, this is the big theme of 2 Peter.

Part of the reason Peter wrote this letter is because there were some who challenged and mocked the very idea that Jesus would return. In chapter 1, verse 16, which we'll look at this evening, some described the idea of Jesus' return as cleverly devised myths.

Nothing more than made-up fairy tale. In chapter 3, verse 4, we're told that some were saying, where is the promise of his coming? As they scoffed at the very idea.

[9 : 50] So Peter has the promise of Christ's return specifically in mind. But secondly, the very word used here as promise is quite unique. It's only used once more and later on in this letter, in chapter 3, verse 13, to describe very specifically Jesus' return.

So if we're to draw some of those threads together, what has God done so that we might live godly lives while we wait for Christ's return?

Well, Peter reminds us that he has given us everything we need to live the godly life. We can know God in the person of the Lord Jesus, the one who himself is the source of our faith and who equips us to live for him.

We have the promise of Christ's return that one day we will join him in heaven and be like him forever. Sure, we'll always be creature and he'll always be creator, but one day we will be perfectly in the image of God.

So what are we to do with some of this information? Well, I'm sure many of us can admit that it's not easy living the Christian life.

[11 : 10] It's not easy living the godly life. If you're feeling like a Christian who really struggles to live a godly life, if you put a lot of that pressure on yourself, if you ever feel like it's too hard, please take courage in these verses.

God, not us, but God, says he has given us everything we need to live for him. Helpfully, Peter also tells us how we are to apply all that God has done for us, which neatly leads on to our second point, which is what are we to do now?

We are to make every effort to add to our faith. So if God has done everything, are we to sit back and relax? Well, no, precisely because Christ has provided everything we need to live a godly life, for this reason, make every effort.

Will you look with me again at verses five to seven? For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love.

Make every effort speaks of diligence and discipline and hard work. And add, which is translated as supplement in the ESV, carries with it the idea of what you might try to add to your diet so that you might get all the vitamins and nutrients and proteins that you need.

[12 : 57] Why? So you might grow to be active and healthy and live a long life. God has given us life and everything we need to live the godly life.

Therefore, add or supplement these virtues so you might grow spiritually. Why does Peter give us this very specific list of godly attributes?

I don't think there's a hidden code or hidden meaning behind why these seven specifically.

However, they do stand in stark contrast to someone who believes there is no God, that Jesus isn't returning, and that I can live however I like.

I think what Peter might be saying is, as you live, as you diligently live your godly life, live in such a way that is so different to those around you.

live in such a way that reflects that attractive character of Christ we mentioned earlier. Live as one en route to heaven and waiting for heaven.

[14 : 08] And these, this list of virtues, they're evidence of our growth, proof to us and to others that God works and is working in us and making us partakers of Christ's divine nature.

Quite practically, I was challenged to read that list and consider what jumped out at me as an area for me to grow in as I make every effort to live a godly life while waiting for Christ's return.

Let me read these verses once more and encourage you to do the same as we hear this list. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge and to knowledge self-control and to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness mutual affection and to mutual affection love.

I certainly don't love the way the Lord Jesus loves. He loves in a very sacrificial way and my love is often quite self-serving and when it comes to brotherly affection, well, what a challenge.

We've recently been reading 2 Corinthians at home and Paul, the Apostle Paul speaks about how he loves everyone in the church and this church really gave him a hard time and he loved all of them because they had been rescued, because they were saved.

[15 : 39] Does that match up with our own lives, I wonder? Think of today as an opportunity to ask God for help in whatever area from that list you need help with.

Maybe talk to someone and together discuss what it would look like for you to practically grow in these seven Christ-like virtues while we wait for Jesus' return.

There's another dimension to what we are to do. Not only do we make every effort or summon every ounce of determination we can muster, we also do so continually.

If these things are in you and are increasing, the godly life is not a static one. If we stop exercising and eating right, we lose muscle mass.

If you stop pedaling on your bike, you will fall. We are to, in increasing measure, continually give everything we have to supplement our faith with these godly virtues.

[16 : 48] Now, if at this point you're thinking to yourself that this sounds great, but a little too close to earning your way to heaven or works-based righteousness and all that, can I encourage you to remember where we began in verses one to four?

We don't earn our faith. It's a gift. It's not just the super godly or the super supplemented spiritual Olympic athlete that gets into heaven.

we have all been gifted everything we need to live a godly life. And it's in response to that great gift that we work hard to grow.

But why go to all this trouble? It sounds like a lot of work and exhausting. Why work hard? Why be diligent? Why make every effort to add to our faith?

Why talk to someone about something you might be struggling with? Well, this leads on to our third and final point. Our future motivation.

[17 : 55] A rich welcome into the eternal kingdom. Peter gives us a set of motivations. Motivations for the here and now and motivations that are eternal.

Will you turn with me one last time to verses eight to eleven? 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.

But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

For if you do these things, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Fruitfulness and effectiveness. Peter says that if we make every effort to work hard at adding to our faith, we will be kept from being ineffective.

[19 : 06] And we all know the satisfaction, I hope, of working hard for something and getting the results we hoped for, whether it's teenagers doing their nat fives and their hires and getting the results they hoped for, or cooking enough burgers to feed 30 hungry students and seeing their smiling faces at the end of it.

Fruitfulness is satisfying. And more than that, fruitfulness impacts the world. It's amazing the legacy and the impact some people have had on our world.

I think of the Beatles and the impact they've had on music and culture for decades to come. Mozart died at the age of 35 and he got a lot done in those 35 years and we still listen to some of his music today.

People say that Lionel Messi has changed the way we look at football forever. What about fruitfulness that impacts the world but with eternal consequences?

In my readings we've been doing 2 Corinthians and it speaks of the glorious ministry we've been given to share of Jesus with others and that sometimes, just sometimes, someone does respond to the gospel and their eternity is changed forever.

[20 : 33] As Christians do we want to be fruitful, growing, that we impact the world and the lives of others with eternal consequences in Aberdeen or our wee corner of the northeast.

Let me read verse 9 again. But whoever does not have them is short-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

Peter is saying if you don't remember these things, what God has done and what you're to do, then rather than that fruitfulness and that impact, blind forgetfulness will be yours and sin will get the better of you.

Remember that God has given you everything you need. God has saved you. Remember, don't be blind and forgetful.

And essentially, Peter is asking the question, what would you rather have? Blind forgetfulness on the one hand or effective fruitfulness on the other?

[21 : 48] And I leave that question with you. Peter moves on and gives us two eternal whys, two eternal reasons or motivations for why we should make every effort.

Verse 10 says, if you practice these things, you will never fall. In other words, you won't fall short. You won't be like the athlete who falls short just shy from the finish line.

I love this reason that Peter gives for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's especially powerful knowing Peter's own experience in the Christian life, I think.

He stumbled and stumbled, denied Jesus and was even told by Jesus that he, along with the disciples, would fall away, which they did for a time.

Also, the word fall in this passage carries with it the idea of being destabilized and knocked off our firm foundation, a theme throughout 2 Peter.

[22 : 55] But Peter tells us we have everything we need to remain strong and stable and steadfast and faithful. On top of that, it's as we supplement or as we add to our faith that we confirm our place in heaven.

It's as you noticeably grow and become more like Jesus that you can be sure that you are truly on your way to heaven. Assurance is our confidence that we possess eternal salvation.

Now, I distinctly remember a slightly mortifying experience when Hillary and I arrived at a wedding just outside Aberdeen and it's only as we walked into the reception hall that we realized we didn't have a clue whether we'd been invited for the meal.

It is horrific and mortifying and the anxiety takes over. We couldn't remember if we'd RSVP'd. We had played in the wedding band so we were kind of sure but still, by the way, we were reception guests and all was well.

Peter tells us that by continuing to practice these little things, by living a godly life as we wait for Jesus' return, the Christian will never fall away but instead have confidence that we will be granted entrance into the eternal kingdom.

[24 : 26] Will you look with me once more at verse 11? And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I love the use of the words rich welcome or richly provided. There's a lavish and extravagant welcome from Jesus himself.

Picture a banquet feast like the ones described in Isaiah or Revelation. Picture Jesus, the one who was pierced for you, waiting for you with open arms.

He leans in so close that he's able to wipe away all your tears and he says to you, well done good and faithful servant. Peter is telling us this morning, don't presume your reservation to heaven, confirm your calling and election, don't be static, grow, make the effort.

With the Christian life, you cannot get into heaven without zealous, diligent, hard work. Is this salvation by works? No, not at all.

[25 : 47] It's the right response to God giving us all we need to live for him. Grace is free, yes, but our response to it isn't effortless.

Jesus will return and I hope you'll be able to join us this evening to see how we have the evidence for that in the next section of 2 Peter.

Jesus will return, that's the long-term goal that shapes this letter and it should be the long-term goal that shapes our lives. Some say Jesus won't return, so live however you like, but Peter warns against that.

This lifestyle of ours won't be in vain, it's the true way to the kingdom because God has given us all things necessary for living a godly life as we wait for Jesus' return.

Restrictions are easing, things are getting a little bit more normal. How are we going to serve and make every effort in these new circumstances?

[27 : 02] What about the next 5 or 10 or even 20 years? Do you hope that as you look back on your life that you can with absolute confidence say that in those years you were fruitful and effective in your Christian life?

that no matter what came you didn't stumble or fall. Instead with God's help you grew and grew so that you are certain you are on course for heaven and that you impacted the world in a small or even a big way in the process.

Jesus will return so let's make every effort to live for him while we wait. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you have given us everything we need for a life of godliness.

You have rescued us and given us a faith as precious as that of the apostles. Your precious promises in scripture and a living relationship with the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 21] In light of these great truths help us to add to our faith these Christ-like virtues. Help us to grow and grow in our faith so that we might never fall, that we might be effective and fruitful and so that we might have confidence that we're en route to heaven.

Thank you that for those of us who have been given all these things, a rich welcome to the eternal kingdom awaits us. In Jesus' name, Amen.