

Make Sure Your Calling

II Peter 1:10-15, Sunday after Christmas

December 30, 2007

Beloved of the Lord...The words of our Lord in our lesson today are for the seasoned Christian. When Peter is writing by direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he is writing to the elect, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 1:2 The elect are those whom the Holy Ghost calls by the Gospel working faith into the heart, justifies, sanctifies, and keeps in the true faith until the end, when they enter life everlasting. You are one of the elect, if the Holy Ghost has taught your heart to believe that Jesus has died for your sins on the cross. If you continue in repentance of sins, a godly and upright life, and persevere in faith unto death, you are one of the elect which God will certainly bring into His everlasting kingdom. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Yet we see in our lesson today strong words of warning. For Peter knows well the power of the sinful flesh, which lives in us all. Remember that Peter himself, at one time fell away. Through Jesus warned him of his upcoming trial, before the cock crowed twice, Peter denied Jesus thrice. Because our flesh then is powerful and seeks to tear us away from God's grace, Peter warns all sincere Christians to make sure of their calling. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." This means, if indeed you are one of God's elect, your life then will show it. For the love of Christ always moves the elect to love God and neighbor. They will be diligent to do all that God commands.

We need to hear these words because due to the flesh, we at times grow stagnant, or nearly dead in good works. Our love toward God and neighbor becomes lukewarm. This is a common problem. To the lukewarm Christian God says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." Rev. 3 We can see God's frustration here. It is as if He is saying, "I left my heavenly throne so that I could be born on earth FOR YOU. I lived a righteous and holy life, and kept myself from all sin and temptation FOR YOU. I let them drive nails into my hands, nails into my feet, they put a crown of thorns upon my head, I bled FOR YOU. I died FOR YOU. I rose again, FOR YOU. And I even now in My heart,

am at peace WITH YOU, and have FORGIVEN YOU. My zeal FOR YOU, my love FOR YOU has not diminished in the least. I still even now in heaven, plead and mediate before My heavenly Father, FOR YOU. But when I examine your life, when I check to see if the tree I planted is fruitful, what do I see? Why isn't the love in your heart burning for me? Why don't you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself?" And so in the words of our text today, Peter is saying, "Brethren, where is our zeal for the cause of the Lord? Where is our passion? Where is our faith?"

Peter therefore writes, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." Peter, by such words of admonition knew well he was not giving to the Christians any new information. They knew God's law, they knew God's commandments, as we know them today. Nevertheless it was his duty to remind the people that good works were lacking in their life. They had lost their zeal for the Lord and their faith was growing cold. Faith either grows, or it shrinks, but it never stands still.

This is true for all of us. Are we growing in the faith, or shrinking? And so the Bible says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Hence we are to be diligent, constant, faithful, in our obedience to God's command, for the sake of our own soul. We need to make sure our calling by good works. This does not mean that our good works will save us, for we are saved by grace alone through faith. But it does mean that if we are in the saving faith of Jesus Christ, if we trust in His merits alone, good works will naturally flow from our heart which constantly rejoices in God's grace. Yet this is no easy thing. For though God's love for us is a constant and unwavering, our love for Him is like an unstable roller-coaster. Too often we take God's grace for granted. That a Man, that God was moved to die for us....to our great shame, becomes old news. And so when Peter reminds the hearers that they are to make sure their calling by being fruitful for the Lord, he is calling to mind the remembrance of their sin, in that they have not been fruitful.

"Yet, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." Peter knew his life was drawing to an end. He knew that shortly God would deliver his soul from his body of sin, and he would be with the Lord Jesus in heaven. It appears Peter wrote these words from Rome (Babylon). Tradition says that the wicked

Roman Emperor Nero, had Peter crucified upside down. Peter suffered a martyrs death. And so Peter, in the knowledge that soon enough he would die, desired to exhort God's children to make sure their calling, be fruitful in good works. "Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

Now this is all very hard to understand when we see the doctrine of election tied or connected to good works. Our own flesh tempts us so that we wonder, "Doesn't this mean that my good works cause my election?" But this means nothing of the sort. For it is the grace of God, it is His infinite mercy that moved God to save all mankind, through the blood, through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is also God's grace and mercy which moves Him to preach the Gospel to every creature, His own Spirit calling us to faith. Thus He chooses or elects us by His grace alone, so that the Holy Ghost calls us by the Gospel, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps and preserves us in the one true faith. Yea it is all by God's grace that you and I have faith, and are kept in the faith unto the end.

This calling, this election of God is sure and cannot fail. Luther said, "Indeed, the election and God's eternal foreordination is firm enough in itself and requires no confirmation. The call is also strong and firm. For he who hears the Gospel, believes in it, and is baptized is called and will be saved. Now since we, too, are called, we must be zealous, says Peter, to confirm this call and election for ourselves, not only for God." Good works then confirm our election only in that our obedience by faith to God's commands, bear witness that God has called and elected us for heaven. While good works are not the cause of our election, they are the fruits, evidence that God has worked the wonderful faith of Jesus Christ into our hearts.

And so when Peter says, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure", these words weed out the hypocrites who think that since God forgives all sins, they can live and act and do as they please, even sin against God with no consequences. Kretzmann writes, "It would be the height of foolish arrogance for a Christian to argue that he can act and live as he chooses in the world; for according to the will of God, His elect children are to walk forward to the realization and enjoyment of their hope on the paths of sanctification." Thus the righteous life of the believer always begins with Christ and the remission of sins. It also continues by His strength alone. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same

bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." We are fruitful when we are connected by faith to Christ, the Vine whose grace sustains and feeds us daily. We bear fruit, when we receive our strength from His holy blood.

And Oh! what a glorious strength it is to know that by Jesus blood and merit, we are at peace with God! When this sweet Gospel message sinks down into our hearts, it lifts our hearts up to God. Christ by His Word becomes our Good Shepherd, so that we want nothing more than Him. And having Him, we have enough. "I am content, my Jesus liveth still!" He turns us, He changes us into gentle sheep who love their Shepherd, and all others. When we fear or are afraid, when we are discouraged or downtrodden, our Good Shepherd Jesus lifts us up as lambs off the ground, and holds us close to His own bosom. He will let no harm befall us. He gives His life for the sheep. When we thirst, He gives us the waters of forgiveness. When we hunger He says, "I am the bread of life." When we are in darkness, He says, "I am thy light." And when we fear death Jesus says, "I have already conquered death! Heaven is your home. "

Dear Christian, let us bloom and let us grow in grace, being fruitful in the Lord's kingdom. For all of God's promises, all of His grace, is freely given, and His love for you will never waver or fail, but it is a constant, all because of Jesus. Therefore believe in Him, trust in Him, and He will help you to lead the fruitful life you desire. When you do what is right, He knows and sees from heaven, and is pleased. Keep and stay on the paths of His righteousness, living and working by His grace alone. In this way you shall never fall. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?..... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen."