

2 Peter 1:8-11 ⁸For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹ for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

We've all heard how the world accuses Christians of doing nothing more than practicing a blind faith., as though we have just decided to jump off of a cliff hoping that something or someone will keep us from hitting the ground.

That would be pretty stupid. I've seen these people on T.V. traveling around the country looking for tall bridges and buildings to scale and then sneaking up to the top to jump off of them. They're thrill seekers.

But the thrill is not hitting the ground doing 200 miles per hour. The thrill is free-falling and then throwing your lead chute into the air so that it grabs the main chute which is on your back and then having that chute open successfully to bring you safely to the ground so you can do it all over again.

I remember watching one program where a camera man was following this one guy who climbed some skyscraper in a large city, and after he jumped off of this building the police were chasing him. I guess it's illegal to jump off of tall buildings. He then hops into a van and they speed away as they celebrate a successful downtown jump.

I wonder how many people would accuse that guy of taking a blind leap of faith. And yet there was nothing blind about it. Stupid maybe, but not blind. He knew his equipment and his abilities and he was able to place his faith in an object which had never let him down, the best in parachute equipment.

But because he knew that he could depend on his equipment he continued to practice his sport. The zeal to jump motivated him to look for taller buildings.

I wonder if the world doesn't accuse many Christians of taking a blind leap of faith because they don't see the object of their faith being a reality in their lives. Their parachutes don't appear to be opening, maybe because they're not willing to practice their faith as that guy who had no qualms about the faith he placed on his equipment.

Peter wants us to show the world our faith as we practice the reality of Christ in our lives. We don't jump into a blind abyss, we stand rock solid on the One who is our Rock, our firm foundation. But because He is our foundation He expects us to walk by faith in Him as one's who know where we're going.

In the process of that walk with Christ our lives will begin to imitate the one we follow and that's essentially what we saw last week when was describing the outworking of our faith in Him.

2PE 1:5-7 "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, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love."

These are all fruits of the working of the Spirit in our lives. It is an indication that we are actively following and serving our Lord. We've jumped into action and our parachutes have successfully opened as the Lord is the One who holds us in the palm of His hand.

But it's because we can trust our Lord that we move forward with Him and show signs of life in Christ as we place our faith in Him everyday of our lives. In other words, there is activity which accompanies our faith in Christ, just as there was activity in the life of that parachutist who trusted in his equipment.

In an odd sort of way it's only when we don't take a leap, or take action in keeping with our faith, that people can accuse us of having taken a blind leap of faith. The object of our faith is the risen Christ and there is nothing blind about that.

And so as we continue in our text Peter is essentially saying to us that the Christian needs to be concerned about godly activity which produces more fruit, which in turn produces more activity which ultimately glorifies our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2PE 1:8-9 "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 if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

"For if we possess these qualities in increasing measure..." What qualities? The qualities just mentioned in verses 5-7. Where do these qualities come from? They certainly don't emanate from us. They are the qualities or the fruit of the One who has given us life, Jesus Christ.

The idea here is that it is expected that this fruit should continue to grow in our lives. It's not enough to think that we can simply become part of the "club" and never have to be concerned with moving forward with our Lord and Savior.

And this is what Peter means when he says, "they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It's not as though we can look at these qualities as some sort of check list and try to emulate them and therefore conclude that we are then being effective and productive. Rather, Peter is suggesting that as we submit to Christ by faith, then we will find ourselves being motivated by the Spirit whose fruit will show itself in holiness and then will produce the kind of Christian life which will be effective and productive.

We don't try to submit to a check list to become holy. We become holy first and foremost inwardly by God regenerating us through His Spirit and then justifying us by the shed blood of Christ received by faith, but then the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our lives will then produce holiness outwardly as we follow Christ who then is able to use us as we are conformed into His image.

But you'll notice that Peter says we become effective and productive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the same word we saw last week which in the Greek is *epignosis* which means a precise and correct knowledge of Jesus Christ.

A faulty knowledge of our Lord will produce adverse effects in our walk with our Lord. And this is why we study to show ourselves approved. We want a true knowledge, a correct knowledge which enables us to appreciate our God and the work He is doing in our lives.

We also want a correct knowledge of Christ so that we know the means by which we can grow in our relationship with Him. An

incorrect knowledge will make us ineffective and unproductive, because an incorrect knowledge will lead us to leaning on our own understanding.

But this correct knowledge must lead to action. To say that we have a correct knowledge and yet it does not prompt us to action is to have what is referred to as a dead orthodoxy. We might have all of our Theological ducks in a row and we can articulate all of these doctrines, but if that's all it is then we don't have a true theology.

Theology is the study of God and God is Deity in action. There is nothing ineffective or unproductive about our God. Are we imitators of Him? Then our lives will show it through a Holy Spirit motivated and empowered action to glorify Christ. But, how will our lives show forth this action which is translated into productive and effective lives?

Well, when our lives demonstrate faith in Christ which adds goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, then the world will see our lives in submission to the One who gives such fruit and they will taste and see that the Lord is good as they encounter us, His ambassadors.

We will not look down on the world, we will actually have compassion and mercy on them just as Christ had compassion and mercy on us. But to do that we must go out to the world and meet them where they are and bring this love of Christ to them. This is why we go out into the neighborhoods.

More times than not they are not going to find us, though God can certainly bring them in. But if our faith is alive and active then we will find that being effective and productive as we reach out by faith to a dying world.

This is where a godly effort must be put forth. And this is why Peter reminds us in verse 5 that we must make every effort. But as we put forth that effort for our Lord we will find that our growth is real and effective. One commentator put it, "progress is the way to more progress." (William Barclay)

The production of fruit produces more fruit. And yet the opposite of that is just as true.

2PE 1:9 "But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

Peter goes from showing how the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will produce effective and productive Christians in the Kingdom of God, to showing how a lack of the fruit, which shows a lack of faith, will produce people who are ineffective. "When we are ineffective we are idle; and when we fail to produce we are useless" (Kistemaker), at least as far as the work of God is concerned in this world.

Now again, Peter is not suggesting that if we just follow this list found in verses 5-7 that we will magically become productive and effective. He's saying we will become productive and effective as we love and submit to our God out of gratitude. Then the Holy Spirit will work His fruit in our lives to the degree that those around us will see Christ in our lives.

But notice how Peter shows that a lack of fruit in our lives is actually a sort of spiritual blindness.

2PE 1:9 "But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

The NIV in this verse has actually reversed the order in the Greek of the two terms nearsighted and blind. It is literally translated blind and nearsighted. And yet both terms are essentially synonymous. The term blind in the Greek is *muopazo* {moo-ope-ad'-zo} which means to see dimly, see only what is near.

In fact, a form of this Greek word is where we get our English word *myopia* which means nearsightedness. It's also where we get another English word, *myopic*, which not only carries the idea of nearsightedness, but also a lacking of knowledge or foresight.

But the Greek word here in our text conveys the idea of closing the eyes so as to squint. In this way it is a deliberate attempt of seeing only those things which are close. Simon Kistemaker says, "such a man is able to see earthly things that are nearby but unable to see heavenly things that are far away. He is spiritually blind."

But his blindness is self-inflicted. He chooses not to look up with any sort of intensity so as only to see what he wants to see. This is what Peter is conveying here in verse 9.

He is saying that a Christian may at times be selective in what he wants to see. But this will produce adverse results. It produces the opposite effects of what we see in verses 5-7 and therefore results in being ineffective and unproductive.

But it also produces another adverse effect. Choosing to squint the eyes, if you will, to spiritual biblical knowledge and truth concerning our salvation creates an environment where not only the eyes don't see, but the mind seems to forget.

Peter tells us that when a Christian does this he has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament says that the word forgotten could also be translated, "having received forgetfulness."

One choice produces the other. Choosing to become nearsighted produces forgetfulness. How can this happen? How many of us have crammed for a test in school? We put knowledge in our heads and we try to place it at the forefront of our minds. But once the test is over it seems we have little use for the information and we quickly forget it.

In a sense many Christians find that the Christian life is not a bed of roses, which by the way our Lord never promised. The way becomes hard at times when trials and tribulations enter our lives. And instead of relying on the power of the Spirit it seems easier to trust in our own ways.

We find that when we come to God's word it's always directing us back to trusting and obeying our great God and Savior. And yet that takes faith, which in turn forces us to trust and obey which becomes a burden to many Christians. Instead of diligently applying their faith, as Peter contends in verse 5, they squint their eyes to see only what they want to see and in the process they have forgotten the beauty and comfort found in their first love.

They have forgotten their cleansing, or as the NASB puts it, they have forgotten their purification from their former sins. Many commentators believe this is a reference to the cleansing or purification which is typified in baptism.

How easy it is for us to put out of our memories the awesome grace and mercy we find in Christ's sacrificial cleansing found at the cross, especially when our faith has to cost us something.

To be reminded of His love for us through His broken body and shed blood is a reminder that we owe our very eternal destiny to Him. For someone who is struggling with life that reminder can be like pouring salt in an open wound. They then realize that they do have a responsibility to walk after their Lord and Savior.

But instead, they choose to put that thought out of their minds because it's easier at that point to walk in the ways that were once familiar; walking in the flesh. It's almost like the expression, "ignorance is bliss".

Peter is saying that ignorance is not bliss. Squinting of the eyes to cover the heavenly truths is only a way to get deeper and deeper into the flesh to where at some point it turns into apostasy. And keep in mind that this letter is warning of this very thing which the false teachers are moving individuals in the church towards.

2PE 2:1 "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -bringing swift destruction on themselves."

What this is meant to do is not to bring fear of losing one's salvation, but to bring fear that we are grieving our Savior and that a true faith should not do this. But it should also bring a fear to those who are playing the game thinking they have a real faith when in fact they don't.

As I've said on numerous occasions, you and I do not ultimately know the heart of a person. If a person makes a credible profession of faith in Christ then we need to accept that for what it is. But if the fruit does not follow the faith then one of two things is happening.

1) The individual has chosen to follow after the flesh and needs to be reminded of the truth that Jesus Christ is his new Master and Lord. Repenting of such sin and turning back to the Lord is the answer.

2) The individual only has a head knowledge and not a true faith and is following after the desires of his true nature in which case he needs to be encouraged to repent of his sin and turn to the Lord.

In both cases, repenting and turning to Jesus Christ is the only answer. Only Christ truly knows the heart. But if we are His witnesses then we must witness of that truth for both believers and non-believers alike. Christ is central to all that we believe and practice. And this is why Peter continues the way he does in the next verse.

2PE 1:10-11 "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, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I like the way the NASB puts these two verses. "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

Notice again the word eager or diligent which we saw in verse 5. The NIV uses the phrase "make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;..." (2PE 1:5)

It's the same Greek word in both verse 5 and here in verse 10. "Be all the more eager or diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you..."

The idea here is that we should strive to show that we have life. Not strive to gain life because we have already received that through our faith in Christ and at that moment we were justified. Rather, we should strive to grow in our faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, do we have a zeal for God? If we don't then we need to seriously consider our relationship with Him, or lack thereof. How do we make certain about His calling and choosing us? Is there some sort of formula? Is it simply by acknowledging a set of truths? No. In fact, Paul addresses this idea of making certain about His calling and choosing us when he wrote the Corinthian church.

2CO 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you -unless, of course, you fail the test?"

Well, how do we fail the test? We fail the test if we have denied that Jesus Christ is our only way of salvation. We fail the test if we place our dependence on self instead of our Lord and Savior. We fail the test if we have no remorse for our sin. It is only through a realization that our sin is what keeps us from God. To repent of sin and embrace Christ by faith is to pass the test.

Essentially it's only when we can say, 'what must I do to be saved?' can we truly know that we place no confidence in the flesh and we give up any attempt to do so. If you have truly come to Christ in this way, you have passed the test. But both Peter and Paul want

us to see how this new life in Christ shows itself to be real in the real world.

ROM 8:10-16 "But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

If you have truly embraced Christ through faith then you need never wonder if you are chosen of God. You need simply to know that after you have placed your faith in Him that He will never leave you or forsake you. I love the way Jesus put it in the Gospel of John.

JOH 10:28-30 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

So, who or what could snatch you out of the Father's hand or the Son's hand? Nothing. So, why do we test ourselves to be certain about His calling and choosing us? To keep us mindful of the great salvation we have been given and to keep us from putting this salvation in the back of our minds where we forget what an awesome grace we have been given as a gift.

But also to keep us from entertaining the past or the flesh and to give us an appreciation of this new life where we're not tempted to give in when the trials come, or to close our eyes to the truth when God wants us to follow Him exclusively.

But there is another way of testing ourselves and that is as the expression goes, "the proof of the pudding is in the tasting."

If it looks like a rose and smells like a rose then there's an excellent chance it's a rose. The same should be true of a believer in Christ. We test the fruit to see if it's what it says it is. We know an orange

tree by the fruit. We know an apple tree because it produces apples. We know a Christian by the fruit the Spirit produced in their lives.

Faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, Christian love. Peter says in verse 10 that as long as you practice these things you will never stumble, or fall as the NIV puts it.

Does this mean we will never sin? Of course not. It simply means that we will not fall so as to be cut off from the love of our Lord and Savior. We never have to fear that our God will not be faithful to bring us home. We never have to fear that He is somehow going to go back on His word.

That alone should give us comfort and motivate us to love Him all the more knowing that we have a place reserved for us in heaven with Him. And that's what makes our next verse so encouraging.

2PE 1:11 "and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

That's our goal. That's our hope. But it doesn't negate our responsibility to seek after and follow our Lord in this world to the degree that we prove our faith and not just talk about having a faith. We show ourselves to have actually met the Savior and have come into a personal relationship with Him through faith in His atoning work on our behalf.

It's what Paul spoke of in ACT 26:20 "... I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."

He also put it well when he wrote to the church in Rome.

ROM 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Prove the life of God in your life. But don't think for a second you're left to yourself to do such a thing. Because even there it is the Spirit who empowers us and enables us to show ourselves alive. Seek him diligently and trust that He wants you to grow in your faith even more than you do.

PHI 2:12-13 "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed - not only in my presence, but now much more in my

absence -continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Look with expectation to what Peter promises. 2PE 1:11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."Live as those who have such a kingdom to look forward to.