

# Make Your Calling and Election Sure

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are going to begin our service with the singing in Gaelic of Psalm 118, Psalm 118 and at verse 20.

We'll read these verses in English first. This is the gate of God, by it the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst, and hast my safety been.

That stone is made het cornerstone, which builders did despise. This is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes. This is the day God made, in it will joy triumphantly.

Save now, I pray thee, Lord, I pray, send now thy prosperity. Blessed is he in God's great name, that cometh us to save.

We from the house which to the Lord pertains, you blessed are. God is the Lord, who unto us hath made life to arise. Bind ye unto the altar's horns with cords.

[ 1 : 07 ] The sacrifice, thou art my God. I thee exalt, my God, I will thee praise. Give thanks to God, for he is good. His mercy lasts always.

We're singing from verse 20. So doris gay ar yn iej eith stiach na dyniw coomtoléngdd. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 3 : 28 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 5 : 58 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 8 : 28 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

what is external to us but what is ongoing in our heart of hearts. But we would keep hid from the eyes of our fellows, our thoughts that we choose not to disclose. They are as we are, naked before the eye of the one with whom we have to do. We bless you and thank you that that is an encouraging thought to your people in particular and that even as they struggle to to reconcile their providence with their understanding of what it entails, that they can come to a God and such as their petitions are they can they can believe that you are able to unravel and put together the desires that they are expressing.

In and through the passion of your son Jesus Christ, we bless you and thank you for the provision that you have made for us in him, the provision that you have made for us in your word that speaks of him. And even though this world is full of trials and difficulties for the believer, you have promised that, you have spoken to us about it. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the five-day trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happens unto you. But rejoice in as much as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that he indeed suffered in this world, that he came into this world and because of who he was suffering was his appointed Lord. He was pure and unsullied by sin and as such he experienced the enmity of the sinner against him. There was an intolerance to the purity that marked him out. So it is in the experience of your people where they demonstrate through holiness by virtue of your spirit working in them. They are instantly the target of the enemy of our soul and those who are led by him. We pray that you would bless us this evening in his name, that you would bless us in our prayers, that you would bless us as we think one of another, while we are separated as a fellowship and able to meet together as we would normally desire to do. We pray that these desires such as they are, that they may be amplified. There are those who speak often of the sense that they have of being deprived of the experience of meeting with your people together in fellowship and in worship. And as that is expressed by them, may the truth speak to them of the identity that they possesses your people. This is one of the characteristics and traits that mark out your people.

[ 13 : 47 ] And you speak to us through your word telling us that we should not let ourselves choose choose other than to meet often together. Although we are by virtue of being under the direction of those who govern us, the truth of the darkness that we are not able to meet as we would. That nevertheless you are able to make up for us these deprivations and we pray that we would not overlook that or be desensitised to it. So remember your people, those who belong to your fellowship here, we pray for them.

As we mentally take take our course through the congregation from beginning to the end. As we visit every home in your thoughts, think of those who are your people. We pray that that would be blessed to us.

We pray for those who are unwell amongst us. Those who are experiencing the illness of various forms, physical or mental or even spiritual. We pray for those who have undergone treatments of various sorts. Bless them we pray. Remember those in hospital at the present and be near to them and direct them to Christ that they may know that he is the great physician.

And even though there are very well equipped physicians to look after their needs, there is one greater than they who can do for us what no other can. We pray for those who are suffering because of the pandemic. We pray for your blessing upon those who are currently hospitalised because of it. Those who are experiencing the effects of long Covid. These nations of the earth that we have no knowledge of as far as the effect of Covid is concerned, but we believe that they are there. We do not have the privileges that we enjoy as a nation. Help us to experience thankfulness for the way in which we see the prospect of relief on the horizon. May that be so, if it be your will. May we be reconciled to your will, whatever it may be for us. So hear our petitions, not only on our own behalf, but on behalf of others.

We pray for those who govern us. We pray for those who rule over, exercise rule over us in whatever way. Who are the instruments for good in the hand of those who govern and in effect in your hands.

[ 16 : 35 ] We pray for those who are part of the various parliaments. We remember the royal household. And we pray for those who are desirous of good for this generation of people who are destructive or who see destruction and would want to avert it. And in that sense, they are careful of the needs of our world, environmentally and in other ways. Remember those who are grieving and sorrowful, those who have death to contend with at the present and those who are still mourning the loss of loved ones.

We know that this is part and parcel of the human experience. Until such time as we will experience the relief of it, when the coming of the Son of Man will be accomplished. Then we read that there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more griefs. All these things will be at an end. And that day is fast hastening.

Open the eyes of our understanding that we may appreciate the word that speaks to us of these things. So continue with us at this time and bless your word to us as we read from it and as we reflect upon what it has to say to us.

We are going to hear God's word as we have it in the New Testament. We are reading from the second epistle general of Peter and we are going to read from the first chapter, the first 11 verses of that chapter. The second epistle general of Peter, chapter 1.

Simon Peter, chapter 1. Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

[ 19 : 35 ] For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And so on, may the Lord add his blessing to this reading the reading of his word, and to his name be the praise.

I'd like us to turn now for a short while to the words we have in verse 10. Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

For if you do these things you shall never fall. As some of you may have already read and possibly heard, it is said of the renowned preacher and teacher the late Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones that he stated, and I quote his words, it is true to say that this verse 10 is really the key verse of the whole epistle.

That the object of the entire letter is to enable us to make our calling and election sure. Now not only is he highlighting that these words are of the utmost import, it invites engagement with the text so that we know what is expected and why.

[ 21 : 44 ] The first thing to take on board is that this is a duty entrusted to every Christian. The second thing is in order to do our duty we must know what that duty is.

Make your calling and election sure. The third thing is that by doing your duty assurance becomes yours. If you do, he says, you shall never fall.

Let us begin with the duty entrusted to the believer. It would be strange if not depressing if we entered into the season of spring and still continue to see the dominance of the dormancy of winter.

It lifts one's spirits to see the signs of new growth. The literal green shoots of recovery. Christian life without growth, without new development is irregular if not impossible.

Where there is life it follows that there must be evidence of such a life. As you can see from the text, the wherefore indicates that this duty is the result of what has already taken place in their lives.

[ 23 : 08 ] In his opening doxology, Peter the Apostle describes the activity of God that results in the Christian believer and he follows that with the exhortation that requires them to act accordingly.

With all diligence. It is wrong to suppose that he is telling them to do what God has done. Clearly they cannot do that.

Clearly it is wrong to argue that this is what Peter is exhorting them to do. Rather, what he is saying is, because God has done what he alone can do, you now can do what you are able to do.

And so prove that God has indeed done that. They are the ones who are to be diligent. If we go back to verse 5, again we find the same emphasis.

And so on.

[ 24 : 38 ] Peter is there encouraging them to do something. They are to do it.

And not someone else on their behalf. If we think of what he is saying, then it seems obvious that the onus is placed upon them to do what God is wanting them to do.

Someone has once said that contemplation alone may make a mystic. Action alone may make a legalist. But it takes them both to make a Christian.

Remember, he is speaking here to Christians. Those, he says, who have obtained like precious faith with him. Recipients of exceeding great and precious promises.

And so on. I feel I must emphasise again that God elects and God calls. What God has done, no one can undo.

[ 25 : 59 ] What God has done, no one can do better. Let me use an example. This winter, the wind has blown over a gate.

Now I can repair that gate. Or I can make a new one. Although I am not much of a joiner. I would be able to produce something that is recognisably a gate.

But if I ask a tradesman to build me a gate. Better still a skilled joiner or carpenter. No one could argue which one would be better.

They may both be gates. They both serve the same purpose. But one will be better than the other. Now God is not saying through the apostle.

Go and do something that I have already done. It is not necessary. What he is saying is go and prove to yourself and others. That he has done this.

[ 27 : 09 ] And that you are the beneficiary of it. Make sure that the relationship between you and him is as it should be. Make sure that the evidences that bear witness to this are where they can be seen and enjoyed.

Diligence is a very good word. A very precise word. Theologians explaining the passage may use words which are all accurate in bringing home to us the activity required.

There must be zeal. Serious endeavour. Resolve. And ardour. In doing what the apostle encourages the believer to do.

Now the second thing is this. We must be sure that where that energy is expended. Make your calling and election sure, he says.

As we have already suggested, it is God alone who elects and calls. Dr. Kennedy, former minister, late minister of Dingwall, suggested that it is God alone who is spoken of in these terms.

[ 28 : 30 ] He insists upon the order as we have it here. That is the way Peter has written it. To make your calling and election sure.

Now logically the order is election first and then calling. Biblically this is how it is described. In the words of the apostle Paul, for example, in the epistle to the Romans in chapter 8, verse 29 and 30.

We read there. And so on.

Coming first in order, so that there is clearly, in the passage we have just read there, the election coming before the calling.

So what is Dr. Kennedy alluding to in his comments? Simply this. Calling is proved by its fruitfulness.

[ 30 : 01 ] Election is proved by its fruit, which is the calling. If I can make out by my fruits that I am called, so I can make out from my calling that I am elected.

Furthermore, the calling of which he speaks is the result of the soul being presented by the Holy Spirit with the gospel of Jesus Christ irresistibly.

When the gospel is preached, all are called to obey that gospel. But only the elect will receive that call effectually.

Describing the need to invite all without exception to come to Christ. Bishop Ryle states, To everyone, we ought to say, To everyone we ought to say, Awake, repent, believe, come to Christ, be converted, turn, call upon God, strive to enter in, come, for all things are now ready.

We will invite all in the firm belief that the invitation will do good to some. But election can only be known by its fruits.

[ 31 : 22 ] We are saved by grace through faith. And that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. If someone gives us a gift, we did not earn it.

Otherwise, if we did, it would not be a gift. It would be a wage. Similarly, if the gift was something that we expected, or the giver expected, something by way of return, that would not be a gift either.

It would be a bribe. No longer a gift. Now, some accuse God of unfairness because he gives to some and not to others. And yet, in the same way, many who complain of unfairness receive the same invitation to come to Christ and receive salvation at his hand.

And they will not come expect on their terms. However, that is a matter for another day. The Apostle Peter is saying here, Make it your business to know that this election and calling are yours.

This may be difficult for some to understand. Some are hesitant to do anything for fear of the taking the glory away from God. But surely that is not what the Apostle is wanting them to do.

[ 32 : 58 ] Go back again to verse 5. And there, we have read these words, and we can read them again. Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue to, virtue to, virtue to, knowledge to, knowledge to, temperance to, temperance to, patience to, patience to, patience to, godliness to, godliness to, godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

And when we read these words, we read words that are meant to convey to us the duty that devolves upon the Christian.

If the words that we've just read there mean anything, if they mean what they, what we, what Peter means is to understand by them.

They are to do this. It should go without saying that they cannot do this without God working in them. They're being told, do this.

It's not a, it's not an activity that they can choose not to do. He says, giving all diligence, add to your faith.

[ 34 : 20 ] Here in this verse again, verse 10, wherefore there are that brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If you remember the Apostle Paul writing, in his epistle to the Philippians, in chapter 2, wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, and not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We can only imagine that Paul is not speaking of salvation by works. If he were, then it is the most blatant contradiction of what he teaches elsewhere.

Certainly not. As Professor Sinclair Ferguson explains it, what we have is a continuation of the lifelong process of obedience, in which we see the significance of what Christ has done for us, in the ever-changing and developing context of our lives, resulting at a personal level of the transformation of our lives into the likeness of Christ.

The final thing that we have here, is that by doing what the Apostle encourages us to do, he says, If you do these things, you shall never fall.

If you do these things, you shall never fall. Before we say anything else, I think it must be stated that the person who has come to faith in Jesus Christ can never fall in the strictest sense.

[ 36 : 11 ] It is a biblical position that we must guard against surrendering. Paul states, He that has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus.

The good work is the work of faith, the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, bringing them to the place where they are sanctified wholly.

It is a confessional position regarding the Church. They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved effectually, called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.

Now, this is a biblical doctrine, a confessional doctrine, no doubt. And this doctrine as it is, stated guards against presumption and insists upon the saving work of the Holy Spirit.

So why then emphasize this need for industry if it is not possible to fall? The simple reason is that if you are engaged as the Apostle would have us be engaged, then the possibility of falling even temporally is averted.

[ 37 : 38 ] If you study the Confession, the Confession reminds us that while a believer may not fall finally, it is perfectly possible to succumb to sin and temptations that will harm us spiritually, cause a breach between ourselves and the Lord.

Alexander Nisbet in his commentary writes, they may actually fall into foul and scandalous sins for a time. If, on the other hand, we are encouraged to believe that if exercised in the way the Apostle teaches, going back to the previous verses, if involved in these activities, there is less likelihood of falling into sin.

David, you remember, was idle when he spied Bathsheba and we all know what happened. The devil finds work for idle hands.

I was thinking recently about the way the world in which we live, our own nation, for example, and elsewhere, how there have been civil disobedience, disobediences occurring.

When we hear about the black lives matter and the demonstrations to do with the physical assaults on women and again violence against their person and again most recently the demonstrations that occurred against the implementation of laws that many consider to be infringements on civil liberties.

[ 39 : 44 ] And we've got the ongoing situation in Belfast at the Pleasant. Now, I'm not saying anything about the rights or wrongs of these things.

It is an evil that is in society that a person is persecuted because of race. It is an evil that is in society that there is any kind of violence done to the person, be it male or female, for whatever reason.

It is an evil that is within society that we see infringements of democratic liberties that are secured over many centuries.

But when we see almost spontaneously these things arising, you ask the question, why now? Why did this happen at the present? And without question, the situation that we have with regard to the pandemic is very much at the heart of it.

And the way that many are affected by that, so that they have time upon their hands, which you would not ordinarily have. I'm not saying that there is anything that those who are involved in it do not feel very strongly about what they're demonstrating about.

[ 41 : 15 ] But the extent to which they are prepared to go because simply they have time on their hands is probably at the heart of it now. Maybe that's a poor example.

But the apostle here wants the believer to be actively engaged in pursuing research, if you like, examination, delving into the reality of their calling and election by looking at the evidences of it.

And the more engaged they are, the more wholehearted they are, the more involved they are in these things, the less likelihood they will succumb to temptations that will take them away from God and the more likely it is that they will become more and more convinced of the reality of the relationship that is theirs with Christ.

The apostle is speaking about a position of assurance that is only possible if the believer is engaged in seeking the fruit that only belongs to the redeemed believer in Christ.

Martin Lloyd-Jones in his comments condemns the professor who modestly claims to have no right to claim that he is saved.

[ 42 : 50 ] It's as if he is embarrassed to say that they are saved. It's a spurious form of humility he says. We have many passages from the mouth of the apostle where he insists on the certainty of his own salvation and the future that awaits him.

This is what Dr. Lloyd-Jones says. There is nothing incompatible with the greatest humility in claiming the assurance of salvation.

Let me go further and say that the most humble man that the church and the world have ever known have been those who have been certain of their salvation.

They realised that it was entirely due to God and the more a man realises that the more certain and the more humble he is on that account.

if you think about what he is saying it is almost irrefutable and deniable. The more you look at what God has done in your life and you realise that it is God's doing, not your own, that you didn't come to faith by spontaneous combustion, that you didn't arrive at a place of knowledge of Christ Jesus without God revealing Christ to you, the more indebted you become to that God and the more convinced you are of the reality of your salvation.

[ 44 : 29 ] Well, may God encourage you to think along the lines of the Apostle, making your calling and election sure, for he says if you do these things you shall never fall.

May God encourage us to be involved in that research. Let us pray. Most merciful God, bless us in Christ's name. Encourage us always to look to him, to wait upon him.

Remember all who are in that fortunate place, that blessed place, of having put their trust in him for time and for eternity. Encourage others to do the same.

Pour your spirit upon us to that end. Cleanse from sin and now may grace, mercy, peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen.