

Called and Elect 2 Peter 1:10-15

Several times I have been privileged to be with people who knew that they would soon die. We all know that we will die, but we assume it will be someday, and someday seems far, far away. However, sometimes people know that they are at the end of their lives. At these times, people tend to question eternity. The question I have heard that I want to talk about today is, “Have I been good enough?”

In 2 Peter 1:10, Peter says:

2 Peter 1:10 (NKJV) Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

“Make your call and election sure.” (“Sure” in this context means “certain” or “solid.”) If we are sure of our calling and election, when we come to the end of our lives, we will have an answer to the question, “Have I been good enough?” Knowing the answer to the question of our eternal home is the certainty that Peter is talking about.

When Peter says, “your call and election,” what comes into your mind?

What is our call, and how does it differ from election?

First, we are talking about eternity. What is your destination when you die? Our calling and election are part of our salvation and have to do with eternity. Questions that a person might ask when they come to the end of their life are “Am I called?” Or, “Am I elected?”

Jesus gave an illustration of a wedding feast. The host sent out invitations, and the invited guests found excuses not to go, so the host sent his servants out in the streets to compel people to come. Some guests showed up not dressed for a wedding, and the host had them thrown out. The wedding feast stands for heaven, and the invitations stand for God’s calling us to be saved. At the end of the illustration, Jesus said:

Matthew 22:14 (NKJV) For many are called, but few are chosen.

Jesus also distinguishes between “calling” and “election.” (“Chosen” in this context is the same word Peter uses that was translated as “election.”) The idea behind being called is the invitation. To state it plainly, to be called is to be invited.

The answer to the question, “Am I called?” is “Yes!” Everyone is invited. God invites everyone and His invitation is genuine. Anyone who wants to can come to the Lord for life. God, for His part, wants everyone to come. In 2 Peter 3, Peter tells us that God is not willing that any should perish.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God does not want anyone to perish. For this reason, God is waiting to bring this world to an end, giving everyone time to repent. He is waiting for people to respond to His call (invitation). To be clear, God is not a trickster. His invitation is real, so free-will also must also be real. The invitation is to all people everywhere. However, now to muddy the water, Jesus said:

John 6:44 (NKJV) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Jesus is talking about election. 2 Peter 1:10 says to make our calling and election sure. Election means chosen. Along with the question, “Am I called?” the question “Am I chosen?” must also be answered. We all are part of the “many” that are called, but are we a part of the “few” that are chosen? Jesus told His disciples:

John 15:16 (NKJV) You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Jesus says that we did not choose Him, but He chose us. He also says that He appointed us. An example of this from the Old Testament is the prophet, Jeremiah. God told him:

Jeremiah 1:5 (NKJV) Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

God’s choice of Jeremiah, the Apostles, and each of us works the same way. God chose Jeremiah, God appointed (ordained) Jeremiah, and God has chosen and appointed you if you know the Lord Jesus.

Calling and election are different sides of the same coin. I have heard those who teach free-will condemn those of us who teach election, and I have heard those who teach election condemn those who teach free-will. The debate will continue because the Bible teaches both. We are responsible for our choice. The problem is that not a single, solitary one of us will choose to seek God. Romans 3 quotes Psalm 14 when it says:

Romans 3:10–11 (NKJV) ¹⁰As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.”

The truth of the Gospel is that salvation is completely (entirely) accomplished by God. Consider Ephesians 2 with me.

Ephesians 2:4–5, 8–9 (NKJV) ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ... ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.

If you are proud of your faith, you can give that up because it is not of yourself, it is the gift of God. Salvation is always and completely a gift of God’s grace, related to NOTHING that we do.

Because of His great love, God saves us. Here is the rub (irritating fact) not everyone is or will be saved. We tend to ask “Why?” Romans 9 uses Pharaoh as an example. Why didn’t God save Pharaoh? This question is answered for us in the Bible. First, God anticipates our human response and says:

Romans 9:16–19 (NKJV) ¹⁶So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” ¹⁸Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. ¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?”

In answer to the this “Why” question, God says:

Romans 9:22–24 (NKJV) ²²What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

For many, this is not a satisfactory answer. The miracle of grace is that any of us are saved, and we focus on the fact that some are not saved. God addresses this issue, and His answer is that we should be a bit more humble.

Romans 9:20–21 (NKJV) ²⁰But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

God is God, and we are not. Some things are beyond us. The fact that many are called but few are chosen is just that - it's a fact. Complaining against God and saying He is unjust or it is not fair does not help. This fact was not a happy one for Pharaoh, but it was happy for Israel. 2 Peter 1:10 assumes the fact and urges us to make sure we are among the chosen.

Here is a hint - if you are still in Egypt, you are not among the chosen.

In 1 Peter 1:4, Peter says that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (appetites). THEREFORE, if we are still in bondage to our lusts, then we have reason to worry. This is why the Apostle Paul says:

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

(Compare Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.)

Examining ourselves to see if we are in the faith is also what Peter refers to when he says to make sure of our call and election. In 2 Peter 1, twice Peter says to be diligent. Both times he urges our utmost concentration and effort. He tells us to add virtues to our faith. He says we are to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. We must understand that these things do not save us because salvation is not of works lest any man should boast. However, Peter does say:

2 Peter 1:10–11 (NKJV) ...if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Many stumble. Many doubt and worry. We know that, in the end, it is not whether or not we have been good enough. The question is whether or not we have trusted Jesus for our salvation. But, how do I know if I have trusted Him? Where I have lacked brotherly kindness, I will have doubts. Where I have lacked love, I will have doubts. If we pursue Jesus with all our heart, soul, and strength, we will be sure. We will be certain. We will not stumble.

In addition, Peter says that in this way, an entrance into God's kingdom will be abundantly supplied. (Let me say again, we are not saved by any works that we have done but by faith in Jesus.) This abundant entrance is hearing God say, "Well done, My good and faithful servant." Jesus taught us that we can store up treasures in heaven. Many will be saved, but it will be a "just barely saved." This is what the Apostle Paul is teaching when he says:

1 Corinthians 3:11–15 (NKJV) ¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

If you spend your life building bigger barns to store up treasures here on earth, you are going to leave it all behind on that Day; you will suffer loss as this Scripture says. You will be in heaven, but according to this passage, it will not be an abundant entry.

In 2 Peter 1:14, Peter tells us why he is reminding us of these things. He says:

2 Peter 1:14 (NKJV) knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

Peter was at the end of his life. He was not asking, "Have I been good enough?" He was writing to remind us of the fundamental truths of the gospel. In fact, he says:

2 Peter 1:15 (NKJV) Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

The translation "decease" here is unfortunate. The word is "exodus," like the book in the Old Testament. The book of Exodus got its name from the Children of Israel leaving (exiting) Egypt. It was a great deliverance. Most modern translations get this one right when they say "departure." Peter is looking forward with anticipation to his "departure." He is going to be with his Lord and Savior, the one he loves. His concern is not for himself. His concern is to leave a permanent reminder of how to get where he is going. He is sure of his call and election.

Are you?

Does the question plague you, “Have I been good enough?”

Are you ready for the Day of your departure?

Where are your treasures?

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!

Let’s apply all diligence so an entrance will be supplied to us abundantly.