



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Peter 1:5-11

“Making Your Calling and Election Sure”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Again, Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and for the privilege of the study of it. We pray, again, that we may be the recipients of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We pray that through the study of the Scripture we may be edified in our faith, and as Peter exhorts us in the 3rd chapter of this epistle, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that this hour may contribute to that end. And we make our prayer in Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the second in our series of studies on 2 Peter. And as you can tell from the transparency our title tonight is “Making Our Calling and Election Sure.” Well, I’m not sure you can tell by looking at the transparency [Laughter] but the top of it is “Making Our Calling and Election Sure,” and it is the phrase that is taken from the 10th verse of the 1st chapter.

My title “Making Our Calling and Election Sure” might disturb lovers of the grace of God for several reasons. The first place, is not our calling and election already sure? So how is it possible for us to say that we shall make our calling and election sure? Are we not taught in some of the great passages of the New Testament that that calling has taken place and that our election is sure? For example, the Apostle Paul writing in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans has said,

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

So how is it possible for us to make our calling and election sure when our calling has already taken place when we were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, justified and assured of eternal glory? Furthermore, the apostle states in the 4th chapter of that same Epistle to the Romans, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure.” So if there is one thing that the New Testament stresses it is the fact that our salvation is a sure salvation.

Furthermore, it stresses very plainly that once we have come to faith in Jesus Christ we can know that we have everlasting life. So how, then, is it possible for us to make our calling and election sure since it is already sure? Or if it is not sure, how can we make it sure? After all, if it is true that our calling and election is not sure then surely we cannot make it sure. We might conceive of God making it sure but that we could make it sure must we become Pelagians finally, after all, and contribute something to our own election and calling?

Now as many of you know, I don't yield to anyone in proclaiming the one gospel of the free grace of God. In fact, I have a sneaking suspicion, as I've told you often, that I preach it more purely than anybody else [Laughter]. Now I smile when I say that, but deep down within I wouldn't want to preach if I didn't think I did it at least as pure as it could be preached. And if I was not preaching it as purely as it could be preached I should change my message to that extent. So while I was kidding you a little bit I really felt, deep down within, that it is my responsibility as a teacher of the word of God to proclaim it as purely as it is possible for it to be proclaimed. So I don't think that I yield to anyone. There are some equals, I presume, but I do not yield to anyone in stressing the free grace of God.

The Apostle Paul has written in 2 Timothy chapter 1, in verse 9, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Now I believe that and I think probably the great majority of you in this room also believe that. That we have been called with a holy calling and that this calling is not according to our works, but it is according to God’s purpose and grace. And furthermore, that that purpose and that grace were purposes that were consummated in the eternity that is in the past, and so we speak of our eternal election.

There may be some question about the term “eternal election” but at least we can say that our election took place in the ages past and our calling has already become an historical fact. There are only two religions on the earth, one that centers in the dogma of free will, and the other which springs from the divine election. One says, “Salvation is of my own self-movement.” That is, the dogma of free will. That is, that my salvation has its beginning in something within my own heart or within my own person, out of my free will. Now that essential teaching is the teaching of salvation by works.

The other doctrine is that salvation is of the Lord. That is, that everything that leads to eternal salvation has its origin in the Lord and not in my own will or in my own heart or in my own mind. That is, salvation begins with a movement from God. And incidentally as you well know in the Christian life that principle still pertains, or still obtains, because the apostle writes, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” So that even in the Christian life the Christian life that I live is a life of grace in which God works in my heart both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Not simply to do, but to will and to do of his good pleasure. So that the work of salvation is a work that begins with God. Any kind of explanation of the gospel of Christ which involves the beginning of salvation by a work, by a movement within the human heart, is therefore part and parcel of a salvation by works. It is part and parcel of Semi-Pelagianism.

So I say, I do not yield to anyone in proclaiming the one gospel of the free grace of God and I do proclaim, as much as it is possible to proclaim, the bondage of the human will and its utter inability to make a decision for God apart from the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. And yet here in the text in 2 Peter we are told to give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

Now how can we explain it? So we must go to the text. Jim McGinley used to say after one of his lengthy introductions, “I haven’t come to the text yet, I’ve just been giving you the anesthetic and now that you’re well under I’ll come to the text.” [Laughter] I hope you’re not completely under but we are going to turn now to the text and first of all we need to handle these verses that follow the section at which we closed last time. So we’re going to begin with verse 5, 6, and 7, where we have the imperative of the life of excellence. Let me read these verses,

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add in your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love.”

Remember that the heretics that Peter is opposing, denied the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the holiness of the Christian life. These two things, essentially, go together. For the man who denies the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus since he denies the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus, his eternal Son-ship, his soul saviorhood, he cannot possibly be a Christian. And not having the true doctrine that always expresses itself in a life of unholiness. It may not be observable to us but it is always part and parcel of the rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Always immorality follows false doctrine. So it’s not surprising, then, that in the opposition to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ the false teachers that Peter opposes should also be guilty of unholiness in Christian life.

Now Peter has begun by saying that God has given us the gift of faith, he has given us the gift of life, and he has given us promises that we share in the nature of God himself. And remember, I tried to point out last time that when we read that we have become partakers of the divine nature

we are not to understand this that we have become little gods. We do not share in the absolute attributes of God, we share only in those attributes that are communicable to us. We do not become omniscient, we do not become omnipresent, and we certainly do not become omnipotent, but at the same time we do share in the communicable attribute of God. Those attributes of goodness, and will, and justice, and mercy, the attributes that I defined last time as communicable as over against the incommunicable, or the relative attributes as over against the absolute attributes of God.

Now Peter, having told us that we have the gift of faith and we have life and we have these exceeding great promises by which we have become sharers in the divine nature, begins the 5th verse by saying, “And beside this,” or, “On this very account.” Now if you have a translation that is not the Authorized Version, I’m reading the Authorized Version with the few changes in it that have been made in the new Scofield edition, you may have a translation that reads something like, “On this very account.” That is, because we had been given the gift of faith, because we have been given life, because we have these promises of sharing in his nature. We have certain responsibilities for holy living. That’s the point that he wants to make. In other words, the possession of blessings from God means that there must be progress in the Christian life. We do not really have Christianity if we do not have progress in our Christian lives. This is one of the great truths of the New Testament which needs a great deal of stress in our days because Christianity is not simply the reception of a certain systematic unfolding of truth apart from life. That is important. Theology is important. The biblical doctrine is important. But the biblical doctrine and true Christian theology issues in a transformed life. Both of these are necessary. We should never stress one at the expense of the other. That’s what Peter is saying and he says it with all the apostles. The possession of truth demands progress in the truth. The fact that we have all things means that we should give all diligence to add in our faith virtue.

Now it’s interesting, I think, that Peter gives us a kind of ladder of virtues that should characterize the Christian faith. This is interesting because Peter was apparently writing to people who had been exposed to the Stoics doctrine and the Stoics liked to construct a kind of ladder, they

called it a *prokopi*, which had to do with a moral advance, that’s really what the word *prokopi* means, an advance. They like to set forth a kind of life that their adherence should follow in the form of a ladder of moral virtues and Peter is doing something of the same thing here. In a sense he is telling us that the Christian faith may be compared to the Stoic faith in this that we do have our *prokopi*, our moral advance, our ladder of virtues, that should manifest themselves in our lives just as the Stoics talk about the same thing in their doctrine. Someone has said that the Christian life of many Christians may be characterized as an initial spasm followed by chronic inertia [Laughter] and if we listen to what Peter is saying here we would avoid this initial spasm and the chronic inertia that follows, because the Christian life should be a good, glorious beginning, but it also should increase in the enjoyment of spiritual things as the months and years go by.

Well let’s look at the things that Peter says that we should give diligence to add in our faith. Incidentally, when he writes the word “add” in verse 5, that word means, literally, to supply abundantly. Peter, someone has said, is a mathematician. In verse 2 he has said, “Grace and truth be multiplied,” and now in verse 5 he says that we are to add to our faith virtue. But that explanation really doesn’t help us too much because in verse 9 he says there ought not to be any subtraction because he says, “He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.” And then our text in the Authorized Version reads, “Add to your faith,” that would seem to suggest in the light of the virtues that follow that we first added our faith and then we add to our faith because he goes on to say, “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control.” That would seem to suggest that since we add these seven things that follow we must, therefore, have added the faith at the beginning. And we must deny that because, remember, last time we pointed out from the text of Scripture that faith is given by God. No one is the origin of the faith that we have by which we are justified. It is a gift of God. It’s the conscious beginning of the new life in us and it is produced by God himself. The seven virtues that follow are the product of true faith.

Let me just read through them, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add in your faith.” Incidentally, the Greek text reads, “In your faith,” not, “To.” So in the faith that is given you by

God add virtue. Virtue was a great Greek word. It's rather surprising that we don't have it in the New Testament but just in a few places because the Greeks thought that virtue was the supreme excellence. In fact, that's what it means, excellence. And I like that word because I think that all Christians should excel in what they do. It is excellence. Excellence should characterize the Christian. That means that if, for example, you're a businessman you should excel in your business if you possibly can. It means to live to the limit of the capacities that God gives us. Christians ought to be known as excelling in their profession. If they are doctors they should be excellent doctors, excel in their profession. If they are lawyers, and it is possible for a Christian to be a lawyer though it's difficult [Laughter], if you're a lawyer you should excel in your profession. And if you're a preacher, and it's most difficult to be a preacher and a Christian at the same time [Laughter]. I think God saves evangelical preachers just to prove that anybody can be saved [Laughter]. But they should be excellent in their preaching and teaching of the word of God. And if you're a businessman of another sort you should be excellent in your profession. It's one of the easiest ways to give a good testimony to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, to excel. So I like that term virtue and I'm glad that Peter used it. He used it in his first epistle and he also uses it in this epistle. Excellence.

And then to excellence, knowledge. Now of course he means knowledge of spiritual things, primarily. And I would say that probably excellence would mean excellence in spiritual things primarily or as a virtue, but nevertheless it has those other applications about which I was speaking. Knowledge. And then to knowledge self-control. What a beautiful thing that is. That requires discipline, but nevertheless it too is the mark of the Christian who is growing in grace and moving up this ladder of moral virtues, self-control. And then patience, or endurance. That means when the trials of life come that you abide under them, that's the meaning of the term patience in the Authorized Version, or endurance biblically. It means to abide under the disciplines that God gives us, endurance.

And after endurance, godliness; the cultivation of likeness to God. I would think that is a virtue that comes through the study of Holy Scripture because through Holy Scripture we have

fellowship with the Lord Jesus. And the Apostle Paul points out to us in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, in verse 18, “That as we behold in the word of God, like a mirror, the face of our Lord Jesus, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Lord the Spirit.” The simplest way to become like Christ is to study Holy Scripture. Because in Scripture we spend time with the Lord Jesus, and in spending time with the Lord Jesus we are given the promise that we shall be transformed. We are not responsible to transform ourselves. Our responsibility is simply to behold as in a glass or mirror the glory of the Lord. And as we do that we are constantly transformed.

Now what better promise could we have than that? Simply feeding upon Holy Scripture brings the transformed life. And anyone who wants the transformed life, and every Christian I think deep down within does, should be encouraged by this, the reading and study of Holy Scripture. I am sure that spending time upon our knees in prayer has something to do with this too, but I must say I feel that the word of God is primary. Prayer is the means by which we respond to that which we discover in the word of God.

Faith, we are told in the word of God, does not come through prayer. We are told that faith comes through the word of God. “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,” so if you wish your faith to increase, if you wish to be more like the Lord Jesus you study Holy Scripture.

Godliness, a beautiful virtue and something that all of us should seek to cultivate before God. And then to our godliness, brotherly kindness, brotherly love. That’s the kind of love that people have within the family of God, one for another. And then the highest virtue of all, love itself. Now love is not the ordinary kind of love. I guess that we could probably say the greatest illustration of love is the life of Jesus Christ himself. That really is the enshrinement of love. But biblical love is something that is most beautifully expressed, it seems to me, in comparison with other types of love.

Someone may have told you, I’m sure that at one time or another someone has, that in the New Testament there are different words for love, and in the Greek language there are different words for love. There is one word for love, *eros*, which is the word from which we get erotic in English, which is so popular these days. That words means sexual love. Then there is the word



*phileo*, that means the love of friendship. And then *agape*, the word that is used here in the last of these virtues, love.

What is the difference between these words? Someone has said that *eros* is all take, for one's own self-satisfaction is the goal. *phileo*, brotherly love, is give and take. And *agape* is all give. Well I like to put it this way, we all understand probably, what sexual love is. But when it comes to *phileo* that's one of the virtues of the New Testament. When a person has *phileo* towards someone else what kind of relationship is that? Well that's the kind of love that one has for someone else because they have mutual likes and dislikes. It's friendship. There's nothing wrong with it. One should have that relationship to God. But it is the kind of love that is produced by the fact that we have the same kind of likes and dislikes. But when we talk about *agape*, this biblical love, this last, the kind of love that God has for men, that's an entirely different kind of love and much stronger. It's the kind of love in which someone expresses a deliberate desire for the highest good of the one that is loved and it expresses itself in sacrificial action for that person's good. It is something that comes out of the will of the individual by which he is directed to move toward the good of the object. Not because of anything in the object. In fact, often contrary to that which is in the object, but simply out of a decision of the will. It is that kind of love which God has had for us.

In fact, the electing love of God is in no way traced to anything in you. He did not love you because he saw something in you that he liked. In fact, he loved you in spite of what he saw in you. Therefore it is *agape* kind of love, now that is the highest expression of love. And when a Christian attains to this particular virtue it produces the kind of activity in which a Christian acts for the good of the object, the fellow Christian. Not because he loves the Christian, not because he likes the Christian, I should say, not because he sees anything of merit in the Christian, but simply because God has moved him to respond to that individual as God has loved us. That's the highest expression of Christian relationship. And that's what Peter speaks about here when he says that in the final analysis the last step is in our brotherly kindness, add love. Now what a challenge that is.

We often hear saints saying, “I love so and so but I don’t like them.” I know what they are trying to say, but often that’s a dodge, a ruse. Christian love is the final expression of the will of God in the believer’s life, motivated by the Holy Spirit for the good of the brother or sister, apart from anything that we ourselves may see in them to which we respond. And that’s something that all the elders should have, at least a measure, and all the deacons should have, at least a measure of. And in fact all of us should have, at least a measure, and which we should attain as Christians. That’s a great virtue.

Now having said that, Peter goes on to speak of the issues of life. He says, “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.” That little “for” which begins the 8th verse introduces reasons why we should build up this ladder of faith, this ladder of virtues. For, he says, to explain if these things are in you and if they abound within you then, of course, you will not be barren or unfruitful with reference to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He would seem to suggest by this, incidentally, that if we wish to grow in the Christian faith we must advance in these virtues. That is, if we wish to come to know the Lord Jesus in a deeper way we must advance in these virtues. So you see, the knowledge of God is not simply attained by studying theology, that’s important, but it comes from putting into practice the things that we learn. And so we learn things and then we put them in practice, and through the learning and the putting in practice we really come to know certain things so that this works as a kind of a spiral. The more we study the Scriptures and learn and the more we put in practice, the more we come to know. And the more we come to know the more we understand of the word of God.

So Peter is trying to stress here, simply, that we must grow or stagnate in the Christian life. It’s impossible for us to stay at the same place. You’ve probably noticed that. You’ve probably noticed that if you have attained to a certain level of spiritual maturity, if we could call it that, and then if you begin to become indifferent and lethargic in your Christian faith you begin to slip. You never stay where you are, you slip away. Perhaps you’ve never had the experience, but I have. I find

this one of the greatest struggles that I have in the Christian life as keeping a freshness, a relationship to the Lord, and a growing experience of the truth of God. That’s very difficult. I find that when I get down on my knees and pray that’s one of the things that I pray for myself constantly.

Ever since I have been a Christian minister, I don’t often tell these things because they pertain to my own personal life and I don’t think that it’s really the province of a Christian to get up and unfold all of the things that he thinks about when he’s on his knees, but one of the things that has characterized my own prayers through the years has been, “O God, help me to come to a deeper knowledge of Holy Scripture.” Every year, I can remember in almost every year, in January I always pray, “O God, may this year be the year in which I make further advances in the knowledge of the word of God.” And then I pray, “O God, help me to experience these things that you are revealing to me.” Because if we do not grow we shall surely stagnate in the Christian life.

It’s a very sad thing but it’s very often true that in our evangelical churches the opinion seems to be held by many of us that there is a certain level of life to which we attain and usually that is accomplished in the first few years of our Christian experience. And the task then is simply to maintain that for the rest of our Christian experience. And a growing, deepening relationship to the Lord does not seem to characterize us. I personally would love to see, out of this Bible class for example, some individuals here who would catch a kind of personal vision of constant growth in spiritual things as long as you’re left here on the earth by God. It’s very sad when an individual or a congregation feels that they have arrived spiritually, and I’m afraid that that often happens. May it not be so in Believers Chapel or in the lives of any of you who are our visitors.

I just think that in the ministry of the word of God there should be a kind of a freshness and a vitality and a sense of life in the congregation always. My daughter has just moved to Birmingham, Alabama from Atlanta, Georgia. And she attends a church in the city of Birmingham which is characterized by that. Of course I told her about this church, but I told her about several others. And she and her family were looking around for a church to attend and she attended this church and I know something about it and I didn’t tell her the kind of church that it was, but she wrote me back

exactly what I would have told her. She said, “This church is a vital, living, real church. And the people in it are living a vital, real, Christian life. There’s just a sense of something happening that is really according to Scripture.” She talked about the depth of scriptural knowledge in the lives of some of the Christians, and also the reality. And that they didn’t hesitate, they didn’t have a lot of the pause, façade, that often develops in evangelicalism.

The first morning she was called by one of the wives who was in her carpool. She was told about someone who was part of the pool and this individual said in a very matter of fact way and not in a critical way at all, my daughter said she said, “Of course Grace, you know that some people that call themselves Christians are not really Christians in their activities.” And Grace said, “Well I must confess that encouraged me because I know that that’s true, and furthermore I like it when people are honest and frank and admit that there is a great deal of pious façade among those who pose as evangelicals.”

Well now, Peter speaks about the lack of these things. In the 9th verse he states, “But he that lacketh these things is blind.” Probably this is to be rendered, “He is blind because he shuts his eyes.” Or that Greek word may mean to squint. So he that lacketh these things is blind because he squints. That is, evidently he can see the things that are. He’s near-sighted. He can see the things that are nearby but he cannot see afar off, he cannot see the real goals of Christian experience. “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his sins.” What he apparently has in mind is a kind of willful turning from the truth, a forgetting of our new status in the Lord Jesus.

I read an illustration that pertained to this verse by one of the commentators and he was saying that some time ago a group of Christians gathered and they were having a great Bible conference in Carnegie Hall in New York City. Now the minister who opened the session with prayer addressed God in this manner, “O Thou great and terrible God, great in Thy majesty, great as the distance that separates us from Thee, from the abyss of our helpless and lost condition we cry after Thee, guilty sinners that we are, have mercy upon us, O God,” and he went on a great deal

more in the same vein. And about that moment in the prayer one of the Bible teachers on the platform who was an elderly gentleman and who understood the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament whispered softly to the man next to him, “Why doesn’t someone give that man a New Testament.” [Laughter] To stress the fact that because what Jesus Christ has done we can speak of God as a God with whom we can have personal fellowship. We have been purged from our old sins, we have been brought into relationship to God through the Lord Jesus. We have been brought nigh, but he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten the whole purpose of his salvation which is that he should be purged from his sins.

Well now we come to our problem with which we introduce the message tonight, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” In other words, in the light of God’s wonderful gifts, wherefore make for yourselves your calling and election sure. Now here is the heart of the mystery of divine election and human responsibility. And evidently it was directed against the false teachers, “May give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

Now let’s stop for just a moment and think about this word “calling”. What does Peter refer to when he speaks about our calling? Well the Apostle Paul has referred to our calling in the Epistle to the Romans. Our calling is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul said, “For whom he foreknew, these he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he did predestinate, these he also called: and whom he called, these he also justified.” So we have about five great acts of God; foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification. Calling, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is always efficacious in the epistles. That is, it is always a calling to which its recipients respond. Calling is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to faith in the Lord Jesus and to justification of life. So calling, then, is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

There are two kinds of calling. There is the general calling of the preaching of the gospel to the whole of the world. And then there is that special calling by which the Holy Spirit speaks to the hearts of the elect. Now this, of course, is a reference to the special calling, “Make your calling and election sure.”

Now he talks about calling first, and election second and I’ll say something about that in a moment. But let’s look first at the word election. Now here we have this word again which causes so much controversy. I don’t know why, it’s one of the greatest doctrines in the Bible. It’s been a great deal of comfort to me all through my Christian experience. I never have thought that anyone ought to be angry over the doctrine of election but surprisingly there are people who get very incensed over the doctrine of election.

I was so pleased, about two weeks ago I got a letter -- I don’t know whether I mentioned this or not -- but I got a letter from a businessman eleven pages long. It’s a very -- he was a very, apparently a very wealthy businessman. He’s president of a large corporation, I think it’s a large corporation, it’s so large that it’s a division of another company. And he’s the president of it and he’s interested in, believe it or not, the five points of Calvinism [Laughter]. He heard on tape a message or two that I had given on efficacious grace and he was so thrilled over it that he wrote me these eleven pages and asked me to criticize his doctrine. And he does have a few odd ideas I must say [Laughter]. I’ve forgotten the exact branch of the Baptist church that he is a member of, it’s not the Southern Baptists friends. It’s, I think, it’s the Hard-shell Baptists, but I’m not positive.

At any rate, he was a former Presbyterian and he said, “I heard you say you were a former Presbyterian and I was so delighted because I was a former Presbyterian. And I for many years was a member in good standing in my church but I was not saved just as you. And then just a few years ago I heard the gospel and I’ve come to know Christ as savior, and I heard your messages on efficacious grace and election and I agree with what you were saying and I want you to examine my doctrine.” It’s a beautiful letter of eleven pages long and then to prove that he was genuine he sent Believers Chapel a check for a hundred dollars for their tape ministry. That proves reality [Laughter].

And he was rejoicing in election, it meant a great deal to him, he's become a student of the Bible, a real student of the Scriptures. He has only been converted just a few years, I don't know whether he said two or five, I've forgotten. But he evidently is a man of some age.

Why people don't love the doctrine of election, I don't know. John Calvin said, “They who shut the gates that no one may dare seek a taste of this doctrine wrong men no less than God.” So I wouldn't want to wrong you by not saying something about the doctrine of election. I want you to enjoy it because it's one of the great truths of the word of God. It's the fountain from which all of our blessings come. They all go back to that choice that God made in the counsels of eternity. So why shouldn't we love the doctrine of election? I believe all the true saints when it is presented as it is in the word of God do love it.

Now unfortunately it's presented in such a way it's no wonder that people don't like it. I traveled home after the message Sunday morning at about 1:20. I got in my car just outside Believers Chapel, I got in my car, turned on my radio and said, “I at least ought to listen to myself once [Laughter].” I have not listened to that program. Don't tell the elders this. I have not listened to that program, and so I turned on the radio and finally found the station. I must confess I didn't even know where the station was. And I found it and I recognized my voice [Laughter]. And I listened for the last five or six minutes of the message on the Book of Acts. Found one thing wrong in what I said, too, [Laughter] which I won't mention.

But I listened on until the message concluded and then listened to the man who followed me and he spoke on election. He referred to election. But what a doctrine of election that man had. He said, “Why election is very simple, the explanation is this; in election God is voting for you [Laughter] and the devil is voting against you, and whichever way you vote that's the election.” [Laughter] That's right, that's what he said. Now it's no wonder that a person doesn't get any joy out of that particular doctrine of election because if you know anything about the nature of man you know that we will never vote the right way. That's not the doctrine of election, that comes straight out of the mouth of Pelagius. But unfortunately there are a lot of people who have that idea of

election. They think of it as just as Pelagian as that, that really the source of our salvation rests with man rather than God. That’s horrible doctrine. That’s strongly anti-biblical doctrine. If you have some ideas like that lurking around in your mind they do not come from God, I assure you.

Election.

This is 1976. This is not election to the House of Representatives, it’s not election to the Senate. It’s election to the church of the firstborn who shall be in heaven. And incidentally if you think that I am stretching this a little too much to say that a person ought to rejoice in election I refer you to someone who told me to rejoice in election and I’ll just read his comments. This is what he said, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” Now who said that? Why the Lord Jesus said it. And he told them to rejoice because their names are written in heaven. So -- I started to say, “Hallelujah.” [Laughter] I’m rejoicing because my name is written in heaven. Election, that’s a great doctrine, tremendous doctrine.

Now our text, however, says, “Make your calling and election sure.” After all I’ve said, this seems as if we are stooping to a very human plain. After stressing that election comes from God and then to read in the word of God, “Make your calling and election sure,” how can we do that?

Well, in the first place there’s no question but that this is something that we are to do. Because in the Greek text this expression in the 10th verse, “Give diligence to make,” that verb “make” is in what we call in Greek the middle voice. And it can be translated this way most accurately, “Give diligence to make for yourselves,” or, “To make by yourselves your calling and election sure.” So the stress rests upon what we do, “Make for yourselves your calling and election sure.”

How can we possibly make our calling and election sure? Did you notice the order of the words? He didn’t say make your election and calling sure, but your calling and election sure. Now calling occurs in time. Election occurs in the ages past. So you can see right at the beginning here that there is a kind of order that suggests that what we are dealing with here is the human side of



election because the way we experience or come to the knowledge of election is by coming first of all to the knowledge of our calling. In other words, we come to know that we are elect after we have come to know that we have been saved. We do not know that we are elect before we know that we are saved. We come to know our election after we come to know our salvation. That’s our experience. We come to know we are saved, then we come to see from the Scriptures that we have been elected from eternity past. Not the time of the election but our knowledge of it follows, our knowledge of our salvation.

So now that’s a clue because you can see, then, that Peter is not talking about this from the divine standpoint but he’s talking about it from the human standpoint. He’s looking at it in the way in which we come to the knowledge of our election. To make my divinely decreed election certain to or for myself is simply a matter, then, of assurance. How do I make my calling and election sure? Through the demonstration in my life of the products of salvation, that’s how. That’s what Peter goes on to say, “Make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, you shall never stumble.”

One of the evidences, you see, that we are truly elect of God is the product of our life. That’s what Peter is speaking about. When he tells us to make our calling and election sure he is simply saying, “Give all diligence that these virtues that I have been speaking about issue you from your life. For when they issue from your life it is through that that you have assurance of your calling and your election.”

John says the same thing except with a slightly different emphasis when he says, “How do we know that we’ve been born again, because we love the brethren.” Or, “Faith without works is dead.” That’s James saying the same thing. Or Paul, “For by grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”

So when we make our calling and election sure it means nothing more than that there should be a demonstration in our lives of the product of divine grace and it is through the product of divine

grace that we recognize the reality of the source, our election and our calling. And this is a very needed and necessary thing. In fact the man who does not have any evidence in his Christian life of these virtues has no reason to think that he does really belong to God.

Let me read you something from Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield. He says, “Accordingly Peter exhorts us to make our calling and election sure precisely by diligence and good works. He doesn’t mean that by good works we may secure from God a decree of election on our behalf. He means that by expanding the germ of spiritual life which we have received from God into full efflorescence, full flowering, by working out our salvation. Of course, not without Christ but in Christ we can make ourselves sure that we have really received the election to which we make claim. The salvation of God being a salvation and sanctification of the Spirit ought, when worked out, to manifest itself in such forms as faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and love. By working out the salvation which we have received into such a symphony of good works we make sure that it is the very salvation to which God has chosen as people. Good works becomes, thus, the mark and test of election. And when taken in the comprehensive sense in which Peter is here thinking of them, they are the only marks and test of election. We can never know that we are elected of God to eternal life except by manifesting in our lives the fruits of election. Faith and virtue, knowledge and temperance, patience and godliness, love of the brethren in that essential love which does not put limits to its object. He that gives diligence to cultivating such things in his life will not stumble in the way for it is which such things in their hands that men enter the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. It is idle,” he says, “to seek assurance of election outside of holiness of life.”

Now there is one correction I should like to make to this, one slight correction. It is possible for a person who has truly believed in the Lord Jesus, for that settles the question of salvation and is the evidence, ultimately, of election, for the only the elect believe, it is possible for a person to believe and for us to see no evidence in the life. And we must never forget that.

We must not, as a matter of fact, look around and test the fruit in the lives of others. God has not called us to check the fruitfulness of other trees planted by the Lord. And we should remember that. But in the final analysis the man who has truly believed must manifest in his life whether it is seen by us or not evidence of the reality of the decision that has brought life.

Now then, Peter says, verse 11, our time is just about up, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” So those who do these things shall not fall. That is, shall not lose fellowship, but shall have an abundant entrance into the messianic kingdom of the Lord Jesus. What great words to excite a weary pilgrim.

I do not want in any way to suggest that these words that I have spoken to you would create any doubt about your election because if you have truly believed in the Lord Jesus that is the proof that you are elect, that you have been called. But we cannot ultimately have any real assurance if that does not manifest itself in a transformed life. And both of these emphases are in the word of God and we must not forget them. This, then, has to do with assurance.

There is no contradiction, then, between the election of God and our making it sure. One is the God-ward side, the other is the man-ward side. There is a contradiction between mere intellectual appreciation and no moral application of the truth. The cure is if you do these things.

Now there may be some of you in this room who cannot make your calling and election sure. You have not been called. And so not having been called you have no assurance of election. And you cannot make your calling and election sure until you have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so your responsibility is to come. And in receiving the Lord Jesus who died for sinners in that act of faith produced by God the Holy Spirit, that is the consummation of your calling and is the evidence of your election. And then our Lord’s word for you is, “Rejoice, rejoice.” Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the great truth of our election in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that this election is something determined by a great triune God in eternity. We praise Thee for the historical calling and justification. And we pray, O God, that we may respond to Peter’s words, “Make your calling and election sure.” Give us, O God, through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, for it is through him alone that this is possible to add in our faith the virtues that Peter has unfolded here in this great section from his epistle. May the Spirit of the apostle’s...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**