

The Sword AND Staff

“Preach the Word” (II Timothy 4:2) • “Feed the Flock” (I Peter 5:2)

Making “Your Calling and Election Sure”

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”—2 Peter 1:10



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THIS ARTICLE is about making “your calling and election sure.” Thoughtfully read 2 Peter 1:1-11. After the salutation, this Scripture has to do with growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. When a professed Christian fails to do this, he may reach the point where he has “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (verse 9). The apostle Peter caps off what he has to say here with this grand admonition: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (verse 10). Then, having followed through on this, the ultimate blessed assurance is given to those who comply: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (verse 11).

The Most Wonderful Thing

There is simply nothing as wonderful as being right with the God who made us, and that we have made our “calling and election sure.” We have been brought under conviction of the guilt and enormity of our sins, along with the certainty of the eternal consequences, and faced up to it. (“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Ro-

mans 3:23). There is a heaven and there is a hell (and eternal judgment). But now we have repented and are recipients of God’s grace and mercy. We know personally that the New Testament message, coming from God himself, applies to us, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12). What a reason for rejoicing! On the day of Pentecost “they that gladly received his word,” Peter’s preaching, “were baptized” (Acts 2:37-41). When Philip baptized the Ethiopian in Acts 8:35-40, upon coming “up out of the water...he went on his way rejoicing.” This little parable told by the Lord describes the greatness and joy of it all: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for the joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field” (Matthew 13:44). Paul likewise highlighted this great experience and relationship when he, in writing to the Christians at Rome, said that “the kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Romans 14:17). Also read Romans 15:13. Even in the midst of trials and persecutions, with the blessed assurance of salvation, Christians can “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:3-9). And, consequently, in his admonition in 2 Peter 1 to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, (the Scripture we are studying), Peter tells them that grace and peace would be multiplied unto them in doing this (verse 2). Other great verses could be stacked one upon another in this line of thought. How great to know that we are right with God and on the way to heaven! We have purpose in living and hope in dying.

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially ***SPEAKING...***

***WISDOM** is worthless unless accepted and acted upon.*

After you have been “added” to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:41,47), then there are many things that are to be “added” to your life (2 Peter 1:5-11).

If we put God first in our lives, we will not come out last.

Trust the Lord and lean not upon thine understanding, and you will find life less stressful and demanding.

To have a fulfilling life, fill your life full of good works.

Unfavorable circumstances many times are the most favorable for the development of godly character.

Be good for goodness sake (because it is the right thing to do).

If you are in the dark, it is hard for you to see the bright side of things.

Sometimes you have to go out on a limb to get the best fruit.

Unless there is within us that which is above us, we will soon yield to that which is about us.

If we get ahead of ourselves, we will soon be behind.

Christ not only showed us what God is like, but what we ought to be.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



ABILITY + OPPORTUNITY = RESPONSIBILITY

THIS could be called Christian math. *Ability + opportunity = responsibility*, and then comes *accountability*. That is how things add up in being a Christian. This may not be the kind of mathematics always practiced in the world, but that is the way God looks at things. We are responsible free-moral agents, and, consequently, accountable.

The parable of the talents spells out very plainly what we have said here. In this parable large sums of money were entrusted into the hands of three different servants by their master while he would be away for some time in a far country. We read, “And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability [own ability]; and straightway took his journey” (Matthew 25:15). As the parable unfolds before us, we find that the one with five talents and the one with two talents wisely invest the money. “But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money” (25:18). When the master finally returned, each servant was required to give an account of what he had done with the money. The ones with five talents and two talents had doubled the sum given to them. To each, their master said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (25:21,23). In giving account, the servant who had received only one talent, but fairly according to his ability, said, “I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine” (25:25). He is called a “wicked and slothful servant” by his master, who further said, “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury [interest]” (25:27). Then we go on to read what he said, “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (25:30).

We find this concept of ability + opportunity = responsibility repeatedly in the New Testament Scriptures. In the book of Acts when the Christians in the church at Antioch heard of the hard times that were going to come upon their Christian brothers and sisters in Palestine, we read, “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea” (Acts 11:29). This concept is again referred to by the apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2). (This refers to the big effort that was later spearheaded by Paul among the Gentile churches to help

the impoverished Jewish Christians back in Judea, not the one in Acts 11:29). The epistle of 2 Corinthians has follow-up directives to that which was laid out in 1 Corinthians 16:2, especially chapters 8 and 9. The churches in Macedonia had exceeded this principle of “every man according to his ability” or “as God hath prospered him,” imbibing the true spirit of Christianity. They gave out of their “deep poverty” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

The **opportunity** part of this concept is highlighted by Paul in Galatians 6:10, when he said, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” In the story of the good Samaritan told by Jesus (Luke 10:30-37), the priest and the Levite fell miserably short of implementing this teaching, as, indeed, they had a wonderful opportunity to do good. They passed by on the other side of the wounded man. The “good Samaritan” seized upon this opportunity to help. Read Matthew 25:34-45. The apostle John wrote, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion [heart of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). James plainly stated, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Approaching this matter of ability and responsibility from another angle, notice what is written in Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” He is talking about spiritual gifts, whether natural or otherwise. And our personal abilities to do things can be applied, whether they are natural or acquired. This theme is dealt with in Romans 12:3-8, as well as 1 Corinthians chapter 12 (there dealing with supernatural gifts in the early church). We have responsibilities according to our abilities. They should be exercised accordingly. Let us not sit idly by.

And the over-all picture of living the Christian life looms before us beyond that which we have noticed. Ability + opportunity = responsibility applies to every facet of it, followed by accountability. We are responsible, free-moral agents created in the image and likeness of God. Then as Christians, those forgiven of their sins, we are people committed to being like Christ. We are committed to obeying his teachings and responding to him according to our abilities. There is a great day of accounting coming. “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:11-12). “For

we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Looking forward to that day, let us respond to him accordingly now. Amen. □

EDITORIAL

Byways

“CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD”



DENOMINATIONAL preachers, almost as a whole, it seems, seize upon the expression to “call upon the name of the Lord” and apply it to alien sinners becoming Christians. They teach that by simply praying and calling out to the Lord the sinner is thereby saved, forgiven. That is what the expression “call upon the name of the Lord” means to them. But is this correct?

Recently in studying and teaching the 9th chapter of Acts concerning the conversion of the apostle Paul, this expression, involving calling upon the name of the Lord, leaped out at us in a vivid way. We know that Saul (Paul) was approaching Damascus, in route to persecute and to apprehend Christians. It was about noonday when the Lord appeared to him in this brilliant and blinding light, coming down from heaven. In responding to the situation, he cried out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (9:6), and thereupon he was told to go on into the city of Damascus and it would there be told him what he must do. “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink” (9:9) and during this time he was praying (9:11). A godly believer by the name of Ananias was called upon

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by the Lord to go to Paul and tell him of God's plans for his life, and what he must do. At first Ananias was reluctant to go, because he had heard that Paul had "authority from the chief priests to bind ***all that call on thy name*** [the Lord's name]" (9:14). But after Paul was told of his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles and being baptized, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues." "But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed ***them which called on this name in Jerusalem***, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" (9:21).

Notice that the expression about calling on the name of the Lord (as italicized above) has reference to Christians, not sinners being saved. This seemed to be the accepted way of talking about Christians in the early church (and how it should characterize us today!). In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul addressed the Christians at Corinth, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with ***all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord***, both theirs and ours." Paul admonished Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity [love], peace, with ***them that call on the Lord*** out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). The apostle Peter likewise wrote: "And if ye ***call on the Father***, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17).

The first use of this expression in the Bible is found in Genesis 4:26. It involves the righteous line of Seth, son of Adam and Eve. It reads, "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men ***to call upon the name of the LORD***." We next come across this expression in Genesis 12:8. Here, after coming into Canaan, we find that Abraham built "an altar unto the LORD, and ***called upon the name of the LORD***." Genesis 13:4 tells us that after an interlude in Egypt, he returned "unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram [Abraham] ***called on the name of the LORD***." Later the same language is used in connection with Isaac. This happened at Beersheba: "And he builded an altar there, and ***called upon the name of the LORD***, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well" (Genesis 26:25).

The first time an expression is used tends to identify and define its overall usage. Thereafter it can be used as a point of reference in understanding the words. In these references in Genesis, we get the impression "to call upon the name of the LORD" means to worship God. It takes on this decided technical flavor, and even is expanded in the New Testament to identify followers of Christ. It has reference to worship and the lifestyle of those who worship God (and are committed to the Lord Jesus Christ). It encompasses trust, and the life of trust and reliance upon God as we live for him.

Now let us get back to Paul on the road to Damascus and then in Damascus. For three days and nights he was blinded and he prayed. How natural this prayer was under the circumstances (and for any sinner reaching out to God). However, it looks like if anyone could have been saved by "praying through" to salvation, (or as they call it, "calling upon the name of the Lord"), Paul could have done it. But after three days and nights, and praying, were his sins gone? Was he a saved man? Had he been saved on the road to Damascus? We will let Paul answer that question himself. In rehearsing his Damascus experience later before the hostile and unbelieving Jewish mob in Jerusalem, he told of Ananias coming to him in the city and relating how that God had called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. With all of that spoken, Ananias had further said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and ***be baptized, and wash away thy sins***, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). In other words, what are you waiting on? Be baptized and get your sins washed away. We are told that he "arose, and was baptized" (9:18). And of his call to be an apostle, Paul later said on another occasion, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

The Lord Jesus Christ had said in the Great Commission in Mark 16:15-16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to ***every creature***. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." On the day of Pentecost in response to the preaching, convicted sinners cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized [immersed] every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Acts 2:37-38). Please observe, those believing (2:36) were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins ("every one of you"). Faith and conviction brought them unto repentance, then baptism for the remission of sins was to follow. "***Remission of sins***" means the same here as spo-

ken by Ananias to Paul in the words, **“be baptized, and wash away thy sins”** (22:16). We know that only the blood of Christ washes away sins (Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 9:14, 22-23). Therefore, in the act of baptism, spiritually speaking, the blood of Christ is applied to take away the alien sinner’s sins (Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:27). We are baptized into his death. Obviously, water does not wash away sins. Saul (Paul) of Tarsus was saved in the same way that every other person is saved or ever will be saved. Please notice what Peter went on to say in Acts 2:39, “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” In other words, the scope of what Peter says in Acts 2:38 reaches down through the ages, and any and everyone who will be saved is saved in this way (“even as many as the Lord our God shall call”). In the context of grace, this is God’s plan for all. Upon genuinely repenting and being baptized into Christ, remission of sins takes place and the gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted as an indwelling agent.

Additional thoughts are in order in reference to Acts 22:16. Ananias said to Saul, as noted, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Really, as seen in this context, the words that follow, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized,” are “calling on the name of the Lord.” “Calling on the name of the Lord” seems to constitute what is grammatically called an apposition. An apposition is an extended explanatory phrase pointing back to the words that have just gone before it, giving us additional insight into what has been said. □



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“That Your Joy May Be Full”

The apostle John likewise in 1 John wrote upon this theme of knowing and assurance involving our salvation. With this in mind, in 1 John 1:4 he begins, “And these things write we unto you, that your *joy may be full*.” Then having dealt

with many facets of knowing in this epistle, (including, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments,” 2:3), he finally states again in 1 John 5:13, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe [keep on believing] on the name of the Son of God.” Their joy was made “full” in knowing, and this knowing was pertaining to their salvation, that they had made their “calling and election sure” (to use the language of the apostle Peter).

The Reason for This Article

And that is why we are writing this article, that we may know for certain of our relationship to God, (and, indeed, that we may know that we have made our calling and election sure). Paul instructed his young companion and fellow-preacher, Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). So in the words that we are attempting to write here, our aim is that we can rejoice together in our salvation and jointly know that we have made our “calling and election sure.”

From two perspectives let us humbly, prayerfully and honestly consider this subject. Let us make our calling and election sure: (1) In becoming a Christian, and (2) In remaining a Christian.

I. IN BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

Have You Been

“Purged” from Your Old Sins?

In making our “calling and election sure,” it is good to go back to when we initially responded to the gospel “call,” when we first professed religion. Peter alludes to this time (2 Peter 1:9), when he said, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the blood of Christ purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. The Scriptures teach that salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12). And that this purging initially takes place when we genuinely repent and are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:20-21). We need to be certain that our “conversion” was the real thing, that we have actually become a Christian, before we consider remaining one. Feelings alone are not enough. They can be deceptive. The bottom line is, what do the Scriptures say? We will be judged by them in that last

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day (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Otherwise the Scripture we are considering in this lesson, which applies to Christians (2 Peter 1:1-10), has no relevance to us. Therefore, Let us examine everything about becoming a Christian and make sure that everything is right here.

FAITH

“He That Believeth and Is Baptized”

“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest”—These words were spoken by Philip in response to the Ethiopian when he asked, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36-37). The Lord had said in the Great Commission as recorded by Mark, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (16:16). In Romans 10:9-10, Paul likewise affirmed, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” We are “justified by faith” (Romans 5:1), and everything in Christianity springs from and hinges on faith. We personally have been brought to a saving faith, realizing that we are sinners and trusting that only Christ can save us, and consequently our response has been personal (and is real). Conversion is an intensely personal experience.

Have You Personally Believed?

We ask. Has faith been exercised, let alone it being personal, when infant “baptism” has taken place? Quite plainly infant “baptism” is not in harmony with what our Lord said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” Faith comes before baptism, but infant “baptism” has it turned around the other way. And babies are not capable of believing, and, thus, they are not even “candidates” for baptism (having no sin). Then for those who do not believe the Scriptures nor have actually believed or trusted in the Lord, they do not even fit into the necessary scheme of things. You must believe “in thine heart” and with “all thine heart.” Christ is more than man; he is God incarnate. The Lord’s church is not a body of unbelievers and doubters who use religion as a front for respectability in their community (or for business purposes). Response is not just a matter of conforming to family tradition. We live in a time when many religious denominations are riddled with unbelief. Real faith, saving faith, is not a factor. So, any way that we

would look at it, if we would be among those who have made and are making their “calling and election sure,” faith is a “must.” Jesus said that if we did not believe, we would die in our sins (John 8:24). Find out what all is involved. Trust the Lord for salvation. In Christianity, faith precedes, going before everything else, as well as being central in all that follows. We are “justified by faith.”

REPENTANCE

“Repent, and Be Baptized Every One of You”

These words were addressed to the multitudes on the Day of Pentecost when they cried out to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) The rest of the apostles had concluded their preaching, and Peter ends with a summary statement for what all have said (as he makes an appeal to faith): “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Now heavily under conviction, this prompted the anguished cry coming from the crowds as to what they should do. The apostle Peter’s immediate reply was, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (Acts 2:38). Repentance was the much heard message of John the Baptist and Christ during their ministry (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17; Luke 13:1-5). Now after the Lord’s resurrection from the dead, we find it in the forefront of the Great Commission when we read “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). It has always been a “must” in a sinful person getting right with God. Remorse for sins and genuine repentance must go before baptism, or baptism means nothing. Confession of faith is inconsequential unless it has been in conjunction with repentance. Death must take place before a burial and before a spiritual resurrection can take place (Romans 6:1-4). Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized.”

Was There a Change in Your Life?

Repentance is a change of heart that produces a change of life. John the Baptist declared that men must repent, and then said, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for [in keeping with] repentance” (Matthew 3:2,8). In Luke 3:8-14 he gives some illustrations of what this means. The apostle Paul’s mission, focusing on the Gentiles, involved preaching that men “should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for [in keeping with] re

pentance” (Acts 26:20). Real repentance comes about by personally being convicted of the guilt and awfulness of sin, that we have offended our heavenly Father, the God who said, “Be thou holy for I am holy.” The Holy Spirit has a part in bringing about this conviction (John 16:7-9; Acts 2:37; Hebrews 4:12). We are convicted. We are made sorrowful for our sins, and “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). This repentance brings us through the waters of baptism, as we arise from there to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). We begin living a life that shows we have repented. Like the Lord Jesus, we hate sin and love righteousness (Hebrews 1:9; Romans 12:9). If there has been no change, obviously there has been no repentance. We were baptized a dry sinner and came up out of the waters a wet one. There was no spiritual birth (John 3:5). Consequently, we are still in our sins, not right with God. Simple and elementary, yet drastic, steps must be taken if we want to go to heaven. “**Repent** and be baptized.” Totally surrender to God. Make “your calling and election sure.”

BAPTISM

The Washing Away of Sins and Putting on of Christ

Faith and repentance climactically converge in baptism as we obey from the heart that “form of doctrine” (Romans 6:1-4, 17). That “form of doctrine” is the gospel, which Jesus commissioned to be preached to “every creature,” whereupon he said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:15-16). The gospel in a “nut-shell” is defined by the apostle Paul as the good news about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). When we believe, repent and are baptized, we make a declaration of faith and personally identify ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, doing what is said in Romans 6:1-4, and 17. We are baptized into Christ, into his death, for the remission of our sins (Read Acts 2:38-39; Acts 22:16; and Colossians 2:11-12; Revelation 1:5). Paul links this with faith in Galatians, when he states, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (3:26-27). Now, in being baptized, it can be said that we have become a Christian (we have “put on Christ”). We have been born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11). We are now a new creature “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The apostle Peter, speaking of baptism, not as an isolated act, likewise clearly stated

that “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21). Subsequently, upon being baptized, people went on their way “rejoicing” (Acts 8:39). ”

Were You Baptized into Christ?

As we have put faith and repentance under the spotlight in conversion, now what about our baptism? (Plainly from the Scriptures above, baptism is part of the plan of salvation, and it is the point where remission of sins takes place).

First, backing up, we ask in all kindness if you were actually baptized. The word “baptize,” representing the Greek word **baptizo** in translation, means to dip, plunge, immerse. And the Scriptures are plain in showing that baptism took place in the water, that it was a burial and a resurrection (physically and spiritually) (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). Sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. Were you baptized?

Next, again take notice of all the things that we have already emphasized about faith and repentance. They apply here, too. “Baptism only” will not do (and some present baptism almost as a work, not as the merits of the blood of Christ being applied through grace). Sometimes children submit to baptism because others are doing it, not really understanding the commitment that should be taking place, and thus making it fall short of being what the New Testament teaches. It was not the real thing.

Then we ask, even though you may have been baptized (immersed), were you actually baptized for the remission of sins? Were you baptized into Christ? Today’s religious world is in a muddled mess wherein it is widely preached that we are saved by “faith only.” Just pray and the Lord will save you, we are told. Some go out of their way to explicitly deny that we are baptized for the remission of sins. A preacher in a major denomination that immerses once told this writer that in no sense of the word did they baptize for the remission of sins. That presents a major problem. If we don’t believe that baptism is of any significance in our salvation, even denying it, do you think that God will impose its meaning upon us (and count it as a spiritual reality)? The Lord’s Supper was not the Lord’s Supper without the spiritual awareness of what it was all about (1 Corinthians 11:20, 29; Romans 6:17). Although some had been immersed in Acts 19:1-7, they had not been baptized into Christ and it was not valid. With any of this uncertainty, that is no way to face eternity. Make your

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“calling and election sure.” There is nothing like being right with God and knowing it. You will be eternally glad that you did.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight
Angels descending, bring from above,
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I, in my Savior, am happy and blest
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.*

II. IN BEING A CHRISTIAN

“They Continued Stedfastly”

We are now ready to look at “making your calling and election sure” from the viewpoint of being a Christian (after becoming one). We have carefully considered the apostle Peter’s reply to those who cried out on the day of Pentecost, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Having told them to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38), he exhorted them, with the account reading, “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward [wicked] generation” (Acts 2:40). They were to do this, not in the sense of being their own Savior, but in responding to what Peter was telling them. Then we read, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (2:41). In the next verse we see what follows baptism in “making your calling and election sure.” “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (2:42). But, as we indicated in the first part of this article, we are focusing on 2 Peter 1:1-11. Let us see what is taught there.

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NOTICE to those who have ordered all of the bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff* recently, check and see if volume 37-38 (1999-2000) was missing in your set. If you didn’t receive it, please let us know and it will be sent to you right away.

A Relationship of LOVE and CONCERN

IN THIS DAY AND TIME too many churches in their interchurch “fellowship” constitute a network of compromise wherein “a rising tide lifts all boats,” thus impeding faithfulness to the Lord’s cause. In such a context it would be better for local churches to exercise their God-given independence as local autonomous entities, being found faithful to the Lord, and in the meantime simply maintaining a restrained relationship of love and concern to the churches at large. □

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. How many Caananite tribes (nations) were driven out by Israel in the conquest of the Promised Land?
2. Although the Levites as a tribe and as the priesthood had no inheritance in the Promised land, how many cities were assigned to them in which to live?
3. King Saul, the first king of Israel, was from which tribe of Israel?
4. Who in the Bible is called a “man after God’s own heart”?
5. Who in the Bible is called the “friend” of God?
6. Who in the Bible is spoken of as a man “greatly beloved” by God?
7. What is the only Old Testament book wherein the names of angels are given, and what are these names?
8. What Old Testament prophet prophesied that Israel would be seventy years in Babylonian Captivity?
9. On what two occasions are we told that angels came and ministered to Jesus?
10. How did Simon the son of Jonah come to be called “Peter”?
11. How far was the place on the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem where Jesus ascended back to heaven?
12. What three men were named “Ananias” in the New Testament (identify them)?
13. In what three chapters in the book of Acts do we find an account of the conversion of the apostle Paul?
14. How many Jewish brethren (Jewish Christians) accompanied Peter when he went into the house of the Gentile Cornelius?
15. Where was the apostle Paul stoned and thought to be dead?
16. What is the significance of the expression “Lord of sabaoth” as found in Romans 9:29 and James 5:4 (KJV)?
17. Where is the Old Testament word “belial” (as in “sons of belial”) found in the New Testament (only one time), and what does it mean?
18. In what two books of the New Testament are the qualifications of elders given?
19. Where is a Scripture that indicates that an “elder” and a “bishop” are the same “office” (position)?
20. Which one of the seven churches in Asia was lukewarm and ready to be spued out by Jesus?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

...Response

APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated. ☐

ALABAMA:

■ *"Thank you in advance for the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I used to get them...We have always enjoyed them very much. Keep up the good work, and may God continue to bless you in your endeavor to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ!..."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"Thank you for this great religious paper."*

■ *"I greatly enjoyed the recent volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF, volumes 47-48. I would like for you to send me other volumes that are available..."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"I really enjoy reading your publication. I usually post the 'Barbs with a Point' on our bulletin board. Keep up the good work."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Keep on preaching the truth! God bless you and the work you are doing."*

■ *"I am returning the hilarious pamphlet that arrived in my mailbox yesterday. I have defaced it so that you won't be able to use it again. I especially laughed at the name of your organization, 'The Sword and Staff.' You do know that 'sword' and 'staff' are both euphemisms for penises, right? You're literally calling yourself a gay organization!...However, I do realize that your organization must be comprised of idiots (to be a believer of any religion is to me an immediate sign of idiocy), so I guess I can't hold this against you too much; your mental disability is not necessarily your fault...Your Bible is a fairy tale..."*

"I kindly ask that my name and address be re-

moved from your database immediately. I certainly don't want any more of this crap delivered to my home."

KENTUCKY:

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF was delivered to me by a neighbor...It was put in her box by error."*

"It is the first time I've ever seen this publication, and I really think it is just brimming over with good Biblically sound information that I want to study and pass on to others at church after I've read them."

"I think it was no mistake that it got to me in a round about way."

"I am enclosing a check...to (hopefully) cover my subscription...and as many of the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF as it will pay for..."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"May God continue to bless you to keep up the good work."*

MICHIGAN:

■ *"Keep on keeping on for Him. Your ministry is a fantastic resource and support for many. God bless, keep and continue to use you. Sent with a prayer."*

INDIANA:

■ *"I have been a faithful reader of your publication for over 20 years. I have access to the copy that comes to our church...Thank you for your great work to the ministry of God's Word."*

■ *"I am a mail carrier...I delivered one of your papers today, THE SWORD AND STAFF, and the featured article was titled: 'Thoughts on the Impact of the Fear of God upon Our Lives'."*

"I would very much like to read that article if possible. Actually, could I have a copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF?"

"Thank you!"

MISSOURI:

■ *"Thank you so much for all your hard work. I have learned so much from your books and questions and answers. May the good Lord bless and keep you."*

■ *"Thank you for allowing our God to use you in putting out THE SWORD AND STAFF for these many years. It has consistently been a blessing and a source of sound Biblical teaching. Thank you. Enclosed please find a check to help with the ministry as well as to cover the cost of the few booklets marked..."*

NEBRASKA:

■ *"I would like to be put on the mailing list for THE SWORD AND STAFF. The church received volume 50, number 1, and I just got through reading it. And I am impressed with the truth of God's Word revealed in it..."*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

"The truth is hard to come by in a wayward world.

"Keep up God's wonderful work.

"God bless you!"

TEXAS:

■ *"I am a talk show host in Texas. I am dealing with a series of subjects on my blog, including the alleged mandate to unconditionally support the state of Israel. I am on my second posting on this subject and rather than typing in the Scriptures John 8:40-46, I chose to do a Google search and came across your website. You may know that those who are religious within the current state of Israel prefer the Talmud (man's traditions) to the Torah (God's word).*

"The first blog in my series deals with the question of who is Abraham's seed and who is heir to the blessing. Your article," Who Are God's Chosen People Today?" is well written. It does not contain anti-Semitism and makes enough Scriptural references to validate your position. I am asking for your permission to link to your article from my blog. I am not asking for permission to use any of your material, but just to link back to you as another point of reading. I am dealing primarily with politics and religion and am trying to challenge people to re-examine both their political and religious traditions before they cast a vote. In doing so I am touching base on a few subjects, but I am not going into the detail you have gone into, and I would like to offer a link to your article as additional reading.

"In your article you do something few people do. You offer your position without taking either an anti-Semitic approach or a Zionist approach. It is refreshing to read.

"Thank you for taking time to consider my request."

Editor: You are welcome to link to the said article. My aim in the article about God's chosen people is the same as in all of my humble efforts at writing, to point out what I believe is the truth in a positive way, scripturally speaking. In linking, I trust this will prove helpful for your purposes.

OREGON:

■ *"I want to thank you for your tireless work in publishing THE SWORD AND STAFF. I enjoy its content and appreciate your convictions..."*

IDAHO:

■ *"The first time I read your paper was last December, having picked up volume 49, # 3...I read the issue twice and was thrilled with the clear way you presented your material. It is an excellent publication and I would like to be put on the mailing list..."*

"May God continue to bless the ministry of THE SWORD AND STAFF."

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:

■ *"A cordial salutation, my brothers! The reason for this message is because I am interested in receiving a free copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Here in Santo Domingo, brothers of the churches of Christ also are interested in receiving it. I hope in God that you can read this message, accept me and send me all the copies. It is not important my brothers if they are not from this year or from the past. We are interested in receiving all the information that you can provide us.*

"Thank you for your help and collaboration! Everything is to edify us in the Holy Scriptures. May God bless you greatly and allow you to continue with the arduous and exemplary work you do!"

PHILIPPINES:

■ *"Praise God! I was amazed to see in the cyber world the website of THE SWORD AND STAFF...Thanks and God bless!"* □

The Policy of The Sword and Staff

The Sword and Staff is not an organization, company or commercial enterprise. The expression, **The Sword and Staff**, simply refers to the Word of God in its presentation ("Preach the Word" II Timothy 4:2—"Feed the Flock" I Peter 5:2). This paper is a preaching/teaching publication and that alone. Consequently, no news items or outside advertisements are accepted or featured. To reverse this policy, would find us unable to handle all of the material that we would receive, considering the relatively small size of the paper and the limited number of times it comes out during the year. For the very same reasons, outside writings are not solicited (although some are used from time to time). The paper, as you see it, represents the editor's humble and singular effort to get out God's message, not fettered by traditional schools of thought, and to be of service to the Lord. We wish to be identified by and with the church of the New Testament, and that alone. □

Signed, But Forgot to Write the Note

DON'T WRITE or say anything that you wouldn't sign your name to. If you receive a negative, anonymous note, just ignore it! If the person is not willing to sign their name, it's not worth reading anyway; don't take heed to it. For example, like the preacher who received an anonymous note with nothing but the word "FOOL!" written on it. The next morning he got up in church and said, "I've gotten notes without signatures before, but this is the first time I've gotten one where someone forgot to write the note and just signed their name!"

—Source Unknown.



Making “Your Calling and Election Sure” (Continued from Page 8)

This Great Section of Scripture (2 Peter 1:1-11)

“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 ye 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**. 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 ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (KJV).

About the Epistle of 2 Peter

The epistle of 2 Peter was written as a follow-up to 1 Peter (2 Peter 3:1). The first epistle deals with being a faithful Christian under persecution, trials and suffering, whereas 2 Peter has to do with being faithful in confronting false teaching. According to Peter, knowledge, knowing God and the truth of God, is the greatest safeguard against false teaching. If we really have a personal relationship with God, having made our “calling and election sure” (as laid out before us here), we are not “candidates” for apostasy. We have all that our souls need or ever could desire in Christ. “Grace and peace” come to us in knowing God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:2). God “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of him [knowing him] that hath call us to glory and virtue” (1:3). As seen in the first chapter, this is accessed and obtained through growing in the grace and knowl-

edge of the Lord. In this epistle explicit dangers of coming false teachers are pointed out, and the last chapter concludes by saying, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from you own steadfastness. But **grow in grace, and in the knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...” (3:17-18). The best defense is a good offense.

“Giving All Diligence”

With that being said, let us get right into the apostles instructions in the first chapter about growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. He starts the series of connected admonitions, strongly urging them, with these words, “And beside this, giving **all diligence**” to add the following stated things to their lives (1:5ff). This word translated “*diligence*,” *spoudé*, is quite interesting. In fact we have it carried over into English as “speed” (with a little more punch to it). Earnestness is tied up in the word. The force of it is fully seen in Romans 12:11, where it is rendered, “Not slothful **in business**; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” The word occurs again in this chapter of 2 Peter in verse 10 where they are told to “**give diligence**, to make your calling and election sure.” That is how we must enter into being a Christian. We should hit the ground running. A half-hearted religion won’t take us even half-way to heaven. In fact, it won’t even get us started.

Faith, and Seven Graces Added

There are seven different graces listed here, after the initial statement of faith, that are to be added as we “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord.” Each seems to spring out of the one just before it, starting first with faith (and all of them fittingly climax in love). We are justified by faith (Romans 5:1). Faith was the moving impetus in our becoming a Christian and continues to be each step of the way in living the Christian life. The apostle Paul said, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Virtue

1. Moving on into these connected admonitions, Peter begins by saying, “giving all diligence, add to your faith **virtue**...” (1:5). (“All diligence” is to be exercised in reference to each grace enjoined and acquired). Goodness and moral courage (valor) seem to be tied up in this word “virtue” in the original language of the Scriptures. Faith leads us into the paths of righteousness, and moral courage is needed to stick in there (facing and overcoming the obstacles in living the Christian life). “Watch

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Making “Your Calling and Election Sure” *(Continued from Page 11)*

ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you [be brave] like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). Really, the Christian life is not for a weakling.

Knowledge

2. The next step that is laid out before us as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord is to add “to virtue **knowledge**” (1:6). Faith and moral courage, also defined as goodness, must be knowledgeably informed in order to be channeled in the right direction. Zeal without knowledge is very dangerous. The apostle Paul spoke of some who had a “zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2). More than once, Paul said, “I would not have you ignorant, brethren.” However, growing in knowledge without growing in the other graces can result in a Christian being imbalanced, one-sided, or even becoming a self-righteous person. But knowledge embedded in spirituality is a “must” if we are to be found faithful and not be “led away with the error of the wicked” (2 Peter 3:17-18).

Self-Control

3. Following this, he says, “and unto knowledge [add] **temperance**” (1:6). In more current vernacular, modern translations supply the word “self-control” instead of “temperance” here (which nails down the thought even better). The Christian life is the restrained life. We must have mastery over all evil inclinations and appetites. Whether we think of this in terms of being given over to strong drink, improper sexual thoughts and impulses, outbursts of hateful and unkind words, or even carelessly gossiping about others, all of this would be prohibited in fulfilling this injunction. Really, self-control comes as a byproduct of the Holy Spirit living within (Galatians 5:22-23), as we are surrendered to the will of God.

Patience

4. “Patience” is the next thing named in this list of things to be added (1:6). Perseverance, endurance, and steadfastness are words that come to mind as synonyms for this word. It is translated as “patient continuance” in Romans 2:6-7, where it is said that God “will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by **patient continuance** in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” As a verb, it is translated repeatedly as “endure.” When we become a Christian, there is usually a lot of living to be done before we die. Of necessity, we are called upon to exercise much patience. We may be disposed in that

direction, but it is more fully acquired, developed and realized through experience (Romans 5:1-4; James 1:2-5). Paul said, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). But as a Christian, we have counted the cost (Luke 14:26-33), regardless, and our mind is set on eternity (Colossians 3:1-4).

Godliness

5. The idea of deep reverence, respect and piety are tied up in this word (1:6). The good fear of God is clearly evident in its outworking in our lives. It implies a life devoted to the worship of God, and rightly directed, manifested in our conduct and conversation. We are pious people. Perhaps it can best be understood in contrast with the word “ungodly.” In 1 Peter, the apostle asked, “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:18). The very demeanor of a godly person will reflect his godliness, not in a sanctimonious, self-righteous way, but in there being no question about him being devoted to God and committed to that which is right. He is no hypocrite. Someone has said that “godly” means that we are like God. Our lives are under his control.

Brotherly Kindness

6. Interestingly, the word translated “brotherly kindness” is **philadelphia**, which literally means brotherly love (1:7). Peter in writing to the same people in the epistle of 1 Peter states that, actually, they were brought into this relationship, that of brothers and brotherly love, when they were converted. Here he said, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned **love of the brethren**, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again...” (1 Peter 1:22-23). “Love of the brethren” is **philadelphia**. John wrote, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...” (1 John 3:14). The writer of Hebrews admonished, “Let **brotherly love** continue” (Hebrews 13:1). Now in 2 Peter, Peter is further emphasizing its ongoing practice. And in the translation, “brotherly kindness,” the English representation of this truth is brought out. “Kindness” comes from the word “kind,” and “kind” from “kin,” meaning relatives or family. We are to treat one another warmly as “kin.” The church is a family of brothers and sisters, who have been born again, and brought together by the blood of Christ. They will be together throughout all eternity. This is a very sacred and special relationship. Let us cherish

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“There Had to Be a God”

WILLIAM J. MURRAY the son of the renowned and notorious atheistic Madalyn Murray O’Hair, in response to the twisted world in which he had lived, in essence said that there had to be a God because it was so obvious that there was a devil. And how else can we explain the depravity, wickedness and awful things that happen in our world? Yes, there is a supernatural, evil spirit at large in our world. □



BARBS

...with a POINT



***DEAD WOOD** doesn’t produce any fruit.*

If you live life on the edge, you may go off on the deep end.

A thankful people do not murmur and complain.

If we continue to try to excuse and to overlook our sins and shortcomings, we will continue to fall short of the glory of God.

Life can become pretty demeaning when we don’t live within our means.

If we have had our sins “blotted out” (Acts 3:19) and then go back into sin, not overcoming, we will have our names “blotted out” of the book of life (Revelation 3:5; 20:15).

We need to “wise up” for when we “dumb down” the religion of Christ, it is no longer Christianity.

Time does not stand still, nor does it march on with a decided step, it runs ahead at a desperate and break-neck speed; so we better get a move on, hurry up and catch up if we want to get anything done while we are still here.

Nations decline because the morals of their citizens have declined.

When we come face to face with God, we will come face to face with ourselves and realize just how awful our sins and shortcomings really are (Isaiah 6:1-5).

If we try to justify our children in their sins, we will be condemned with them.

Fasting and praying were much in evidence in the early church whereas feasting and playing conspicuously characterize the modern church.

Many times life throws us a curve ball when we are not even up to bat.

There is nothing wrong with being right (as all of us should seek to be right with God) unless in our human weakness it generates self-righteousness, and then we are no longer right.

A church that compromises the truth of Christ does not comprise a faithful church of Christ.

In a number of places in our society today the name of God is not allowed, and if it is, it cannot be accompanied by the name of Christ (as in prayer).

If the perverted practice of homosexuality is not wrong, there is no such thing as right and wrong.

If we do not learn from the mistakes of the past (ours and others), the future will further be filled with them.

Fast living will move you toward death and the judgment a little faster (Hebrews 9:27).

When the high tide of worldliness engulfs the church, we can expect many lives to be spiritually shipwrecked.

Many times we are not getting anything done because we are not doing anything.

In our zeal to return to the church of the New Testament, let us not preach a church-centered message instead of the Christ-centered message (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The only ecclesiastical organization we find beyond the local church in the New Testament was other local churches.

If we would be the church in the Bible, we must have the Bible in the church (and that alone as our rule of faith and practice).

Real success in life is not determined in terms of dollars and cents.

When we exalt people a little too high, it will only be a matter of time until we see that they have feet of clay.

We live in a day when people want to work less and less for more and more.

To forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25), which is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18; 4:16), is to forsake Christ. □

*The best way
↻ to get ↻
anything done
is to do it!*

Making “Your Calling and Election Sure” *(Continued from Page 12)*

and esteem one another highly in love. Paul also admonished, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with *brotherly love*; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

Love

7. Of course “charity” is love, the *agapé* love (the higher love of esteem and respect) (3:7). How relevantly this series of seven begins with faith and now ends with love. The apostle Paul wrote, “Now the end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Timothy 1:5). In his spiritual directives to the Colossians, he said, “And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness,” (Colossians 3:14). If we look upon Peter’s admonitions in 2 Peter, that we are considering, as an upward path ascending to heaven (“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Peter 1:11), the words of Paul can fittingly be applied (“*above* all these things put on charity [love]”). It bridges the gap into eternity, where “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16). And Paul here called love “the bond of perfectness [completeness],” binding everything else together in completeness now. From any angle we look at it, love is all important and should pervade all that we do. The Corinthian Christians were admonished, “Let all your things be done with charity [love]” (1 Corinthians 16:14). We can hardly overstate what we are saying about love.

Concluding Thoughts

Now as we bring this study on the series of seven to a conclusion, and having them in mind as we have highlighted their meaning, we read, “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” (1:8). It is important that these graces not only be in us in our spiritual development, but that they “abound” (as in the word “abundance”). And as they are profusely in our lives, looking at it from the negative viewpoint, we shall “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “knowledge” is *epignosis (epi+ gnosis)*, meaning full knowledge in contrast with that which is fragmentary. This is accomplished as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord as laid out here. And in diligently doing this, we know assuredly that we are making our “calling and elec-

tion sure” and being engrossed in doing this we will “never fall” (stumble and fall) (1:10). Then in the grand climax of it all we are assured that “an entrance shall be ministered unto you [us] abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1:11).

CLOSING REMARKS

Dear Reader, this concludes our article on making “your calling and election sure.” As we close, we ask you: Have you made “your calling and election sure”? What is your relationship to God? We have asked this from the standpoint of becoming a Christian and then in actually being a Christian. The apostle Paul, prodding, wrote to the Christians at Corinth, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates [disqualified]?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). We have not written these words to be unduly prodding, intrusive or unkind (as some might think). It is just the opposite. Our concern is the eternal well-being of your soul; that we mutually might be right with the God who made us (1 Timothy 4:16) and that we really have hope in the hereafter. Is your relationship with God one of joy and contentment, or is it one filled with question marks and clouded with uncertainty? It doesn’t have to be this way. We have pointed you to the Scriptures. Seriously take to heart the things that we have written here. Eternity may be in the balance. □

The Soul Winner’s Prayer

Oh, give me, Lord, Thy love for souls,
For lost and wand’ring sheep,
That I may see the multitudes
And weep as Thou didst weep.

Help me to see the tragic plight
Of souls far off in sin:

Help me to love, to pray, and go
To bring the wand’ring in.

From off the altar of Thy heart
Take Thou some flaming coals,
Then touch my life and give me, Lord,
A heart that’s hot for souls.

O Fire of Love, O Flame Divine,
Make Thy adode in me;
Burn in my heart, burn evermore,
Till I burn out for Thee.

—Eugene M. Harrison

**Church Attendee,
Which One of These Are You?**

- 1. You attend every service of the church when it meets, unless providentially hindered.
- 2. You attend the services of the church only on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings.
- 3. You attend only the services of the church on Sunday mornings.
- 4. You attend only the “main” service of the church on Sunday mornings.
- 5. You attend the services of the church every once in a while, only if you have time and “feel” like it.
- 6. You attend the gospel meetings (some call them “revivals,” “rallies,” “lectures,” etc.) of the church occasionally only when invited.
- 7. You attend the services of the church twice a year at the time of “Christmas” and “Easter.”
- 8. You attend services of the church only when there is a funeral of someone close to you or out of respect for others.

QUESTION: Which church attendee, if he or she professes to be a Christian, has complied with the admonition in Hebrews 10:25 (and what we read in Acts 2:42)?

Someone has said, “I go to church, and just more than visit, so when I am at last carried in the Lord won’t ask, ‘Who is it?’”

Mercy, Not Justice Wanted

IT IS SAID that a mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death.

“But I don’t ask for justice,” the mother explained. “I plead for mercy.”

“But your son does not deserve mercy,” Napoleon replied.

“Sir,” the woman cried, “it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for.”

“Well, then,” the emperor said, “I will have mercy.” And he spared the woman’s son.

Broken Bone is Stronger

IT HAS BEEN SAID “just as they tell us that a broken bone renewed is stronger at the point of fracture than it ever was before, so the very sin that we commit, when once we know it for a sin and have brought it to Christ for forgiveness, may minister to our future efficiency and strength.”

FORGIVING others and accepting forgiveness (forgiving one’s self) are great determining factors in spiritual healing in a person’s life.

Repentance

“**REPENTANCE**” actually involves three important meaningful components: (1) A person has done something wrong, (2) he feels deeply sorrowful for what he has done, and (3) he changes, with the intent not to commit the sin again.—**Selected**

When we talk about religious “movements,” it draws attention to men; when we talk about the church of Christ, it draws attention to Christ.

When the apostle Paul said, “I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7) that didn’t mean that he had just kept it to himself.

We are blessed to be a blessing; we are comforted to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

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