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**1 - Making Your Calling and Election Sure:
An Analysis of 2 Peter 1:8-11**

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I was raised in a Reformed community, where God's election of his people was stressed. I distinctly remember the first time I read 2 Peter 1, and verse 10 especially jarred my Calvinistic mind. Surely Peter couldn't be saying what that text seemed to be saying, could he? "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure." If my salvation is totally in the hands of a sovereign God, how could I do anything to make sure that I am among the elect? In this article I will visit this puzzling text and seek to uncover what Peter means by it.

A. Peter's Socio-Religious World

Commentators on 2 Peter usually begin with an introduction, in which they discuss issues such as the disputed authorship of this

¹ Author of *Daylight Devotional Bible* (with Dirk R. Buursma; Zondervan, 1988; 1407p), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (edited; Zondervan, 2004; 722p), *An Abridgment of New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (editor; Zondervan, 2000; 1544p), *NIV Topical Study Bible* (helps by Verbrugge, edited Dirk R. Buursma; Zondervan, 1989; 1461p), *NRSV Harper Study Bible* (edited; Zondervan, 1991; 1914p), *Early Church History* (Zondervan, 1998; 95p), *James: Living on the Edge* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Pub., 1994; 2 vols.), *Paul's Style of Church Leadership ...* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992; 404p), and *Time-saving Ideas for Your Church Sign: 1,001 Attention-getting Sayings* (Zondervan, 1999; 125p).

letter, its likely date of writing, its destination, its literary style and genre, and its relationship to Jude. Such issues need not concern us in this article. Suffice it to say that I accept the Petrine authorship of the book, which means I date it prior to AD 68.

Commentators also discuss the nature of the opponents, whose infiltration into the church had much to do why the letter was written. Traditionally these opponents have been viewed as Gnostics or proto-Gnostics,² though that hypothesis is generally not accepted today. More recently some scholars have argued that these “false teachers” (2:1) had philosophical links with the Epicureans, primarily because Epicureans denied the notion of a coming judgment and advocated for complete human freedom (which could lead to an immoral lifestyle, the sort of lifestyle describe in ch. 2).³

The issue of identifying the opponents is also one that does not need to be settled here; with Schreiner, it is probably best merely to describe their characteristics and not attempt to identify exactly who they are; the limited information we have in these three chapters does not allow for such precision.⁴ But what is more important for our purposes is to examine the socio-religious world that Peter assumes in his letter. We need to grasp the structure of this world in order to understand the flow of his argument in chapter 1.

Peter essentially divides up the world of his audience into two groups. The first group is the believers (I will call them Group 1), who have been called and chosen by God, who have received faith as a gift of his grace, and who now have life and godliness (see the discussion below); they are Christians. The other group (Group 2) is that of the “false teachers,” who teach “heresies of destruction” and “deny” (ἀρνέομαι) the only Master who sacrificed his life for them as a payment for sin (2:1). Those who belong to this group are headed for condemnation (κρίμα, 2:3), for destruction (απόλεια, 2:3), for the “darkness of darkness” (οἰζόφος τοῦ σκότους, 2:17)—which is a euphemism for hell. They are not Christians.

² See, e.g., Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude* (TNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968): 37-40; Thomas R. Schreiner summarizes the proposed arguments in *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003): 278-79.

³ See Jerome Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 122-28; Schreiner critiques this view in *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 279-80.

⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 280.

It does seem clear that those who belong to Group 2 have had in the past some affiliation with the church (with those in Group 1). They had the hope of escaping the corruption of the world through a relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior. That is, Group 2 people are not pagans who have never had any appreciation for the teachings of the apostles. The fact that they are trying to promote their teachings within the church (2:1) suggests that have had some relationship with the church. Perhaps they still view themselves as followers of Jesus.

But the most important observation about members of Group 2 is that they have become entangled again in the world and have succumbed to its evil devices (2:20).⁵ They at one time knew the way of righteousness (i.e., the way of becoming right with God), but they have turned their backs on it (2:21). Thus, Peter compares them to the angels who sinned and were sent to hell (Tartarus, *ταρταρώ*, 2:4), to the wicked world that was destroyed in the flood (2:5), and to the condemned sinners who were burned in the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). Though Peter does not specifically say so, he would agree with the apostle John in 1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”⁶

Now in Peter’s socio-religious world, some might argue that there is a third group. The false teachers are attempting to influence members of the Group 1 to shift their allegiance to them, to follow them in their teachings and in their wicked lifestyle (2:2). This might appear to be a separate group of people “in transition,” gradually sliding from Group 1 into Group 2. Now in terms of Peter’s analysis in this letter (as we will see), such a group does not exist, and he is writing this letter to make sure that no one slides into Group 2. Nevertheless, I believe it is plain that the whole tenor of Peter’s

⁵ 2 Peter 2:20 is a first class condition of reality, in which the *εἰ*-clause focuses not on what these people could have been (express by the participle *ἀποφυγόντες*) but on what they now are—entangled in the world and its pursuits; as a result, their latter stage worse than the first. As Jesus himself suggested in the parable of Luke 12:47-48, those who know the way of the Lord and refuse to follow it are worse off than who do not know his will in the first place.

⁶ While Peter does not dwell in this letter on those who never had a relationship with the church, he would undoubtedly class such people also in Group 2. That is, there is no Group 3; there are only believers and unbelievers. The apostle John does deal with those who have never been believers with his use of the Greek word *κοσμός* (“the world”; see, e.g., 1 John 2:15-17; 5:19).

writing suggests that if it were to happen, any who might transfer their allegiance to the false teachers would only be demonstrating that they had not truly received the grace of God. They would have the characteristics, as outlined above, of Group 2 and never been true members of Group 1.

With this socio-religious world in mind, let us now turn our attention to 1 Peter 1.

B. Context of 2 Peter 1:1-7

Context is one of the most important hermeneutical principles that determine the meaning of a passage. Thus, while much of the focus in the article will be on verses 8-11, I would be amiss if I did not first of all set this passage in the context of the theology that Peter advances in the preceding verses. In verse 1, Peter addresses this letter “to those who ... have received a faith as precious as ours.” Note that Peter does not speak here about those who have received salvation; rather, he refers to those who have received “faith,” which is the instrument by which salvation is communicated to an individual (cf. Eph. 2:8). Peter clearly intimates here that while “faith” is something that a person must exercise, even faith itself is a gift that one receives from God.

Moreover, the verb translated “received” is the verb λαγχάνω, a verb that occurs four times in the New Testament. In the other three instances in which this verb occurs, it is linked in a context of the casting of lots. The priest Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, was “chosen by lot” to serve in the temple ministry (Luke 1:9). The soldiers “decided by lot” which one would get the seamless garment of Jesus (John 19:24). As the early apostles were discussing a replacement of Judas between the time of Jesus’ ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter refers to the betrayer as someone who was numbered among them and (lit.) “received the lot of this service” (Acts 1:17).⁷ The apostles then went on to cast lots and chose Matthias as Judas’s replacement.

⁷ This use of λαγχάνω suggests that Judas, like the other disciples, was called and chosen by Jesus as a disciple (cf. Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:12-15); what is especially significant is that here this verb is linked directly with the noun κλήρος (“lot”). The disciples did not choose Jesus; rather, Jesus chose them (cf. John 15:16).

The important point in the casting of lots, according to the Old Testament, is that the one viewed as responsible for the outcome of the lot is the Lord God: “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Prov. 16:33; cf. also 1 Sam. 14:41). In addition, most scholars consider the Urim and Thummim as a sort of casting of lots, through which the will of the Lord was determined.⁸ Thus, the emphasis in 2 Peter 1:1 on the source of our faith, whereby we receive the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, is that it comes from the Lord; it is a gift of God.

In verses 3-4, the grammar is admittedly difficult to follow.⁹ But at least two elements stand out. First, Peter twice uses the perfect form of the verb δωρέομαι, a verb that means “to bestow, give.” This is a middle deponent verb, so that it has an active thrust in meaning. In verse 3, δεδωρημένης stands in a genitive absolute construction with τῆς θείας δυνάμεως, which then translates: God’s “divine power has bestowed on us everything we need for life and godliness.” In verse 4, the subject of δωρέομαι is presumably God, and what he has given us are his “very great and precious promises,”¹⁰ through which we become sharers in “the divine nature.” Through both occurrences of this verb, in other words, Peter emphasizes that we are recipients of God’s gifts; we do not earn them, nor do we bestow them on ourselves.

The second significant element in verses 3-4 is Peter’s emphasis that the means whereby we become aware of these divine gifts is “the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (v. 3). Note especially the phrase “who called us.” I cannot go into a full discussion of the notion of calling here; suffice it to say that the calling here is that of an “effectual call” given by Christ. When Christ calls believers to himself, along with that calling comes the gift of

⁸ See “Urim and Thummim,” *New International Bible Dictionary*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987): 1044-45.

⁹ See this discussion of the grammar in Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter*, 289-90. See also the article by Terrance Callan, “The Syntax of 2 Peter 1:1-7,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 632-40. Callan points out the three options for verses 3-4: a concluding clause to the opening blessing (v1-2), an anacolouthon, or an introductory clause (which he calls a protasis of a condition) to verses 5-7. While I agree with Callan that verses 3-4 must be linked to verses 5-7, I see verses 3-4 as a causal clause begun with ὡς rather than some form of a conditional sentence with a protasis and apodosis.

¹⁰ BDAG gives an active emphasis in 2 Peter 1 to both of these middle deponent verbs; s.v. δωρέομαι (p266).

being able to respond to that call. “When God calls or speaks, it is so.... The call of Christ, then, is effective and performative.”¹¹ This call enables us to escape the corruption (either moral or physical—or both) that is related to this sinful world (cf. Eph. 4:22; 1 John 2:17; note also the notion of escape from this world into God’s eternal kingdom in 2 Pet. 1:11).¹²

In the next three verses (2 Peter 1:5-7), Peter instructs believers, based on the power and calling they have received from God (cf. καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δέ at the beginning of v. 5, which can translate “and with this especially in mind”), to grow in their Christian faith by developing and increasing in their lives eight Christian virtues: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. It is true that Peter introduces this list in verse 5 with a second person imperative verb ἐπιχορηγήσατε (“furnish, provide”). This use of the imperative emphasizes that we are not passive in living out the Christian life. But the eight Christian qualities listed here would be impossible for us to develop in our lives without the substratum of God’s sovereign gifts and call that Peter has laid out so powerfully in verses 1-4.

To summarize the context, then, Peter is concerned that believers escape the corruption of the world around them and grow in Christian graces, but they are able to do so only because they have received faith and salvation as a gift from God, and because God has bestowed on them everything they need in order to live a life of holiness and godliness; equally important, he has placed his divine nature within them, which serves as the basis for Christian living.

C. The Expected Results of 2 Peter 1:8-9

The connective γάρ joins verses 8-11 with verses 5-7; Peter is now able to move on to the next point of his argument.¹³ The Greek

¹¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 290.

¹² Note that the words that Peter uses here are almost identical to those used in 2:20, where he indicates that the members of Group 2 were hoping to escape (ἀποφεύγω) the corruption (φθορά in 1:4; μιάσματα in 2:20) of the world (του κοσμοῦ). While φθορά can denote a variety of types of corruption and destruction (e.g., physical, moral, religious, eternal), μιάσματα is more limited to moral corruption (see BDAG, s.v. μιάσμα, 650; φθορά, 1054-55).

¹³ The Greek connective γάρ does not always carry a causal nuance, “for, because.” As BDAG points out, γάρ sometimes simply expresses continuation or clarification, similar to δέ (s.v. “γάρ,” p189); I argued this in an unpublished paper presented at Midwest Regional SBL Conference at Calvin College, Spring 2003, “Driving Your γάρ with Caution.”

word ταῦτα (“these things”)—which summarizes the eight qualities just mentioned in verses 5-7—functions as the subject of the verb καθίστησιν, and it has two participles that expand its scope. These two participles (ὑπάρχοντα and πλεονάζοντα) are circumstantial participles that carry the adverbial nuance of either condition or means. We can translate verse 8 something like this, then: “These things, if they belong to you and if they are increasing” (or, “these things, by means of their existence and of their abundance in your life”), “will not cause you to be useless and fruitless in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The emphasis in verse 8 is essentially a double negative; otherwise put, *not* to cause someone to be *useless* and *fruitless* denotes, *mutatis mutanda*, causing someone to be useful and fruitful. In other words, Peter stresses here that if the eight qualities mentioned in verses 5-7 become an integral part of our lives and are actually increasing in abundance, they will enable us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the practice of living useful and fruitful lives that serve and honor him.

In other words, Peter is encouraging these believers to remain in Group 1 (as outlined above) and not to slide into Group 2 by following the false teachers into their destructive heresies. He feels confident that if the believers to whom he is writing follow the lifestyle recommended in verses 5-7, they will grow “in the knowledge” (εἰς τὴν ... ἐπίγνωσιν) of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word ἐπίγνωσις is an important term in 2 Peter; this is the third time he has used it (see 1:2, 3). Bultmann defines this word as a “decisive knowledge of God which is implied in conversion to the Christian religion”;¹⁴ Bauckham calls it “that fundamental saving knowledge on which the whole of the Christian life is based.”¹⁵ Because such ἐπίγνωσις is so critical to salvation, Peter affirms that it is from this knowledge that the false teachers have fled (2:20). Thus, the more we become fully aware of the fullness of who Christ is and what he has done for us, the less likely we are to slide into the false teachings and immoral behavior of the heretics.

¹⁴ R. Bultmann, “γινώσκω,” *TDNT*, 1:707.

¹⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983): 170.

In verse 9, Peter offers the converse of verse 8. Regarding someone in whom these eight qualities described in verses 5-7 do not exist and are not flourishing and who does not have a growing ἐπίγνωσις of Christ, he or she is “blind, short-sighted, and forgetful of the cleansing of his past sins.” The verb μωπάζω (“to be shortsighted, nearsighted”) is a hapax legomenon in the New Testament and occurs only in later Christian writings. When coupled with τυφλός, it bears the meaning “he is so short-sighted that he is blind;”¹⁶ he cannot see where he is headed.

Moreover, the people described in verse 9 have forgotten about their “cleansing from ... sin.” Cleansing (καθαρισμός) from sin, a common New Testament metaphor used to depict what happens in salvation (see Acts 22:16; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7, 9), is a process that is wrought only by Christ (see Heb. 1:3). This metaphor is based on the purification imagery of the Old Testament law (see, e.g., Lev. 16:15-16, 19, 30; Ps. 51:7; Isa. 1:16).

But how does the πάλαι (“long ago, in the past”) figure in? Even though this adverb is connected most closely with ἁμαρτιῶν (“sins”), I hold that it refers not to past sins (as if only sins done long ago are covered by the cleansing of Christ), but that it refers to what the people referred to in this verse heard at some time “in the past” with respect to Christ’s cleansing from sin. It is precisely this cleansing that is not, and never truly has been, a part of their lives; in spite of whatever moral virtues they may have been manifesting for a period of time, they are now once again wallowing in their former sinful life—just as a dog returns to its vomit or a pig to its mire (2:22). These people are, in other words (if we use the suggested scheme of Peter’s socio-religious world), members of Group 2. As Moo writes on this verse, “spurious Christians, false teachers, were about. Surely Peter has these people—whom he will describe in greater detail in chapter 2—in mind when he warns about the kind of person who ‘does not have them [i.e., the virtues of vv. 5-7].’”¹⁷

Thus, even before Peter enters fully into the world of the false teachers, he already describes them in here. Verse 8 describes the Christian lifestyle and behavior of Group 1, and verse 9 offers a key

¹⁶ BDAG, s.v. μωπάζω (p532).

¹⁷ See Douglas Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996): 48.

characteristic of Group 2. A Christian cannot remain static in the Christian faith. “Instead, we are either continuing to grow or we have begun to slip backwards.”¹⁸ The problem for the Christian who does not increase in his or her knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of Jesus Christ, does not appreciate God’s saving grace and gift of faith, and does not continue to develop a fruitful life of service to him and to others—such a person ends up in Group 2. It is not that this person has switched groups; rather, it becomes apparent that he or she never truly was in Group 1.

D. The Encouraged Effort of 2 Peter 1:10-11

With this in mind, Peter now moves to verse 10, which he begins with διό. Because God expects his people to add to their faith the various qualities mentioned in verses 5-7 so that they may abound in the faith and live fruitful lives, he exhorts them to “put forth every effort [σπουδάζω] to make [ποιέω, in the infinitive form ποιείσθαι] your calling [κλήσις] and election [ἐκλογή] sure [βέβαιος].” Each of the Greek words noted here is significant.

The verb σπουδάζω reflects back on the word σπουδήν in verse 5, where Peter instructs believers to put forth effort to develop the eight qualities of verses 5-7 in their lives. This is a word group that denotes the putting forth of human effort. The verb σπουδάζω occurs eleven times in the New Testament,¹⁹ and in each case it refers to something that human beings are being encouraged to do. It is used twice more in this letter. In 1:15, Peter indicates the effort he is expending in his writing so that after he dies, those whom he has led to the Lord will be able to recall what he has taught them about Jesus.²⁰ In 3:14, he exhorts the recipients of this letter themselves to put forth every effort to remain spotless and blameless until the return of the Lord. Thus, in 1:10, as long as we are living on this earth, we

¹⁸ Zane Hodges, “Making Your Calling and Election Sure: An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:5-11,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 11 (Spring 1998), available online at www.faithalone.org/journal/1998/Hodges.html (accessed Feb. 23, 2007).

¹⁹ In addition to this verse, the verb occurs in Gal. 2:10; Eph. 4:3; 1 Thess. 2:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:9, 21; Titus 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:15; 3:14.

²⁰ It is worth noting here that J. B. Mayor (*The Epistle of St. Jude and the Second Epistle of St. Peter* [London: Macmillan, 1907; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965], 102-3) sees an allusion here to the Gospel of Mark, which (according to church tradition) was written by Mark under the supervision of Peter.

must put forth effort to grow in the Christian faith and way of life, through the help of the Holy Spirit (though Peter does not mention the third person of the Trinity here). Peter does not hesitate to say that living a Christian life requires effort on our part.

The infinitive ποιῆσθαι is a present infinitive of the common verb ποίεω, which completes the thought of σπουδάζω. As a present infinitive, it emphasizes ongoing effort. In other words, putting forth effort to grow in the faith and Christian graces is a lifelong proposition. There is never to be a moment in our lives when we can relax and say regarding Christian maturity, “I have arrived.”

We have briefly discussed the notion of calling in our comments on verse 3. The verb used in the phrase “who called us” (καλέω) in verse 3 is related to the word “calling” (κλήσις) in verse 10. As noted in our comments on verse 3, this calling refers an “effectual call” given by Christ; it is inner call through which Christ also gives us the necessary grace to respond. This is the reason why it is linked so closely with ἐκλογή (“election”). The two together form what is technically called a hendiadys, where two words are so closely associated together they that they form a single idea—that of “elective call.”²¹

The word ἐκλογή occurs seven times in the New Testament, and in each instance it denotes something God does. In Acts 9:15, God says to Ananias, when Ananias shows reluctance to visit Saul immediately after the latter’s call from heaven on the way to Damascus, “This man is a vessel of election for me,” that is, “this man is my chosen instrument.” In Romans 9:11, Paul writes about how God had chosen the younger son, Jacob, over the older son, Esau, even before they were born to be the one who would carry on the family promises. As Paul continues to struggle with doctrine of God’s election and the role of the Jews in that election, he uses ἐκλογή three times in Romans 11: “a remnant according to the election of grace” (11:5), the elect received God’s promises (11:7), and the people of Israel are still “beloved by virtue of their election” (by God). Finally, in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Paul calls the Thessalonians

²¹ This is the way that Schreiner (*1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 304) translates these two words. Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter*) points out “the author’s predilection for nearly synonymous word” in 2 Peter 1 (190). Other examples are “life and obedience” (v3), “glory and goodness” (v3), “useless and fruitless” (v8), and “shortsighted and blind” (v9). Similarly here, then, “calling and election” are synonyms.

believers those who are beloved by God, and for that reason the apostle writes that he is confident of “your election.”

In other words, when all is said and done, believers are the *recipients* of God’s calling and election. In no way can we force God’s hand to become the “called” and the “elect”; it is a work of his grace. This is, of course, in keeping with the context as noted above, that everything we need for our redemption and salvation, including faith, we have received as a gift from God.

There is one final word to discuss in this crucial verse 10: the adjective βέβαιος (“firm, sure”). This is the critical word to study in the verse, since with ποιῆσθαι it suggests the notion that we can do something to “make sure” (or “make firm”) that we are among the elect. One of the most important elements to note about the βέβαιος word group is that it roots out of a legal framework. “The promises of God, the word of God, and the gospel will be fulfilled with absolute certainty because they have been legally confirmed by God, and so form the foundations of the faith.”²² Because of this firm foundation, the believer receives assurance of salvation. “The certainty of the believer’s hope is inextricably rooted in the legal validity of God’s word.”²³

The verb βεβαιόω (“to confirm, make firm, establish”) sets the tone for this word group in the New Testament. It occurs eight times (including the textually suspect Mark 16:20). Four of these are in the active voice. In Mark 16:20, God “confirms” his word by signs. In Romans 15:8, Paul writes that Christ became a servant of the Jews (lit., “the circumcision”) in order to “confirm” the promises made to the patriarchs. In 1 Corinthians 1:8, Paul writes that Christ “will make us firm” to the end in order that we may appear blameless on the day of the Lord. In 2 Corinthians 1:21, the apostle emphasizes that God is the one who “makes us stand firm” in Christ and anoints us. In all four of these occurrences, the one who does the confirming is either God or Christ.

The other four uses of βεβαιόω are in the passive voice. In 1 Corinthians 1:6, Paul writes that his witness about Christ “was

²² See H. Schönweiss, “βέβαιος,” *NIDNTT*, 1:658.

²³ *Ibid.*, 660. H. Schieder, “βέβαιος,” *TDNT*, 1:600-603, also directs the reader’s attention to this “technical legal sense” (603).

confirmed” among the Corinthians by the way they were given God’s grace and were enriched in him with word and knowledge (1:4-6 contains three passives). Colossians 2:7 likewise contains three passive voice parallel participles, that the Colossian Christians were rooted and built up in Christ and “were made firm” in their faith. In Hebrews 2:3 the author notes how salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, “was confirmed” in believers by those who heard. And finally, Hebrews 13:9 stresses how good it is for the heart to “be made firm” by grace, not by special (ceremonial) foods. These uses of the passive (with the possible exception of Hebrews 2:3, since an agent is expressed by a ὑπό + genitive construction) are what New Testament scholars call “the divine passive”—the use of the passive voice with the implication that God is the agent, sometimes expressed in the text but often only implied.²⁴

In other words, in the New Testament, the work of strengthening the hearts of believers and confirming their faith is the work of God. This same emphasis becomes apparent in a brief study of the two uses of the noun in this word group, βεβαίωσις. In Philippians 1:7, Paul writes that the Philippians are sharers with him in God’s grace, whether he is in chains or is out working for the defense and “confirmation” of the gospel. While Paul does not elaborate here how he defends and confirms the gospel, other passages of the New Testament suggest that he defends it by his preaching and his legal testimony before rulers and governors (note the legal context) and confirms it by his exercise of the gifts that the Spirit has given him (Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Mark 16:17; Acts 5:12; 19:11-12; see also Heb. 2:4, in the context of the use of βέβαιος in 2:2). In Hebrews 6:16, the author uses βεβαίωσις to refer to an oath that confirms a promise, and he specifically relates it to God’s oath that confirmed his promise to Abraham that he would have a son. In both uses of βεβαίωσις in the New Testament, the one doing the confirming is God, even if a human being is involved.

The third word in the βέβαιος word group is the adjective βέβαιος, which, like the verb, occurs eight times in the New

²⁴ See the discussion of the divine passive in Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996): 437-38. Note especially this statement: “That God is behind the scenes is self-evidently part of the worldview of the NT writers. The nature of this book demands that we see him even when he is not mentioned” (438).

Testament. In four of these, clearly the one behind what is considered firm and secure is the Lord God. In Romans 4:16, Paul refers to God's promise of salvation by grace through faith that is "firm" and secure for all of Abraham's true descendants, both Jew and Gentile. In Hebrews 2:2, the author emphasizes how the word spoken by angels was "firm," because it was God's word that they spoke (reflecting the tradition that Moses received God's law through angels as mediators; cf. Gal. 3:19). Later in Hebrews (6:19) is a reference to the Christian experience of hope, which God offers to us as a "firm" and secure anchor for our souls (cf. also Rom. 5:5 on the believer's hope). And in 2 Peter 1:19, Peter writes how God's word spoken by the prophets is more "firm" and secure to us because such words originated in God.

As to the other four uses of βέβαιος, one of them simply points out the obvious legal maxim that a human will does not go into effect (that is, is not confirmed) until that person dies (Heb. 9:17). The other two uses of βέβαιος (omitting for the time being our text, 2 Pet. 1:10) do speak of a human confidence. In 2 Corinthians 1:7 Paul feels confident about the Corinthians (i.e., he has a "firm" hope) that just as they have shared in his sufferings, so they will share in his comfort. And in one of the warning passages of Hebrews, the author encourages the believers to hold "firm" to the end of their lives the conviction of their faith that they first experienced (Heb. 3:14)—and let us recall that what will enable them to do so is the hope God has given them (Heb. 6:19).

Let us sum up, then, our study of the βέβαιος word group in the New Testament. In the vast majority of its usages, God is at work as the one who initiates and confirms the faith of Christians. Our calling, our election, and our faith are not things that originate with us; they are gifts of God. "It is God himself who establishes, makes firm, the believer in Christ, and seals him with the Holy Spirit... He is secure because he looks away from all efforts of his own and stands entirely on what lies outside himself."²⁵ And throughout our lives, the things that happen to us and the way we live out our faith, both of which confirm in our hearts that God is at work in our lives, are divinely appointed.

²⁵ Schönweiss, "βέβαιος," 660.

Thus, when Peter instructs the Christians to whom he is writing to “make their elective call βέβαιος,” he is not suddenly shifting to a works righteousness theology, as if the way a Christian lives establishes his or her calling and election. After all, as Zane Hodges reminds us, “‘the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).’ Thus, in no way are we to conclude that βέβαιος ... ποιῆσθαι means ‘to confirm the call, i.e., so that it does not lapse.’”²⁶ Rather, Peter is saying that as believers live their Christian lives in the power of God’s Spirit and as they grow in the eight Christian graces through the strength and power that come from God, they will begin to feel ever more firmly in their hearts that God indeed has called them and chosen them as his people.²⁷

This is the emphasis in the last part of verse 10: “for by doing these things you will not at all, ever, stumble.” The participle used here (ποιούντες), like the two participles in verse 8 (see above), has the adverbial nuance of either means or condition (“for if you do these things,” or “by doing these things”). Writing this letter in a context of those who are in Group 2, Peter does not want his readers to follow along with them in their “destructive heresies” that deny “the sovereign who bought them” (2:1). He knows that as long as they are living the Christian life to which they have been called and are feeling the power of God’s Spirit moving in their hearts and lives, they will never stumble; that is, “they will not forsake God, abandon him, and commit apostasy.”²⁸ Rather, they will be confirming in their hearts and by their lives their calling and their election. Make no mistake: Peter here is stressing the importance of putting for consistent effort to live a Christian lifestyle. But a Christian does not that in order to earn divine grace; rather, it is to “show evidence of this reality by means of virtuous living.”²⁹

The end result of remaining firm and steadfast in the Christian faith until the very end is expressed in the last verse: “For in this way

²⁶ Hodges, “Making Your Calling and Election Sure,” online version.

²⁷ I should note here that Hodges, *ibid.*, interprets βέβαιος (ποιῆσθαι not in terms of personal assurance, as I do, but as “producing valid evidence *for others* to observe that God has indeed ‘called’ and ‘chosen’ him” (italics added). He derives this from the legal connotations of word in classical and Hellenistic Greek. But as my study of the βέβαιος word group has demonstrated, this legal framework is secondary to the confirming power of God’s grace, which secures our salvation.

²⁸ Schreiner, *2 Peter, Jude*, 305.

²⁹ J. Daryl Charles, “2 Peter,” *EBC*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006): 13:391.

an entrance will be richly provided for you into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Note once again here the use of a divine passive verb in “will be provided” (ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται). Peter does not say that believers will earn an entrance into the eternal kingdom as a result of living the Christian life of the eight Christian graces, for no one earn a place in heaven. Rather, God will provide believers an entrance into that eternal kingdom as a result of his calling and election by his rich grace. The adverb πλουσίως, which modifies the verb ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται, emphasizes how rich and glorious indeed is the heavenly inheritance that God has in store for us.³⁰

Conclusion

In summary, then, after his opening greeting in verses 1-2, Peter begins this section with the exaltation of God’s grace in verses 3-4, and he ends in verse 11 with a concluding statement that “makes it clear that final salvation is not man’s achievement but the gift of God’s lavish generosity!”³¹ These verses form the bookends or an inclusio through which this entire passage must be read. We received God’s salvation by his grace through the work done by Christ, and as we tap into that power and “divine nature” (v. 4), we receive confirmation in our hearts that we truly are the elect of God and called to his service for his glory.

³⁰ In two of the other three instances of this adverb in the New Testament, the emphasis is on what God has richly provided for us through his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:17 [a full life]; Tit. 3:6 [the Holy Spirit]).

³¹ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 193.