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## IF YE DO THESE THINGS.

"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 Savior Jesus Christ." – 2 Pet. 1:10,11.

THIS statement of the Apostle Peter is suggestive of several important thoughts: (1) It indicates the possibility to the class addressed of "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is the prize of the high calling of the overcoming saints of the Gospel age. True, when we consider its exceeding glory, faith is prone to stagger at the promise that, poor and imperfect though we be, God proposes in the ages to come to show the exceeding riches of his grace in his [R2154 : page 146] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:7.) Nevertheless, such is the case: "unto us are given the exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" – through the worldly desires, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." – 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 2:16.

These exceeding great and precious promises contemplate the adoption of these called ones by the great Sovereign of the whole universe as his sons and heirs; as joint-heirs with his only begotten Son, the heir of all things: they shall be with him where he is and behold his glory; and they shall put off this mortality, and, like him, who is "the express image of the Father's person," they shall be clothed with immortality. So shall they be forever with the Lord, and see him as he is; for they shall be like him. Having overcome the world, they shall sit with him in his Kingdom, even as he overcame and sat down with the Father in his Kingdom. – Rev. 3:21.

"Fear not, little flock," says the prospective Bridegroom of the Church, "for it is your Father's *good pleasure* to give you the Kingdom,"

"for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God." Nor will he give the Kingdom to his beloved grudgingly; for Peter says, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly*:" there will be a glorious welcome, a joyous greeting and a coronation jubilee among all the heavenly hosts when the laurels of victory are placed upon the heads of all the overcoming soldiers of the cross, the heroes who nobly fought the good fight of faith – who kept the faith, fought the fight against the world, the flesh and the devil, and finished their course in faithfulness even unto death.

All this abundance of grace and glory is the possible inheritance of even the weakest saint who, trusting not to his own ability to make his calling and election sure, humbly looks to God for strength from day to day to endure hardness as a good soldier. If any man attempts to do this in his own strength, he must surely fail; for the *fiery trial* that is to try *every one* will prove too much for the mind of the flesh; but God who worketh in the consecrated to will and to do his good pleasure, will so fortify and equip those who depend upon his grace, that, with the Psalmist, they can say, "It is God that girdeth me with strength....By thee I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall;" and with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." – Psa. 18:32,29; Phil. 4:13.

(1) Let us not fear, then, to lay hold upon the exceeding great and precious promises when we are so fully assured that he who has begun the good work in us will finish it, if we let him. (Phil. 1:6.) "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith" – not faith in ourselves; for we can have no confidence in the flesh. The poor, weak and faltering flesh does not warrant us in reposing confidence in its ability for the great responsibilities of soldiers of the cross. We must draw our supplies of wisdom and strength from above: they are not within us except as implanted there by the spirit of God.

(2) We next notice that while Peter's words encouragingly indicate the possibility of the glorious inheritance to all who are called, there is

also the implied possibility of failure to enter into it. There is an "*if*," a *contingency*, upon which the scales of divine judgment as to our worthiness or unworthiness of the inheritance must turn. And it is in view of this contingency that Paul urges all the called ones to great sobriety of mind and carefulness of conduct, saying, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and again, "Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." It is not enough, therefore, that we have *consecrated* ourselves to God as living sacrifices; that we have *covenanted* to follow in the footsteps of Jesus; for the consecration, the covenant, the promise, will avail nothing if we prove unfaithful to it, except to rise up in judgment against us. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." – Eccl. 5:4,5. See also Deut. 23:21-23; Prov. 20:25; Heb. 10:38,39; Psa. 15; Luke 9:62; John 15:6; Acts 5:4,5.

(3) Our attention is next drawn to what is implied in this expressed contingency – "If ye *do these things*." What things? – The reference is to the things mentioned in the preceding verses; *viz.*, that with all diligence we add to our faith fortitude; and to fortitude knowledge; and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love."

It is important to observe here that while all of these virtues are imperative requirements of those who would be esteemed of God as faithful, they are only of value as they are added to, or built upon, a foundation of faith – "Giving all diligence *add to your faith*," – your "precious faith," as described in verse 1. This faith is our abiding confidence in the divine plan of salvation, which centers in the redemption accomplished through the precious blood of Christ, who freely gave himself a ransom for all. No righteousness of our own without this foundation of faith can avail anything to commend us to God. All our works of righteousness must be built upon this faith.

But is not faith in Christ sufficient unto salvation [R2154 : page 147] without the subsequent *doing* of any thing? To this the Scriptures plainly answer that a faith that Christ will save us in our sins – while we still love sin and do the works of sin – is a misplaced faith; for Christ never proposed to save us *in* our sins, but *from* our sins; and God is faithful and just to forgive sins and to cleanse from all unrighteousness those who come unto him by Christ, – through faith in his shed blood (sacrificed life) as the propitiation or satisfaction for our sins, and in his cleansing power. "He that saith, I know him [Christ, as my Lord and Savior], and keepeth not his commandments [to *do* the works of righteousness, and to bring forth the fruits of repentance of sins], *is a liar,*" says the Apostle John, "*and the truth is not in him.*" (1 John 2:4.) Therefore the Apostle Paul also exhorts believers, saying, "Beloved, *work out* your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." – Phil. 2:12,13.

It was God that provided for us the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and it is God that has drawn us unto himself and that has promised us all needed grace to walk in the paths of righteousness; and more, even to follow in the footprints of Jesus in the way of self-sacrifice. While, therefore, with fear and trembling, – with great *carefulness* – we endeavor to work out our salvation, it is our privilege always to realize the promised grace to help in every time of need, and to be confident that our best *efforts* toward righteousness are acceptable [R2155 : page 147] to God when presented through the merit of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us by faith.

Having this foundation, then, and "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" – through the desires of the flesh – and having by faith laid hold also on the "exceeding great and precious promises" of being made partakers of the divine nature and joint-heirs with Christ of his Kingdom and glory, and being anxious to make our "calling and election sure," let us consider these *additions* to our faith, which, if possessed and continuously cultivated, are the assurance that

we shall never fall, and that an abundant entrance into the Kingdom shall be granted to us.

The first addition (*virtue*) is *fortitude* or strength of character in righteousness. This implies the cultivation of the strictest integrity in our dealings, both with God and with our fellow men, – scrupulous honesty, justice and truth being the only standard. The Psalmist clearly defines it thus, saying, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth *in his heart*. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor; in whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not [*i.e.*, who will not violate a contract found to be unfavorable to him]. He that putteth not out his money to usury [taking unjust advantage of the necessities of others], nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." (Psa. 15.) Such a one is a virtuous man, a man of fortified or strong character.

The second addition is *knowledge* – the knowledge of God and of his righteous will concerning us (revealed through his Word, by the holy spirit). Neglect of this divinely appointed means of knowledge is equivalent to setting up our own imperfect standard of righteousness and ignoring the divine standard. It is therefore important that we give all diligence to the study of the divine oracles that we may be fortified in faith and works accordingly.

The third addition, *self-control*, is one of the most important elements of good character. He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city, is the counsel of the wise man; and many a victorious general has yet to learn to conquer and control himself. Self-control has to do with all our sentiments, thoughts, tastes, appetites, labors, pleasures, sorrows and hopes. Its cultivation, therefore, means a high order of character-development. Self-control, accompanied by faith, fortitude, knowledge from on high, implies increased zeal and

activity in divine things and increased moderation in earthly things, in judgment, in conduct, in the regulation of temporal affairs, etc. "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

The fourth addition is *patience*. Time is a very necessary element in the process of perfecting every good thing. The fruit hastily plucked is the unripe, hard, sour, bitter fruit. Time, as well as pruning and fertilizing and cultivating and shower and sunshine, is necessary to the ripe and luscious fruitage that delights the taste. So it is also with the fruitage of plans and purposes, of education and of grace. God's deep designs work out slowly, not only in his great universal government, but also in the hearts and minds of his intelligent creatures. God is operating all things according to his own will along the lines of the fixed principles of his wise and righteous laws – physical, moral and intellectual. To be impatient in any case is foolishly to insist upon having the unripe, hasty, sour, bitter fruitage, which, if the Lord grant it, will prove a sickening penalty for the impatience that demanded it. "Let patience have her perfect work," wait God's time: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Wait the Lord's time and way and the indications of his will in every case, both with regard to ourselves and others and "they that put their trust in him shall never be confounded." [R2155 : page 148]

Faith, fortitude and knowledge prepare God's people to have patience with every effort toward good, however weak, – patience with the poor, blinded world, with the "babes in Christ," with the slow and stupid, with the excitable and blundering, with the over-confident Peters and the skeptical Thomases. But to have patience or fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness" and sin, is the perversion of this grace; for these, wherever found, should be promptly and sharply reproved and rebuked according to their *evil intent*; with patience, nevertheless, toward the repentant prodigals, and always with meekness.

It is noticeable that the Lord seems to forewarn his people of great need of patience in the "harvest" or end of this age: patience toward fellow men and patience, in the warfare against evil, and in waiting for the Lord's time and method of setting right the wrongs of "the present evil world." The poor world, lacking faith, fortitude, knowledge of the divine plan and patience will fall a ready prey to unrest and anarchy in the near future. The Word of the Lord to his people is, – "*Ye* have need of patience."

The fifth addition is *godliness*, godlikeness, piety, – that devout, controlling reverence for God which yields a hearty, cheerful, loving conformity to his will – fervency of spirit in serving the Lord. This is a later development and vital element in the Christian character. Piety, godliness, springs spontaneously from appreciative and grateful hearts, whose delight is in the law of the Lord, in meditation upon his precepts and promises, and in secret communion with God in prayer and praise. Loving, cheerful activity must result from such an inner life; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the whole being is quickened to new life. Only those who have a living faith in God, and who are fortifying their characters against evil and growing in knowledge and self-control and patience are prepared to appreciate the grandeur of the divine character; and only such are really energized by a desire for God-likeness.

The sixth addition is *brotherly kindness*, which of necessity grows out of godliness. As God-like-ness presupposes the other graces mentioned, so its development implies an appreciation of divine justice and beneficence, and will broaden and deepen our sentiments toward all the well-disposed, however imperfect, and especially will it enlarge our hearts to all who are of the household of faith – "the brethren."

The seventh addition is charity, *love*, – the bond of perfectness which unites all the other graces, and as a name stands for them all.

Love to God alone is not the full manifestation of this grace; nor can there be, according to the teachings of God's Word, a sincere love

for God, without a corresponding love to man: "If a man say, I love God," says the Apostle John, "and hateth his brother, *he is a liar*, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20.) And Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, *if ye have love one to another.*" – John 13:35.

It is the abounding of these graces of character *added to* our faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Savior that insures the soul against the possibility of falling: "If ye do these things, *ye shall never fall.*" The contingency is not in the doing of these things *perfectly*, and regardless of the righteousness of Christ to cover our transgressions and compensate for our daily shortcomings; but if, *added to* our faith in the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have cultivated all these graces *to the extent of our ability*, we shall not fall. When we have done all that we can do, we are still unprofitable servants, not daring to trust in our own righteousness, but in the ample robe which is ours by faith in Christ, while, with consistent "diligence," we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that the righteousness of Christ is only applied to such as desire to forsake sin and to pursue that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." – Heb. 12:14.

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