

Entrance Exam

2 Peter 1:10-11 February 1, 2026

In 1912, Jim Thorpe accomplished an *incredible* olympic feat: He won gold in both the pentathlon and the decathlon. No had ever done that before and no one has done it since.

The king of Sweden presented him his medals and said, "You sir, are the greatest athlete in the world." Not only was it true, it wasn't even *close*. In the decathlon, Jim scored nearly 700 points more than the silver medalist.¹

Jim was welcomed home to parades and celebrations of his victory. But then, a local reporter heard an off-hand remark from one of Jim's former coaches.² He realized he had the scoop of a lifetime: Years before the olympics in Stockholm, Jim had played two summers of baseball in a North Carolina minor league, earning \$2 a game.³ The reporter published a story branding Jim a *professional* athlete during a time when only amateurs were allowed to compete at the Olympics.

Even though his two baseball seasons had nothing to do with track, even though it had nothing to do with the olympics, even though the compensation had been meager, and even though the deadline for challenging the results of the 1912 Games was long past, the International Olympic Committee stripped Jim of his medals and his name was removed from the record books.

Could a Christian get disqualified from heaven on a technicality? The verses we just heard are the kind that might make your collar feel a little tighter the first time you read them. Depending on how they are interpreted, someone might envision a believer at the very end of their race, stumbling and falling and being disqualified just before the finish line of eternity.

We know from all the jokes we've heard that people have to stand before the Apostle Peter at the pearly gates before they get into heaven. That's not true, by the way. Peter is not a bouncer at the door of heaven. But is Peter saying that if we don't *Christian* hard enough, we won't make it? That *is* the perspective of some people out there. And there are other serious issues to deal with in this text. These two little verses are a doctrinal minefield.

Are they teaching that you validate Christianity by doing certain behaviors? If so, could someone *do* the behaviors to *become* a Christian? Is this text teaching that you can *lose* your salvation? Is it teaching that a *real* Christian *could* attain sinless perfection on this side of heaven? It's a text that raises serious questions. So, let's endeavor to make sense of what Peter is trying to get across to us.

2 Peter 1:10 - ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election, because if you do these things you will never stumble.

¹ <https://www.olympics.com/en/athletes/jim-thorpe>

² <https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/jim-thorpe-backlash-olympic-medals-debacle-and-demise-carlisle>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/07/sports/jim-thorpe-s-family-feud.html>

Chapter 1 is all about the character of the Christian life - what it really means to *be* a Christian. Peter has explained that, through faith, we receive from God all we need for life and Godliness. And that we receive these things not only to possess them, but to produce fruit in our lives. The power of God is given to be operative in us so that we will be useful and fruitful in our growing knowledge of Jesus. And in the last two verses, Peter just explained that if we don't live out our Christianity, we are blind, shortsighted, and have forgotten what it means to be cleansed from sin.

But now Peter moves to the other option. He says, "Therefore," which can be translated as, "Instead of this."⁴ Instead of living a life of *blind* Christianity, we should "make every effort to confirm your calling and election." We've heard this "make every effort" before - and we will *again* in chapter 3. Peter wants to be *clear* that we have a part to play. God has accomplished all of this for us, given us all these things, so that they can thrive and grow and produce and operate in our lives. Last time the analogy was being given a car so that you will *drive* it.

But is he now saying that we are responsible to *secure* our calling and election? That God has provided the *way* for us to be saved, but it's up to us to get across the finish line? The finish line of eternity *is* what Peter is referring to. After all, as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 2:12 - ¹² we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Your *calling* is, fundamentally, into the Kingdom of God. And election refers to salvation. So what does it mean that I *confirm* my calling and election?

Linguistically, Peter is saying you must "produce a guarantee of your salvation."⁵ A Christian should be able to verify the genuineness of their faith. And he would point back to the list of Christian virtues in verses 5 through 7 as evidence of true faith.

If a person is really a Christian, you should be able to tell by looking at the fruit of their life. Now, we talked last time about how there *were* people in Peter's mind who *were* saved - cleansed from their past sins, yet were not growing in fruit. The New Testament refers to them as babes in Christ, or sometimes carnal Christians. It's a terrible, spiritually diseased state to be in.

But even *worse* is to be a person who *thinks* they're a Christian but aren't. Let's be frank: There might be someone here who *thinks* they are saved, but have never been born again. Jesus Himself said there will be those who call out, "Lord, Lord," but *will* not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Why? Because they did not do the will of the Father.⁶ And Jesus will say, "I never knew you."

How do you *know* if you're actually a Christian? Well, first you *believe* the Gospel, and *then* you actually see the growth of spiritual fruit in your life. If spiritual fruit is not growing in your life then

⁴ Gene Green *Jude & 2 Peter*

⁵ Robertson Nicoll *The Expositor's Greek Testament: Commentary Vol. 5*

⁶ Matthew 7:21

you are either a blind, short-sighted, amnesiac, baby, carnal Christian, or you're not a Christian at all. You don't want to be *either* of those things. Peter encourages us not to take it for granted.

Am I a Christian? I'm commanded to work out my salvation with fear and trembling.⁷ To pursue the Kingdom of God and live life as a disciple.

Am I *really* saved? That question can be answered by answering these two questions: Are you obeying Jesus and is there spiritual fruit growing in your life? You can *confirm* your Christianity.

Peter continues and says, "if you do these things, you will never stumble." How should we take this? There are two very *scary* ways of taking this verse. The first is that, if we don't achieve well enough, we'll fall down and lose it all just before the end. That Peter means stumbling into damnation.

The problem with *that* interpretation is that we are told very plainly in Romans 11 that God's gracious gifts *and callings* are irrevocable.⁸ If you've accepted His call of salvation, He's not going to get to the end and say, "Just kidding. Had my fingers crossed. We decided to go with another candidate." Jesus said that those He gives eternal life will *never* perish. That *no one* can snatch them from His hand.⁹

A second problematic way of looking at this verse is to assume Peter means that a *real* Christian will eventually stop sinning altogether. There are some Christian traditions who do hold this perspective - that you can (*and should*) attain sinless perfection in this life. That's a little scary because, if we're honest, we recognize we're nowhere *near* being sinless. And you know what? Neither were the apostles. James says, "We *all* stumble in many ways!"¹⁰ John wrote that if we say we have no sin, we're liars.¹¹ Paul said the things he wants to do, he doesn't do.

So what *does* Peter mean by stumbling? Stumbling means "coming to grief,"¹² or "suffering a reverse."¹³ Peter himself had experience in such a stumble. On the night before the crucifixion, facing pressure and danger, he *did not* endure, but denied his Lord. And after giving in, he went out and wept bitterly. He didn't lose his salvation, but he *did* need to be restored to closeness with Jesus, service to Jesus, which Jesus graciously and compassionately accomplished.

When Christians stop growing and living out their faith, we suffer *misfortunes*, spiritually speaking. We must not assume that spiritual strength and maturity and fruitfulness happen on their own. They don't! These are pursuits we must make every effort to receive, cultivate, and establish in our lives.

2 Peter 1:11 - ¹¹ For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

⁷ Philippians 2:12

⁸ Romans 11:29

⁹ John 10:28-29

¹⁰ James 3:2

¹¹ 1 John 1:8

¹² Richard Bauckham *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 50: Jude, 2 Peter*

¹³ Dick Lucas & Christopher Green *The Message Of 2 Peter & Jude*

Peter is *not* saying that if you don't Christian hard enough for a long enough period of time you won't make it into the Kingdom. If that were the case, who then could be saved? The fact is, *if you're a Christian, you've already been brought into the Kingdom on one spiritual level.*

Colossians 1:13 - ¹³ He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

Notice those verbs: *Rescued*. *Transferred*. Past tense. We're not working to be *qualified* for the Kingdom. Jesus did that for us. Hebrews 6 explains that God guaranteed His promise of salvation to us with an oath so that we would have unchangeable hope set before us - a hope we can *anchor* our souls on, *firm and secure*, and that's possible because Jesus was our *forerunner*. He already won the decathlon and now He invites us to *share* in His victory by running the race behind Him.

So, 2 Peter 1:11 is *not* about us working to be *qualified* for the Kingdom. It is about the *quality* of our reward *in* the Kingdom. We should make every effort to live out the Christian life, to bear fruit, so that we won't only *enter* the Kingdom, but so God can *richly provide* an entrance for us.

Here's what we need to admit: God is not a communist. I think because we value fairness and because of the things we think about heaven and eternity, we allow ourselves to assume that everything is *totally* equal in God's Kingdom. But the Bible absolutely teaches the opposite.

Let's start with an easy one: There are different *crowns* in eternity. At least five of them.¹⁴ One of them is the *martyr's crown* - called the Crown of Life in Revelation 2. Those that die for Jesus get a special crown. We're fine with that, that seems nice - plus we don't really want it, do we?

But listen - in God's Kingdom there are going to be different levels of reward given depending on what we do in *this* life. Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 3. Some Christians will have their Christian life evaluated and be rewarded while others will watch their efforts burn up and they will experience loss. They *will* be saved, but as through fire.¹⁵

Once, while people were thinking about the Kingdom of God, Jesus told a parable where some servants are rewarded with ten towns of authority because of their faithfulness, others five towns.¹⁶

There are *tiers* of reward and placement in God's Kingdom. In fact, Peter uses a term here that suggests the ordering of a triumphal procession¹⁷ - an emperor's parade.

So now remember what Peter said in verse 10: He doesn't want us to stumble, to suffer a *misfortune*,¹⁸ which would erode the richness of our reward in the future.

¹⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/heavenly-crowns.html>

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

¹⁶ Luke 19:11-26

¹⁷ Nicoll

¹⁸ Edwin Blum *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation*

Now, we shouldn't be offended at the idea that there will be degrees of glory conferred in Christ's Kingdom,¹⁹ because there is *nothing stopping you* from living an absolutely thriving, growing, Christian life that will lead to more rewards than you could ever ask or imagine. It's up to you! God *wants* to provide it richly for you. The word used there was the same Peter used earlier when he said we should supplement our faith.²⁰ So, God gives us all we need so that we can supplement our faith with these wonderful, supernatural fruits, which will then allow *Him* to supplement our entrance into the Kingdom with greater and greater, rich rewards.

So the question is: *Are you a Christian?* If yes, then the next question is: *Are you a growing Christian?* Is your Christianity on track for all the glory God *wants* to lavish on you in eternity?

In Peter's mind, a significant aspect of being a growing Christian is thinking ahead to eternity. Thinking ahead to your place in Christ's Kingdom. This, by the way, means that we cannot be *fully* in the Kingdom now. There is a theology that teaches there is no *literal* Kingdom, that we're in it now. But this and many other passages prove that cannot be true. Now, Christ's Kingdom *is* eternal, and He *has* brought us into His Kingdom as citizens, but we are waiting for the full, final, literal and physical fulfillment where Jesus Christ rules and reigns on His throne in Jerusalem.

So we realize we're not only living out our Christianity today, but that *as Christians*, we are headed for eternity. And in chapter 3, Peter's going to come back to this idea and say, "Since the coming Kingdom is a reality, it's obvious what sort of people we should be." Thinking ahead keeps us from becoming short-sighted in our faith. It helps us contextualize our situations, direct our decisions, give us hope on dark days, and remember our lives have purpose.

In the end, Jim Thorpe's medals and records were reinstated. It just took 70 years. The IOC knew it was the right thing to do and they *wanted* to honor Jim's athleticism.

God is not looking to disqualify you. He wants to *richly provide* this entrance for you. And as we run, He's given us what we need so that the pitfalls of life don't knock us off track. He wants to empower us to stay firmly established in the truth - the living, growing, productive truth of Christianity. Let's run. Let's grow. Let's *enjoy* what Christ Jesus has already won, already promised, already given to us by grace, through faith.

¹⁹ D. Edmond Hiebert *Second Peter And Jude*

²⁰ Green