

In verse 10 Peter writes: "For if you do these things, you will never fall."

Here is an emphatic denial that we will ever fall or fail. But what can Peter mean by never falling, stumbling, or failing? Is a Christian who is growing in godlikeness exempt from falling?

Peter could mean that Christians who grow spiritually will never fall into sin. But we know from other scriptures that all believers commit sin.

He could mean that Christians who grow spiritually will never willfully sin or stumble into serious sin. But we know from Scripture that some very godly people have willfully committed some very serious sins.

He could mean that Christians who grow spiritually will never fall into uselessness, ineffectiveness, or unproductiveness. This is supported by much Scripture, but it duplicates what Peter has already said in verse 8.

He could mean that Christians who grow spiritually are assured that they will never fall away utterly from the Christian faith. If so, then Peter is informing us that we can derive assurance that we will never fall, from the fact that we are moving in the direction of positive growth and development in the Christian life.

Now it is a fact that no genuine believer can ever utterly or finally fall away from the Christian faith. And it is a fact that when God begins the good work of regeneration in a believer, He will continue that work until the day of final deliverance from sin and its effects. But although the fact is guaranteed, the assurance that we will never fall is not intended or given to one who is not walking with the Lord or growing toward spiritual maturity. Such a person has no right to that assurance.

There are two sides to this truth. On the one hand, God preserves us in faith and life and salvation; He will never lose a single one of His sheep. On the other hand, we persevere; and as we do so, we receive assurance of God's preserving grace. This may seem to be a fine distinction, but I believe that it is an important one, and that it should be maintained.

C. But there is a third assurance in this passage. Peter says that exertion toward spiritual maturity assures us of a rich welcome into Christ's eternal kingdom.

In verses 10 and 11 Peter says:

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.