

A SURE SALVATION – A GROWING LIFE

1 Peter 1:1-11

Introduction:

[From Illy]... ABSOLUTELY SURE!

Queen Victoria of England once heard a sermon that greatly impressed her. Later she asked her chaplain, "Is it possible to be absolutely sure in this life of eternal safety?" He replied, "I know of no way that one could be absolutely sure." This incident was later published in the "Court News" and came to the attention of a minister of the gospel by the name of John Townsend. After much thought and prayer, he sent the following letter to the Queen: "To her gracious Majesty, our beloved Queen Victoria, from one of her most humble subjects. With trembling hands but love-filled heart, and because I know that we can be absolutely sure even now of our eternal life in the home Jesus went to prepare, I would ask you, Most Gracious Majesty, to read the following passages of Scripture: John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10. These passages prove there is full assurance of salvation by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for those who believe and accept His finished work."

Several days later Townsend received this note: "Your letter of recent date received, and in reply would state that I have carefully and prayerfully read the portions of Scripture referred to. I believe in the finished work of Christ for me and trust by God's grace to meet you in that home of which He said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' (Signed) Victoria Guelph."

Can we be absolutely certain of our eternal salvation? That is a question that has troubled many people over the centuries. I would respond by saying, "Yes, we can be sure." But at the same time, we must be careful not to have a false assurance, believing something that is not true in our own lives.

This morning I would like to introduce you to the little book of 2 Peter. It is a short letter, filled with both promises and warnings, and it seemed like a good way to wrap up our pastoral ministry here in Clive.

Verses 10-11 of our text this morning give us the challenge to be certain of our salvation – "...be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure..." But before he gets to that, Peter gives us a lot of

information to think about regarding our salvation and the life of faith. I am only going to be touching the surface of what is in this passage as we go through it this morning.

Let's begin with Peter's introduction...

A Like Precious Faith

Peter addressed his readers as those who have "...obtained a faith of equal standing with ours..." (ESV). NIV – "received a faith as precious as ours:" I love the KJV on this phrase. It says, "them that have obtained like precious faith with us..."

There are three important things about our faith that Peter mentions in this verse:

1. **It is a faith that is received from God.** The word translated "obtained" or "received" means to receive or obtain something by divine allotment. It is ours not because we deserve it, or because we have gained it ourselves, but because it is given to us. Even though we must respond to the call of God, yet we need to realize that true saving faith is not something that we muster up by ourselves. It is not that we must try hard to produce enough faith for God to accept us. If that were the case, even that faith would become a work for our salvation.
2. **It is a faith whose object is Jesus Christ.** Not only is God the source of our faith, but His Son is the object of our faith. What do I mean by that? Well, if you think of faith as trust in someone or something, it becomes apparent that the key to faith is not the amount of trust you have, but the object in which you are trusting. Some people speak of faith as though there is some power in faith itself. If you just believe strongly enough you can accomplish anything. But the power of faith is not in the belief itself, but in the object or person in which you are putting your faith. Trusting in ourselves and our own ability to satisfy God will never save us. Our faith must be in the one who is "...able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, [Christ]..." (Heb. 7:25)
3. **It is a faith that results in true righteousness.** There is tied together with faith the aspect of righteousness, the idea of being made right

with God and living a life that is right with God. Romans 3 speaks clearly about a righteousness from God, which is not by keeping the law, but by faith. It is not a do-it-yourself project, but a gift from God, delivered when we decide to trust Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.

An important question for each of us to consider – do you have that faith? Do you have the kind of faith Peter speaks of – faith in a powerful, all sufficient God, faith that produces righteousness, not by good works or keeping the law, but by receiving the righteousness of Christ?

Those are the kind of people Peter is writing to. As he continues, he goes on to talk about...

The things necessary for an abundant Christian life

Read vv. 3-4 – There are three things to note here. He has provided:

1. Everything we need for life and godliness – He has not left us on our own to live the Christian life. He has given us the Holy Spirit. He has given us a new life, His righteousness. He has provided all that is necessary for a life of victory. He wants us to walk in victory and has provided everything for that.
2. His great and precious promises – the word “great” is “megas” – then he adds the word “very” or “exceedingly” – super mega. His very great and precious promises. Through the excellence and goodness of God, we have been given these wonderful, magnificent and precious promises. The nature and purpose of these promises is suggested in his next point...
3. Through His promises you may escape from the corruption of the world by participation in his divine nature. When you come to Jesus Christ in faith, He puts in you a new nature, a spiritually alive nature. He also places within you His spirit – the Holy Spirit. Through this participation in His divine nature, Peter says you can escape the corruption of this world.

What Peter is saying is that there is a way to victory – even though sometimes you struggle with sin. Think of Romans 7 – Paul’s battle with the sinful nature. We do not have to live in defeat. There is victory, there is a way to walk in victory – He has provided it. Paul found that in Rom 7:24-25 – *“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

The key to the abundant life is in our relationship with Jesus Christ – participation in His divine nature. And that only comes through a deeper knowledge of Him.

Look at v. 3 again – *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him** who called us to his own glory and excellence...”* The key to victory is in getting to know Jesus Christ better and better.

In the following verses, Peter expands the idea of a life that is growing in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Qualities of a Growing Life

We are going to go through these very quickly as we do not have time to go into detail.

Faith

It all begins with faith – the trust we have in Christ to save us. If you do not have that to start with, you will never be able to develop the other characteristics Peter mentions here.

The word “add” – means to supply or to furnish. The thought is to supplement or support. Faith is not something we supply. It is received from God – see v. 1. But Peter calls on us to supplement or support our faith with a number of things, which are built on one another. And these are not in a random order – Peter is very specific about these.

Virtue (Goodness)

Faith must lead to a life of virtue, of goodness, of moral excellence – if it doesn’t, it is not true saving faith. Faith that is not supported or supplemented by a life of moral excellence is only a verbal expression, not a true expression of the heart. But excellence is more than just doing our best. Rather it means pursuing the moral character which emulates our Lord in order to bring praise and glory to Him.

Knowledge

Goodness or moral excellence, virtue must be supplemented with knowledge. It is interesting that goodness or virtue precedes knowledge in these verses. That is because knowledge by itself can be a dangerous thing – *“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”* (1 Cor. 8:1)

Knowledge must supplement our faith and our goodness, but if it comes before virtue or moral excellence, it can lead to disaster.

Self-control

Knowledge must be supplemented by self-control (temperance) – the term means literally “to take a grip of oneself” (Barclay). It is the opposite of self-indulgence. As unbelievers we are dominated by our physical appetites and are enslaved by them – 1 Peter 1:14. We are called to a higher calling. We need to be self-controlled, not dominated by the fleshly desires and sinful appetites which once controlled us.

Perseverance

Self-control must be supplemented by perseverance. If self-control has to do with physical pleasures, perseverance has to do with pain. Our natural tendency is to pursue pleasure and flee from pain. The gospel calls for us to identify with Christ, which includes identifying with Him in His suffering:

1 Peter 2:21-23 – “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”

Perseverance is the frame of mind and character which persists in doing what is right even though doing so may produce difficulties, suffering, and sorrows. Perseverance is the commitment to suffer in the short term in order to experience glory for eternity.

Godliness

Perseverance must be supplemented or supported by godliness. Godliness speaks of a life of piety toward God, it refers to practical religion. It is the religion we practice in our day-to-day walk.

1 Peter 1:14-16 – “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

As we persevere and patiently wait for Christ’s return we need to live a life of practical obedience to God:

Titus 2:11-13 – “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Brotherly Affection (Kindness)

Godliness must be supported by brotherly kindness. **“Brotherly kindness”** is the love saints should have for one another as fellow-believers. It is a love based in part on what we share in common with the One we love. Godliness cannot exist without brotherly kindness. ‘If any one says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar’ (1 Jn. 4:20). Love and affection for our Christian brothers and sisters is a distinguishing mark of true discipleship.

Love

This love is “*agape* love,” which might be called the highest love. It is also the capstone of all the virtues the Christian should pursue.

Love, *agape* love, is the greatest of all Christian virtues. It is the cornerstone on which the entire building of our life must rest. Refer to 1 Cor. 13 – whatever gifts I may have, whatever sacrifices I make, whatever service I may render, it is meaningless if it is not supported by love – love for God and love for our fellow man.

In verse 9 Peter reminds us that failure to pursue these qualities in our Christian walk is a very short-sighted approach to life. It indicates a lack of understanding of what has really happened in salvation.

Blessed Assurance

Well, that brings us back to vv. 10-11, where we started this morning. *“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure...”*

That word “sure” or “certain” refers to fixing something securely so it cannot be moved. Peter’s exhortation here is based on the instructions he has just given. We are to live in the power and the promises of

God; we are to seek to build character and growth by adding all of those qualities described in vv. 5-7 to our faith. When we do so we are building on a foundation that is secure and steadfast.

So, what does Peter mean when he exhorts us to make our calling and election sure? One writer says, *“To make our calling and election sure is to make it stable. It is to set our lives on a course that cannot, and will not, be changed or moved away from the faith. It is to become so solid and stable that we will not be moved.”*

Peter builds on his exhortation to pursue holiness by summing up the benefits in two promises:

1. The promise of stability, a steadfastness which keeps us from stumbling. Since Peter is writing to Christians here, I do not believe he is referring to a “fatal fall” which results in the loss of one’s salvation. I believe he is speaking of the kind of stumbling which results in being useless and unfruitful, but not complete destruction.
2. The promise of a rich welcome into the kingdom. The Bible indicates that there are those who will enter into heaven by the proverbial “skin of their teeth.” 1 Cor. 3 speaks of such a one as being saved, yet as by fire. But, for the Christian who pursues holiness, there is a far better entrance into the kingdom of God. It is an entrance we eagerly anticipate. This is the reward of diligently seeking to confirm our calling and election.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with the exhortation in v. 9. Two questions:

1. Have you been born again? Peter is writing to those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. If you have not yet trusted in Him for the forgiveness of your sins, then there is no need for you to think about growth. I urge you to put your faith in Him today.
2. If you know the Lord this morning, are you growing? Are you seeking to develop Christ’s character in your life, as Peter lays it out for us? If you are not, then you are becoming blind and forgetful and unfruitful. You are setting yourself up for a fall. Each of us should take these words of Peter to heart and seek to obey them by God’s grace and to His glory.