

Certainty of Our Faith

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[0 : 00] 2 Peter 1, verses 5-11.

! I'm hopeful that we'll cover several important verses.! This particular portion of Scripture deals with the certainty of our faith, certainty of saving faith.

Let me start out with a rather bold statement. I'm not really known for that. But if you possess saving faith, you're heaven-bound.

With your name recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, before the creation of the universe. And here's the bold statement.

You're never going to lose that faith. Now why would I say that? I didn't say you weren't going to struggle. But you're not going to lose it.

[1 : 22] Why do I make that? That's a bold statement. I make it and stand by it for this reason. It's not your faith. It's not my faith.

The only saving faith is that which belongs to God. And when I say that, I'm talking about the three persons of the Trinity.

The one true God. And He bestows this faith on His true children. The genuine children.

Well, how can I possibly prove that? Listen to this passage that was breathed out by the Holy Spirit onto the sacred page of Holy Scripture.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. And for by grace you have been saved through faith. And that not of yourselves.

[2 : 31] It is a gift of God. Not of works. So that no one may boast. It's God's faith.

That He bestows. But let me bring up an interesting question. How do you know you're saved? How do you know you're on track to one day dwell in the physical and visual presence of the Lord forever?

Well, the Apostle Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, writing by the inerrancy of the Holy Spirit, provides the answer to that in the very next verse.

Verse 10. Because in that verse it says, for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

that's the test of genuine faith by grace. There are certain things that Christian people engage in.

[3 : 56] Unless you get a little worried, let me assure you, none of us does them unto perfection in this life.

I mean, you can read a verse like, Be ye holy as I am holy. It's not unto perfection, it's the direction of our life.

We are striving and never arriving until we see the Lord. God. And the Apostle Peter is going to present several of these directions of our life in our lesson tonight.

But I must wave a red flag at this point. You're not saved if you do a number of these things. You don't wake up and say, Well, I'm not 100% sure, I better do this one today.

You are saved by the unmerited, undeserved, and unearned grace of Almighty God through the faith that He grants you.

[5 : 16] And when that happens and it's real, good works will come. They will come. Let me read to you 2 Peter 1 verse 5 to 11 for our lesson tonight.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence in your faith, supply moral excellence.

And in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control. and in your self-control, perseverance.

And in your perseverance, godliness. And in your godliness, brotherly kindness. And in your brotherly kindness, love.

for if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 26] For in whom these things are not present, that one is blind, being nearsighted, having forgotten the purification from his former sins.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and choosing sure. For in doing these things, you will never stumble.

For in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be abundantly supplied to you. So here we come face to face with the doctrine of eternal security. Being Baptists, most of us are pretty comfortable with that doctrine. It goes by other names. One of the most prominent is perseverance of the saints.

This is one of the pillars by the way of Calvinism, the five points, which by the way were written as a rebuttal to the Armenian five points.

[7 : 39] And Calvin wasn't looking over their shoulder. But the members of the Synod of Dort came up with these to answer the arguments of the Armenian.

It is the last point of the tulip and it is referred to as perseverance of the saints. It is another way of saying eternal security.

I do think the brothers of the Synod and that met from 1618 to 1619 could have come up with a better description for eternal security than perseverance.

perseverance. I say that for this reason. Perseverance, there is an indirect implication of human effort. Well, if I could just persevere, I will be okay.

If I could just hold on to the end and when I get to heaven, slam the door shut so no one can enter in, then I will be saved.

[8 : 49] Of course, I used to say that's no guarantee of security. Lucifer and a third of the angels fell from heaven. It didn't do them any good to shut the door.

They were thrown out. I think there's a better word though that describes eternal security and that is the word preservation of the saints.

only God can preserve His elect children. Only God can do that.

Preservation is really becoming more in vogue in our day and I'm thankful for that. Perseverance to me implies some work of ours or at least a cooperative effort we engage with the Lord.

The Lord does 50%, I do 50%, or the Lord does 99% and I do 1% or you know. But only God can preserve us.

[9 : 51] We can't preserve ourselves. This is the work of the triune God. And as I looked at the various descriptions Peter uses to describe a saved person which we read above I was struck by the similarities between this passage and Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit in the book of Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 to 23.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Some people have suggested that Peter and Paul must have sat down together and compared notes.

Why don't you tell them this part and I'll tell them this part. No, that didn't happen. That didn't happen. I'll tell you the best answer. both what Peter wrote down and what Paul wrote down were written by a common author with a capital A, the Holy Spirit of God.

He wrote them down. We can also have a firm foundation for achieving personal assurance of our faith by reading the 1689 Baptist Confession.

[11 : 35] I've got about ten books at home on the confessions. I read them. They're not lengthy. Get through them in an hour, each one. Here's the Baptist Confession of 1689.

By the way, this is not the Southern Baptist Convention. We didn't come along until later, much later. This is 1689 in Great Britain. Although temporary believers and others and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and in a state of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish, yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope will never make them ashamed.

this certainly is not just a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the

gospel and also upon the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made and on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God and as a fruit thereof keeping the heart both humble and holy.

So this has led us to Peter's inspired comments on the assurance of our salvation. And I already read it to you but I'm going to do it again.

2 Peter chapter 1 the first part of verse 5 Now for this reason also applying all diligence in your faith supply and then I broke it there.

[14 : 10] I ended this in the middle of a sentence. I did that because next will come a list of spiritual virtues similar to the list of the various fruits of the Spirit that Paul provides us in Galatians chapter 5.

Some even overlap. Same ones. But here in 2 Peter the apostle tells us to work out our salvation by applying all diligence.

And again this is similar to the words of Paul but in a passage that he wrote in Philippians. So then my beloved just as you have always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

By the way that's Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 to 13. Now there's a paradox at work here. It is God who saves us.

[15 : 41] If God does not do so we're in the grave and in eternal danger. At the same time we are told by this same God we're to work out our salvation and we are to apply all diligence to our salvation.

Well Paul used a Greek word here translated all diligence the Greek word *spude* that word is best translated work out with zeal and eagerness accompanied by a sense of urgency.

A sense of urgency which we're going to look at next week. This is a monumental statement here and please make note of it.

Saving faith is the ground in which fruit of Christian sanctification grows. Sanctification is that process that begins at initial salvation when we are justified and then we progressively grow into Christ likeness.

That's being sanctified. And let us make sure what we mean by justification. Justification is an act of God whereby he imparts to a believing sinner the full and perfect righteousness of Christ forgiving the sinner of all unrighteousness declaring him or her perfectly righteous in God's sight thus delivering the believer from all condemnation.

[17 : 46] sounds like Paul in Romans the greatest book in the Bible Romans chapter 8 verse 1 there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

To live your life and honor Christ properly we live out the virtues revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. that's how we honor Christ that's how we live our lives now we don't pursue these virtues to be saved that's a work of Christ we pursue these virtues because we are saved that's a big difference talk for just a moment about pursuing virtues what are they?

well I read them let me read them again moral excellence and in your moral excellence knowledge and in your knowledge self-control and in your self-control perseverance or preservation and in your preservation godliness and in your godliness brotherly kindness and in your brotherly kindness love moral excellence first virtue that Peter lists in secular Greek literature that word referred to a person that was a hero and performed courageous deeds in scripture we are taught that living lives of moral excellence is to be our norm that's what we are to do every day it's to be normal for the believer do we have it modeled in the new testament that we can pattern our lives after i think we do i would pick the apostle paul good place to start of course remember where he came from when it was saul of tarsus but now he's paul and here's what he said in the book of philippians 3:14 most of you already have this memorized i press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of god in christ jesus in this life we're to be pressing on and then we have knowledge what is at the heart of moral excellence well it's our next virtue according to the holy spirit it is knowledge this refers to divine truth truth that is taken in understood and applied to our lives you can't even begin this process until you are illumined by the truth of the scriptures and that takes study but more than study diligent study and then meditation on what you've just studied what is the goal in acquiring this type of knowledge paul expressed it in the first letter to the corinthian church chapter 2 verse 16 for who has known the mind of the lord that he will direct him but we have the mind of christ grace gift from god the mind of christ can you imagine salvation and then we come to self control the next

virtue and literally that refers to athletes who even beat their bodies into submission you remember the greeks they were big on athletics that's where the olympics came from and these guys beat themselves into submission so they could perform at their peak i never beat myself when i played football but the line coach got a hold of me a few times i love that man boyd sands in peter's day there was a tremendous battle going on

with false teachers bringing heretical false theology to the church and it goes on in our day it goes on in our day i made a comment at voice of the martyrs meeting this week and i said the greatest danger to the church is not persecution the greatest danger to the church is ravenous wolves coming in with subtlety and spreading seeds of falsehood and dissension to get us off track one of the main goals of the false teacher is to separate faith from conduct and the next virtue we've already talked about a little bit but pursue in perseverance and that's a very difficult word to express in english it exposes us to patience we might even call that patient endurance we persevere or are preserved when we resist temptations and when we endure in the midst of trials and difficulties and guys we all know those are going to come you're going to have trials and difficulties and next we have godliness the best way to express godliness is to have a very healthy daily hour by hour reverence for god now what do i mean by god i'm referring to the trinity the one true god who has revealed himself in father son and holy spirit it means that we're true worshipers paul spoke about this virtue when he wrote to his son in the faith timothy first timothy 4.8 the second part of that verse godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life life we're to be godly in the present life and then paul goes on and also for the life to come it will follow us into heaven and then our next virtue is brotherly kindness this is to have affection for others peter was present when the lord jesus spoke to the religious leaders of his day and one of them said this he was a scholar of the law that doesn't imply a lawyer he knew the scriptures he knew the scriptures and he wanted to ask jesus a question but behind it he was testing the scriptures revealed that to us he was putting jesus to the test never put god to the test and he said to him teacher term of endearment this snake teacher

which is the great commandment in the law and he said to them you shall love the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind others add with all your strength also for and jesus went on this is the great and foremost commandment and then he said the second's a lot like it you shall love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets we've never fulfilled those two commandments that's why we need a savior who has who has next virtue is love and that's the last virtue spoken of in this letter it was the first one in galatians and the last one here love in the scriptures love for brothers and sisters in christ christ has always been inseparable from love for god you can't love god and hate your brother i had a guy go so far one time and tell me well i love god i just don't like jesus i said boy have i got a news for you you know in those verses which peak on this level of love the word agape is used this is agape agapeo in the greek language and there are a number of words for love in the bible eros which is sensual love phileo you ever hear the city of brotherly love philadelphia i've been there it's not it's not but phileo is man i really like you a whole bunch you're a neat guy but agape goes to a whole different level agape is the highest form of love anywhere in the word of god or in the universe agape love what is it well it's selfless love it is love that puts people and their needs before themselves we know we should do that but that's not always easy this is love that's sacrificial it is love that is willing to die on a cross for sinful people who have scorned you and spit on you and mocked you and said all kinds of evil it's love that takes someone to the cross and in first corinthians very famous we read these inspired words from the holy spirit first corinthians 13 considered to

[30 : 42] be one of the greatest pieces of literature ever written even the guys that ascribe that to him are not necessarily believe the bible or believe in inspiration or even believe in god but they say you can't get better than this it's the great chapter on love and paul closes it but now abide faith hope love these three but the greatest of these is love the very greatest i trust that you all realize how these virtues built on each other there's a pattern here when you have moral excellence you're on your way to knowledge and with knowledge you're better able to have self-control and self-control ushers in a firm belief in perseverance or preservation which brings in godliness leading to brotherly kindness and culminates in sacrificial agape love there's links here in the chain well i'm embarrassed but i'm going to start closing our lesson this evening we could spend another hour on verses 8 to 11

I'm not going to do that to you tonight but it says in 2nd Peter 1 verse 8 and 9 for if these things are yours what we just read all the virtues if these things are yours and increasing the lord wants these to be increasing they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our lord jesus christ you're going to be useful in the kingdom and you're going to be fruitful when you have these things for in whom these things are not present that one is blind being nearsighted this is a blind man talking a nearsighted man having forgotten the purification from his former sins if you live by the virtues and they are increasing in your life you are neither useless or unfruitful this is the true knowledge of the lord jesus christ and you don't have to strain to live those virtues they come naturally to the true born from above born an other in the greek blood bought child of god found only in christ they come natural but if you're not living these virtues have never lived these virtues i'm going to suggest you follow the counsel of the apostle paul in second corinthians chapter 13 verse 5 test yourselves this is a self examination test yourselves to see if you're in the faith it's very personal this is closet time your prayer closet test yourselves to see if you're in the faith examine yourselves or do you not recognize about yourselves that jesus christ is in you and then paul says unless you fail the test what do you do if you fail the test this is a self examination what do you do if you fail the test well pay heed to peter is a very wise counsel in the last two verses of our lesson tonight verses 10 and 11 therefore brothers be all the more diligent to make your calling and choosing sure for in doing these things you will never stumble for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our lord and savior jesus christ will be abundantly supplied to you where is a good place to begin the process of making your calling and choosing sure you're commanded to do that where should we do it well I said it above but I'll say it again in your prayer closet before the father son and holy spirit once you are there and by the way it doesn't have to be a closet you guys know that right but it's pretty good if you got one once you are there give to the triune God father son and holy spirit all the credit for saving you and for keeping you saved well let's close with a word of prayer father I thank you for your love your patience that you patiently endure us and lord what a god we serve who has revealed himself to us in three persons may we worship you in spirit and truth and honor you in all things I pray in Jesus name amen