

1 Peter 1:3-11: Making your Salvation Sure

This morning as we gather to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, I want us to look at an amazing passage of Scripture here in 2 Peter 1. If you don't have a Bible, there should one under a chair in front of you close by. Feel free to use that or have it if you don't have a Bible. We'll be on page 1018.

I want us to look at this passage because it helps us understand what we do with what happened on a cross 2,000 years ago. Many people know the basics of Christianity. They know the Bible points out that we are all sinners through and through, that we deserve damnation because of our sin and that we can't do enough good things to somehow offset our sinfulness. It'd be like trying to do community service to get let off a charge of double homicide - it's just not going to happen. We're sinful and hopeless.

And we know that God in his love sent his sinless Son, Jesus, 2,000 years ago. Jesus is the God man who lived a sinless life, died not for his sins but for the sins of all who would believe in him, he rose again, he ascended into heaven where he reigns and one day will return to judge the world according to righteousness.

The only way to make it through the perfect and just judgment of Jesus is to turn from your sins, beg God for mercy and forgiveness, trust that your sins have been paid for by Jesus, who died on the cross in your place for your sin. To trust he was your substitute.

That simple message is the message of the gospel; it's the gospel - good news - because by believing it we are given eternal life with Christ in heaven and escape the wrath of God in hell.

But here's the deal: I know many people, and you do too, who say they understand and believe that message but there's really no been no fundamental change in their life reflecting that they believe that. It'd be like someone who came up to you and says: "Oh yeah, I inherited \$10 million from my grandpa a couple years ago" yet they still drive their '92 Ford Tempo and clock in at their minimum wage job everyday. Or, to push the analogy a little further, maybe there's been a small change, but not enough to convince anyone that they've inherited anything. "After I got my inheritance I went out and financed a new truck." We'd all be wondering if they understood how inheritances work,

But this is the reality of many who know about the Bible or Jesus, but have not actually been changed by Christ. They've never truly experienced what the Bible calls regeneration or new birth.

So that's what I want to focus on this morning: what is the connection between believing in Jesus and living for Jesus.

1) The Necessity of Knowing Jesus for Salvation and Sanctification. Read 3-4

So there is a lot going on in this passage but I think as we go through it you'll see Peter's logic pretty easy to follow.

First of all, Peter says that "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." When Peter says life he's talking about eternal life - that is, salvation. When he says godliness he's talking about the godly life that every Christian is called to live. There is no such thing as carnal Christianity. No such thing as Jesus being someone's Savior but not their Lord.

So what he's saying is that God has granted to believers, not only the power that saved us but power to live in manner that pleases God. If you are a believer in Jesus today, it's because God by his own power made that happen. The Holy Spirit raised you from spiritual deadness and gave you eternal life. **And** that same power that saved is the same power that we have to live a life pleasing to God. No Christian can ever say, "Well, I just can't stop sinning, I just can't obey in this one particular area." No, if God has poured out his power on you to save you from your sins he's also poured out his power on you to live a life of godliness.

His power - God's power through Christ - has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. So that power is there.

How does that happen? How does God's power come into our lives? When we moved into our house 4 years ago the power had been shut off for several years and I had to jump through some hoops to get the power turned back on. So the question I asked over and over was "how do I get the power turned on?" Great, you're telling me I need God's power for salvation and sanctification, but how does God grant this power? The answer is through knowing Jesus. **Read 3**

So Peter says the power of God for salvation and the power of God for godliness come through knowing Jesus; through "the knowledge of him called us to his own glory and excellence." The knowledge that Peter is talking about here is not just information. It's not just knowing historical information about Jesus like something you'd watch on the history channel. It certainly includes information - it includes the gospel message of Jesus' life, death, resurrection. It includes the reality that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, not based on works at all. But it's a personal knowledge here that Peter has in mind. An intimate knowledge like you'd know a friend or your spouse. He uses it several times. **Read Vs. 2, 8**

Peter does use knowledge in **Vs. 5-6** to mean doctrine or theology. But here what he's talking about is knowing intimately Jesus as your Lord and Savior; as the good shepherd who has laid down his life for your sins.

This knowledge, Peter says, is of him who called you to his own glory and excellence. We live in a very casual and informal culture. Even 20 years ago there was an employment perk in many companies called casual Fridays where men didn't have to wear slacks and a tie to work and ladies didn't have to wear a dress or skirt. Now, there's no such thing as casual Friday because every day is casual. I only wear a tie if someone is getting married or buried.

But in ancient times when a king would summon someone into his presence, the person who was summoned knew it was a big deal. First of all, the call - or the summons - was not optional. The King called you so you came. And you wanted to come, it was an honor. And when you entered into his presence you were in your best clothes on your best behavior using your most eloquent speech because you were in the presence of the king. That's the imagery Peter uses.

If you are a Christian, you have been called into the presence of King Jesus. He called you and you came. His call was both authoritative and an honor. There's a sense in which there was no option, but a sense in which there's no way you'd pass it up. But what we have been called into is the glory and excellence of Jesus. Jesus doesn't call us into an eternal life of morally casual Fridays. He calls us into his own glory and excellence. Just to be clear, the issue isn't really what you wear - although I guess it could be depending on what you're wearing. The issue is that believers have been called into a life of glorious and excellent service. Just like it was an honor to serve in the castle for the king, it is an honor to serve in the ministry of the King of kings. And we act like we are in his service because if you are a believer you are in his service and you have come to know the King personally.

But that's not all, Peter says through knowing Christ there's even more. **Read 4a**

Peter adds that through knowing Jesus we have precious promises and we have become partakers in the divine nature. So what are these promises we have through Jesus and what does it mean we are partakers of the divine nature?

First of all, we don't have the promises listed out here. But because we know the Bible talks over and over again about promises we can take a pretty educated guess. Through faith in Christ:

- Our sins are forgiven.
- Although one day we will die, God will raise our bodies to be like his glorious body.
- We have become children of God and will inherit the Kingdom of God.
- Filled with the Holy Spirit who will guard our salvation until either we die or the Lord returns.
- Take part in God's blessing to Abraham of including all nations in his family.

Through knowing Jesus we have a boat load of promises from God who cannot lie. Election season is ramping up and that means politicians are breathing out promises left and right, but even if they get elected they will

only be able to keep a handful of them. God has promised some pretty audacious things. These are tall, tall orders - precious promises, great promises. But because he's God he will deliver on all of his promises to his children.

Through knowing Christ we also partake of the divine nature. That sounds unusual - does that mean we become God? Well, no, there's only one God. In what way do we partake of the divine nature? First, we become children of God. The apostle John says we're born of God. We share his character, we share his holiness, we share his love for his glory. We have eternal life which means that we know God, but also that we will eternally know God - we will live forever like God lives forever.

Just think about that. With modern medicine, depending on the diagnosis of a disease, the best doctors can do sometimes is stave off death for a few weeks or months or maybe years. They can hold off death. But God says: Hey, I'll make you live forever in joy and peace and glory. That sounds pretty good but that only comes through knowing Jesus.

And not only have we been called into the glorious and excellent presence of Jesus, notice what we've been saved out of. **Read 4**

So we have these precious and great promises, we've also escaped the corruptions in this world. This is the opposite side of the same coin. Yes we've been saved into the glory of God. But we've also been saved out of corruption. This is why we talk a lot about repentance.

That salvation includes calling people to repentance, which is a change of mind about sin that brings about a change of our actions and desires. And God calls us to repent because our own flesh is saturated with sin: **Gal 5:19-20**: Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these

But through knowing Jesus we have escaped that corruption. Not entirely, of course, we still struggle with sin. But substantially. We still sin, we live around sinners. Ultimately we won't escape it until the Lord returns.

So this personal and intimate knowledge of Jesus, who is glorious and excellent, is where the power for salvation and the power for godliness come from. The only way anyone will ever know God is through knowing Jesus. And the only way those who know God will ever mature and become more like God in holiness is to continue to know Jesus.

Peter says there is a necessity of knowing Jesus for salvation and sanctification.

2) The Necessity of Growing in Christian Maturity.

So here's something that often happens: people say "Oh, I'm a Christian, I believe in God and Jesus and all that" but there's no growth in their Christian life. There's no spiritual maturity that takes place. And, to be honest, it's really difficult to convince someone of this. Unless you're just brutally honest or a total cynic about your own life, usually you perceive that you're always getting better. So even those who claim to know Jesus but don't also tend to believe they're getting better in life.

But notice what Peter says. He says there is really a divine expectation and necessity to grow. And he gives us a list of categories for exactly what he means. **Read 5**

So 2 things to take note of before we even get to the list. First, he says in **Vs. 5** "for this very reason." What he's doing is connecting all of **Vss. 3-4** to what is going to follow. Because Jesus's divine power has granted everything for life and godliness, because we have intimate knowledge of God, because we're partakers of the divine nature and have been delivered **for those reasons** we should be growing in these areas. So if the first part is true of you, if you really do know Jesus as your Lord, then by necessity you'll be growing.

The second thing I want to point out is that phrase "make every effort." **Read 5**

The NASB says “applying all diligence”; NKJV “giving all diligence.” The idea is that whatever these things are we’re about to read we are to give ourselves totally to them. Not only are these not optional, they are not peripheral.

I have a van that came with heated seats except that the first winter we had the van the driver side seat went out. I have yet fix it because in a car, heated seats are optional. Backup cameras are optional. Cruise control is optional. Brakes, however, are not optional. If those go out you have to deal with that pronto. Transmissions are not optional. Electrical systems are not optional. When those go out, we make every effort to fix them or we’re dead in the water.

Peter is saying these things are not the heated seats of the Christian life. This is the transmission, and tires and brakes. These are essential and we are to make every effort to ensure they are happening in our lives.

Peter says we are to make every effort, not try a little bit. Not put it off until we have a little more time. Not, “You know, I’m growing a little.” Every effort is to be made in the Christian life. Schreiner: “The priority of grace...does not cancel out strenuous moral effort” (Schreiner, T. R. 1, 2 Peter, Jude, p. 298). These things take work, and discipline and earnestness.

We could spend a lot of time on each of these. But I don’t want to get too bogged down. I don’t think this is a list of dominos where you work on virtue, then knowledge, then self-control. I think these are actually fruit of the Spirit and all should be growing all at the same time. All should be growing, but some are going to grow faster than others. That’s okay.

Virtue. **Read 5** Virtue is an unusual word because we really don’t use it all that much. Probably the best translation is “moral excellence” (NASB). In the military, many soldiers give their lives for their country, many are brave in battle and do things perfectly as soldiers that we can’t even imagine. But there are those who go so far above and beyond the call of duty they are awarded the Medal of Honor. It’s the nation’s highest honor for heroic effort.

That’s exactly what Peter is calling every believer to. The word he uses was used in Roman civic life to refer to “uncommon character worthy of praise, excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue” (BDAG, pg. 130) Christians should be living our lives so far above and beyond the call of duty for the glory of God that others look to us as examples of what Christian life is about.

Knowledge. **Read 5** What kind of knowledge should Christians be acquiring? We’ve already seen that there is a personal, relational knowledge that every Christian has of God through Jesus. But Peter here seems to be making a distinction. Knowledge here is probably knowing more about who God is and what he wants for our life.

It’s not just information for information’s sake. It’s not just theology for theology’s sake. Bible information is great and theology is great, but the point of knowing the Bible more and more is that our lives can be more conformed to the image of Christ. We become more like Jesus because we are more attentive to how God wants us to live.

Self Control. **Read 6** Most of us understand what self-control is. It is sticking to a particular course of action or refraining from other action. The problem isn’t defining it, the problem is doing it. It’s so easy to make excuse after excuse for not being self controlled. Whether you claim to have an impulsive personality, or your past invites indulgence, or you can afford it, or whatever - those are all works of the flesh.

The one who is filled with the Holy Spirit - God the Holy Spirit - has a spirit of self control. We are not to be mastered by anything, not even our own appetites and desires. We are to make every possible effort we can to be defined by self-control.

Steadfastness. Some of your translations say perseverance. The idea is to do everything in your power to maintain the course of following Jesus. We are constantly called to persevere.

Matthew 10:22: the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Hebrews 12:3: Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Following Jesus is like swimming upstream in the world. It's hard work and takes endurance. There is a 7 mile run in San Francisco called Bay to Breakers, it's the oldest annually held footrace in the world. But it attracts different kinds of people. Some come to from all over the world to compete and set records. Others show up in silly super hero costumes and other ridiculous outfits. They're not there to actually accomplish anything significant, they're there to just have a silly time.

That kind of distinction is often true for those who claim Christ. Some people think Jesus is just another thing or hobby to add to their life. They're treating Christianity like those silly people are treating that footrace.

Listen, we don't have some silly trophy for a foot race on the line. We have eternity on the line and the way we get there is to diligently remain steadfast for Jesus.

Godliness. This is a general admonition to do godly things. To be like God in righteousness and purity. Sometimes the Bible gives us very specific things we need to focus on, other times we are given sort of broad categories of obedience, like godliness. The nice thing about the term godliness is that most every believer knows an area they need to strive more earnestly, so God is allowing our conscience to do the work for us.

Side: I think we know this, but just to be sure, these are not steps we need to be taking to be saved, to have our sins forgiven. No, our sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus alone. But for those who are saved, these things are things we pursue out of a love for Jesus who saved us from our sins. This is the character of those who want to be Jesus' disciples and be like the master who saved them.

Brotherly Affection. **Read 7** The Greek word here is one we are all familiar with: philadelphia. Phila - meaning friendly love and affection, delphia - meaning brother. This is an excellent word because although Christians are called to love all people, we are honest enough to realize that that is hard. And sometimes we can make the excuse of "Well, I love them, I just don't get along with them or like them" or "We're just very different in personality." And so we use that as a reason to avoid people or just sort of stay away from them.

Peter says that's unacceptable. In fact, he says just the opposite. He'll say we need to grow in love in just a moment, but here he says we need to grow in brotherly affection. We need to grow - make every effort - to love people in the same manner as we love our best friend who is easy to get along with.

When Jesus died for the church, he knew we'd be a rag tag bunch of misfits all with our own preferences and personalities and quirks. Listen, some of us are just weird. God knows that, but Christ died for us all. He didn't die for us so that we'd gather together and just not fight. If you have kids, the goal of your family is not just to be together and not fight. The goal is that everyone has brotherly affection for everyone else. That's God's goal.

God is actually commanding that we earnestly pursue being friends - having affection for - the body of Christ.

Love. The last, quality of course is love. I'll simply read a verse you all know well:

1 Cor. 13:4-8: Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

We are to diligently pursue those things. Diligently pursue not being rude / not being irritable / not boast / being filled with hope.

All of these qualities are necessities in the Christian life.

3) The Necessity of Self Evaluation. **Read 8-11**

One of the biggest concerns I see in Christians is “does my life matter for the Kingdom?” “Does what I do make any difference in eternity?” And Peter’s answer is: if you trust in Jesus, and you are diligently pursuing these qualities, **vs. 8** says will effective or fruitful. You will have a life that matters for Jesus for all eternity.

But **Vs. 9** has a warning. If you’re not pursuing these things, or if you’ve just hit cruise control on following Jesus, you’re so near sighted that you’re blind. You know what the problem with being really near sighted is? You have just enough sight to run into things and hurt yourself. You think the way is clear but you trip over the curb, you run into the door. You’re life is a train wreck.

Peter says, if you claim to follow Jesus and you’re not earnestly uprisng these things, diligently pursuing these things, you’re life is a train wreck. It’s like you’ve actually forgotten than you’ve been cleansed from sins, you’ve functionally forgotten that you’re a Christian.

So what can you do? **Read 10**

Examine yourself. Make your calling and election sure. Election is the Bible’s teaching that God has chosen people for salvation from before the foundation of the world. But a lot of people who get really excited about election grow lazy in their faith. Peter says “You believe in election - great. Make sure you are elect.” Imagine the tragic irony of someone who is a Calvinist ending up in hell because they don’t actually pursue godliness. I’m a Calvinist, there’s a lot of Calvinists in here: make sure you’re pursuing these qualities. Make sure God **has** chosen you and he has actually called you into the faith. **Read 11**

Peter says for in this way there is entrance into the Kingdom. In what way? In the way we’ve seen. Through knowing Jesus, diligently pursuing the qualities he mentioned and examining yourself to make sure you’re in the faith.

What do you do if you look at all these things and go, “You know, I believe in Jesus but I’ve been coasting for a long time.” I want to have moral excellence, but am I really giving it my all?”

Here’s what you do: you ask God to forgive your laziness. Ask him to forgive what Peter calls nearsightedness and blindness. And you know what? He will. Full pardon. And then you commit yourself to make every effort to pursue these things.

And if you’ve never followed Christ, he calls you to come. He doesn’t ask you, doesn’t serenade you, doesn’t invite you. He commands you like a king commands his subject to come into his Kingdom. Not because it’s an eternity of a bummer, but because it’s an eternal life of joy and grace and honor serving the King of kings.

Pray