

"Confident in Your Call" - 2 Peter 1:5-11

This is September 11, 2016, the 15th anniversary of that horrible devastating terror attack on the World Trade Center. Relatives and friends of those lost still grieve. We as a nation, grieve with them, as we should. I suspect all of us remember exactly where we were when we heard the news.

In the wake of that attack, it almost looked like our country would turn from her arrogance and turn back to God. For a short time, it seems we were united as a people. Church attendance spiked as folks searched for meaning. There were prayers in congress, prayers in the White House, heartfelt prayers throughout the land. But sadly, it was all short-lived. There was no lasting revival; there was no spiritual awakening and today, our culture has strayed even further from the God of this universe, from the truth of His Bible.

So many are suffering a crisis of faith: "Where is God? Does He even care about us? How could a holy, righteous, loving God allow the persistence of such evil in the world?"

I can't say I planned it this way, but I find it quite appropriate that I get to expound on 2 Peter 1:5-11 this morning. Peter is teaching us how to respond to threats that come from within the Church. Satan desperately wants to distract Christians from the grace and love our God lavishes upon us. Satan wants to replace our hope, our peace, our joy with doubt, fear and hate. The enemy wants us to doubt God's love for us.

In our text this morning, Peter is addressing the phenomenon of doubt and specifically, how can I be sure that I am actually saved? How can I be sure that God has welcomed me into His kingdom? How can I know that I am not self-deceived? How can I be confident in my call?

Peter tells us.

We are saved by faith alone. Jesus has done all the work. God has provided all the witnesses to that work. All we have to do is believe that it is true.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

But if you want assurance of your salvation, if you want to know for sure that you are one of God's elect, one of His own special people, there are things you need to do. We talked about those things last week: You need to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12) You need to progress as a Christian, growing in your Christian walk. You need to ...

... add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

And you can do it, because God has made it possible. He has given you the means.

...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)

This morning, we continue with that passage and we are going to look into the reason we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. That reason is so we can be confident in our call. Many, many Christians struggle with this. Many of you, I suspect, have from time to time wondered "What if I'm not really chosen?" If you are not

confident in your call, is there anything you can do about it? Yes ... and the Bible shows us what we should do about it. Let's go to God's word right now.

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8-11)

Let's begin by taking a closer look at verse eight.

For if these things are yours and abound ... (2 Peter 1:8)

Of course, Peter is talking about those characteristics, those virtues that are evident in the Christian life: faith, virtue, knowledge, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, agape love. Now, Peter is not indicating that we have to take those virtues successively. In other words, you don't have to perfect faith before you can attain virtue. You don't have to perfect godliness before you can attain brotherly affection. No, he means that we are to cultivate all these virtues at the same time. We are to work on them. We are to watch them grow and develop. We want to see them abound and they will grow and abound if you only draw close to Jesus. God wants you to draw closer to Christ. Remember, it is God who will do the work. God works in you to both will and to do for His good pleasure.

If you want Him to accomplish that good work, you need to seek Him out. You need to dwell in His presence. You need to spend time in prayer. You need to spend time in His word. You need to spend time with His people as they worship and learn.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. (1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)

Your part is to seek God with everything you've got.

... you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Our God is not hiding! He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)
And when you do seek Him,

... you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:8)

But we are a forgetful people. I think forgetfulness is hard-wired into our genes. In fact, as I get older, I seem to be getting better at forgetting. Apparently, it takes some practice. Sadly, it's easy for Christians to forget the infinite love God has lavished on us.

We come to saving faith. At a point in time, I came to a realization that God actually loved me. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, but I needed to realize that God so loved Ken that He gave His only begotten Son, despite the fact that I was pretty unlovable, despite the fact that I was guilty of rebellion against my Creator, despite the fact that I am guilty of cosmic treason every day.

Jesus died for me. He paid the penalty for my sins, every one of them. He suffered and died on Calvary because of me, and by His stripes, I am healed.

I can still remember the profound relief I had when I realized that my sins were no longer counted against me. Can you remember how you felt when you first believed? I pray that you've had that experience. If not, I pray that you would have that experience this morning by just speaking from your heart to Jesus: "I confess you as Lord of my life. I believe God raised you from the dead. I want to have a relationship with you. I want to follow You!"

That is saving faith. That's what gets you into God's kingdom, but, my friend, you absolutely do not want to stop there. You need to build on that kernel of faith. With prayer, Bible Study, and Christian fellowship, you need to add to your faith. Because if you do not, well, look at verse 9:

For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, (2 Peter 1:9)

Now, the Greek word translated shortsighted means myopic. It could be translated "squint", or to blink the eyes. And Peter adds that this person's eyes have been rendered so useless that he is essentially blind.

For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. (2 Peter 1:9)

Now you have heard me say that there are people in the Church who think they are Christians but they are not. Yes, there are people who are self-deceived. There are people who, when they come to that Great White Throne, will hear Jesus say "Depart from me; I never knew you" because they didn't receive salvation by faith alone. And that is what you must do. You don't have anything to offer. You need to admit your depravity to yourself and to God and beg for grace and mercy.

Those who are self-deceived are counting on their own piousness, their own good works ... and that won't cut it. If that is you, you had better repent!

But there is another sort of deception in the Church Peter is addressing Christians who have forgotten they have been truly saved. Individuals who actually belong to Christ can be deceived by Satan into believing that Jesus doesn't love them after all. Perhaps they have even confessed Christ publicly in the ordinance of baptism but they failed to realize the significance of their new life in Jesus and just gradually drifted back into their old, worldly habits. Those folks are easy pickings for the devil.

We are forgetful. We need reminders. I'm convinced that is why Jesus gave us the Communion. We need to be reminded of His sacrifice. We need to be reminded of His incredible love for us. We need to remember that His body was broken, that His blood was shed to save sinners, just like me.

It is so important that you add to your faith. It is so important that you pray continually. It is so important that you search the scriptures daily. It is so important that you spend time with God's people, so that you add to your faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection and *agape* love. Otherwise, you are going to forget you have been cleansed. Otherwise, you will forget that Jesus has saved you.

So, my friends, we need to take this seriously. Don't be one of those folks who just dabbles in Christianity. Go all in! Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, (2 Peter 1:10)

The Greek word implies that we are to exert ourselves. We are to labor, to study, to give maximum effort because in doing so, you confirm your call. You confirm your election. That's how you know God is working in you to both will and do for His good pleasure.

You don't labor to get saved – salvation is by faith alone. It is a gift graciously granted by Almighty God. But once you are saved, you labor to confirm your call. You must be even more diligent in prayer. You must be even more diligent in Bible study. You must be even more diligent to hang with fellow believers. And you must strive for obedience because if Jesus is your Lord, you need to do what He says.

...for if you do these things you will never stumble; (2 Peter 1:10)

Have you ever stumbled in your Christian walk? Have you ever fallen short of what Jesus expects of you? Of course you have; we all do. That's not what Peter is talking about. Peter is not saying that you will live a perfect life here on this earth while lugging around that body of flesh.

But if you diligently add to your faith, if you diligently pursue Jesus, you will be firmly established, unmoved, and absolutely sure of your salvation, not because you're such a good and pious Christian, but because you will learn to recognize just how good and how powerful and how gracious our God is.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand. (Psalms 37:23-24)

I hope you understand what's at stake. There are only two kinds of people in the world. There are the saints and there are the ain'ts. When you stand before the judgment seat, will you hear "Depart from me; I never knew you," or will you hear "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." Friend, if you are an ain't, it isn't too late to become a saint. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9) It's not about what you do, it's about who you trust. Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Do you believe this? If you're having trouble believing, then pray for faith. Pray "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

If you have placed your faith, hope and trust in Jesus Christ alone, you have been promised an incredible heritage.

...for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:11)

It's what it's all about. That is the sure hope of every born-again believer. It is the promise of a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells. It is worth reaching for. It is worth searching out. It is worth adding to your faith.

How do I know I am saved? How do I know that I am a child of God? It's not because of some great supernatural revelation. It is not because of a dream or a vision.

I know I have been saved because God has given me His Word. He has promised, and He never lies. He has revealed Himself to me in Jesus Christ. He continues to work in me through the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. I know I have been saved because I continue to pursue Him through prayer, Bible study and the fellowship of the saints. I

wouldn't do any of that on my own. It is God who is working in me to both will and do for His good pleasure.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)