

# THE PROOF OF SALVATION

2 Peter 1:8-11

## INTRODUCTION

- From the earliest days of the church, distinguishing the true believer from the false professor has been a continual problem
- In the gospels there were multitudes of people who followed Christ, apparently as his disciples, yet they did not truly believe on him, but followed him for their own selfish purposes
- Eventually they fell away (John 6:66)
- Not only do these false professors deceive others, but very often they deceive themselves as to their spiritual state, thinking themselves to be saved when they are lost, thinking they are at peace with God when they are actually enemies of God, thinking they are bound for heaven when they are actually bound for hell (Revelation 3:17)
- Determining whether one is a true Christian or not can sometimes be difficult
  - ✓ Seeing Judas Iscariot at his best, one would conclude he must be saved
  - ✓ Seeing Simon Peter at his worst, one would conclude he must be lost
- Yet it is possible, by an examination of character and conduct, to ascertain something of the reality of one's spiritual condition (2 Corinthians 13:5)
- The proof of salvation is *fruitfulness* (Matthew 3:8; 7:20; 13:22)

- Salvation effects not only a change of *standing* before God (justification) but also a change of our very *nature* within us (regeneration) (Ezekiel 36:26-27)
- The old nature is crucified, and the new nature is imparted to us (Ephesians 4:22-24)
- With this new nature, God has equipped us to live the new life of holiness we are called to – “his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (v.3)
- In writing his second epistle to warn the saints against false brethren infiltrating the church, he first shows what true Christianity looks like, and part of that evidence are the seven graces listed in vv.5-7
- Virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity
- After listing the seven graces, Peter goes on to explain how vital it is that a Christian not only bears them, but *increases* in them as he grows in sanctification
- Note the repetition of “these things” in vv.8,9,10,12
- These seven graces, whether they are absent or abundant, serve as a spiritual barometer by which we can gauge our spiritual state

## I. THESE THINGS PRODUCE ABUNDANCE IN SALVATION (8)

A. This is a picture of a fruitful, productive Christian

1. The phrase, “neither barren nor unfruitful” is a *litotes* – the use of negative words to express a positive statement – and hence means “very productive and very fruitful”
2. God intends for his people to be useful for his kingdom in this world, and those who fail to add these graces to their faith will be useless and ineffective for God

3. Those who add these graces also show they have a true knowledge of Christ, the knowledge that comes from obedience
4. The fruit we bear in our lives is not for our glory, but God's

## II. THESE THINGS PROVE AUTHENTICITY OF SALVATION (9)

- A. There is disagreement over whether v.9 speaks of a believer or unbeliever
  1. Arguments for it being a believer
    - a. The phrase "he was purged from his old sins" seems to refer to someone who has been cleanse by the blood of Christ
    - b. True believers can become backslidden – they can fail to grow spiritually as they should (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Hebrews 5:11-14)
  2. Arguments for it being an unbeliever
    - a. There is a change in pronouns in v.9 from "you" to "he", indicating the apostle is speaking of a different group of people
    - b. The descriptions of being blind, unable to see afar, and forgetting past cleansing fit better an unbeliever than a believer
    - c. The seven character traits that mark a Christian are not found at all in this person
    - d. If these people are false professors, it would parallel Peter's description of them in ch.2
- B. He lacketh these things

1. The word “lack” means “not present”
2. They are not merely in short supply, but upon examination, they cannot be found in their true state
3. There may be a *form* of these graces, such as a form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), but like the Pharisees, it mere outward show and does not come from a regenerated heart
4. Elsewhere we are told that a person who does not have love for the brethren demonstrates they are lost (1 John 3:14)

#### C. He is blind

1. Blindness (spiritual) in Scripture always refers to the unregenerate, never to believers (Matthew 23:16,17,19,24,26; John 12:40; Romans 11:7,25; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:18; Revelation 3:17)
2. This person is blind to his true spiritual state, blind to his need of the gospel, blind to Jesus Christ
3. The true Christian “seeth the Son, and believeth on him” (John 6:40)
4. Only Christ gives sight to the blind (John 9:39; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6)

#### D. He cannot see afar off

1. This word (*muopazon*) is found in our English word “myopia” (short-sightedness)
2. The only “sight” he has is for this present life in this present world
3. God’s people see afar off – to heaven, to eternity and live accordingly (Hebrews 11:10,13,26-27)

E. He has forgotten he was purged from his old sins

1. This is not a mere memory lapse, but a deliberate abandonment of the change that took place when he professed to be a Christian
2. The word for “purged” (*katharismou*) is often used in relation to ceremonial cleansing/purifying (Mark 1:44; Luke 2:22; 5:14; John 2:6), and is used in connection with baptism in John 3:25
3. A person may make a profession of faith in Christ for forgiveness of sin, and testify to it by baptism, while the heart has never been purged of sin by Christ’s blood
4. And subsequent to this, he has no fruit of grace in his life, he has no spiritual sight or understanding, and he has no thought for God or Christ, wilfully forgetting what he once professed to be
5. These apostates are described in the following chapter as dogs and swine that were removed from their filth, but their nature never changed, and eventually they return to their sin and show their true state (2 Peter 2:20-22)
6. Those who add nothing to their faith are like the apostate Demas – unfruitful, blind forgetting and abandoning their profession (2 Timothy 4:10; cf. John 2:19)

### **III. THESE THINGS PROMOTE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION (10-11)**

A. We can make our calling and election sure

1. This refers not to God’s part in our election and calling, for that is eternally fixed
2. It refers to our assurance and enjoyment of our salvation

3. God “elects” or chooses us in Christ from eternity (1 Thessalonians 1:4)
4. Then in time he “calls” us by his grace to justification and eternal life (Romans 8:30)
5. While the basis of our salvation is in Christ’s atonement alone, we can have greater assurance of our salvation both to ourselves and others, by the fruit of a godly life, showing we indeed are partakers of the divine nature
6. The more these seven virtues abound in our lives, the greater the assurance – the less they abound, the less the assurance

B. We can be guarded from stumbling and falling

1. The born again Christian cannot “fall” in the sense of apostasy and damnation
2. God, by his grace, keeps us from falling (Jude 24)
3. The saint may “fall” in the sense of stumbling in his walk, yielding to temptation, nevertheless, “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23-24)
4. By growing spiritually, adding these things to my faith, I can become more and more protected against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil

C. We can have an abundant entrance into Christ’s kingdom

1. The word for “ministered unto” (*epichoregeo*) is the same as used for “add to” in v.5
2. As we add these graces to our faith, God promises to minister unto us a glorious entrance into the kingdom

3. All the redeemed will enter into Christ's kingdom, but not all will enter with the same rewards
4. Some will enter heaven "as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15) – still saved yet with few rewards in glory
5. But others will have an abundant entrance ministered to them
6. What we do with this life, whether we live for Christ or for self, whether we use our talent or bury it, whether we add to our faith, or not, determines the rewards we receive at the judgment seat of Christ (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19)
7. Note that Christ's kingdom does not end after 1000 years, but will continue with the new heavens and new earth unto all eternity

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Have you truly been purged from your sins by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, or is your "clean life" a mere outward show for the praise of men?
2. God has given us a "checklist" against which we may measure our own spiritual condition
  - ✓ Is my life characterised by the highest standards of moral excellence?
  - ✓ Do I know Jesus Christ personally as my Saviour and Shepherd, and am I growing in my knowledge of him and his will for my life as I walk with him daily?
  - ✓ Do I have self-control, a rule over my own spirit, where my choices are governed not by the whims of the flesh, but by my solemn duty to obey God's will?

- ✓ Do I patiently endure the trials and difficulties of life with an unshakeable trust in God?
  - ✓ Do I have the fear of God in the core of my being, which leads me to live soberly, righteously and godly in my thoughts, words and deeds?
  - ✓ Do I truly love God's people as my brothers and sisters, expressing that love by preferring them before myself, sacrificing myself for their sake?
  - ✓ Do I love my neighbour as myself, even those who hate and mistreat me, in the same way that Christ demonstrated his love for his enemies?
3. It is one thing to be saved, but it is another to be *assured* of it – are you adding these things to your faith and thereby making your calling and election sure?
  4. All of us are prone to becoming spiritually short-sighted, taking our eyes off eternal things and looking too much to earthly things, raking through the straws, sticks and dust of the world, while ignoring the crown above us
  5. May we adopt Christiania's prayer as our own: "O deliver me from this muck-rake!"