

Some people do not have birth certificates, and one such person was Will Rogers. Will Rogers was a country cowboy, an actor, and a very popular entertainer way back in the early 1900 era.

Once, when Will Rogers was applying for a passport, the clerk asked him for his birth certificate, but Will said that he didn't have one. Well, the clerk said that she needed one from him in order to issue a passport. He asked why, and she replied, "So I can have proof of your birth," to which Rogers answered, "Well, I'm here, aren't I?"

This morning we are going to talk about our proof of birth – our proof of being born again. I believe as far back as the 60's, there was a question being circulated which asked: *"If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"* That was a good question, it was a probing question, and it was a question that prompted people to examine their lives – giving assurance of their salvation to some, but causing nervous doubt in others.

I want to say this morning that I have no intention of causing you doubt about your salvation. That's not something I want to do. On the other hand, I have no intention of giving you some false assurance if you are not really saved. That would be the absolute worst thing I could do. Instead, my intention this morning to simply to present the truth of God's Word, and then as the Apostle Paul said in **2 Corinthians 13:5** – you can search your own heart and examine for yourself to see if you are of the faith – if you are truly saved. What does that say?

Now, some say we *can't* know if we are truly saved or not – but that is wrong, because the Bible tells us that we *should* know if we are saved. Listen to this from **1 John 5:11-13**.

¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

God does not want us to guess if we have eternal life, or wait to find out when we stand before Him. That's way too late, and this is way too important. Instead, He wants us to know we that have eternal life, to be confident about it, to be assured of where we stand because that will have an impact in how we live our lives. I have shared the scariest passage in the Bible to you a few times, for it describes a situation that I hope none of us would ever find ourselves in. It's **Matthew 7:21-23**, Jesus said,

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

Think about that passage for a moment. If those who were prophesying in Jesus’ name, casting out demons, and performing many miracles were in danger of hearing the words, “*I never knew you*” from Jesus, then what does that say about people who profess to be Christians, who say they are saved – they claim to have prayed the “magic prayer”, but there is no evidence in their lives, in their behavior, in their character that suggests they are saved.

Now, our salvation is not the result of works. I have said many times – our salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone – period – end of story; however, our lives should reflect our salvation, how we live our lives should give evidence that we are saved. Works are not a means to our salvation, but they should be the result of our salvation.

The Apostle Paul spoke about this in **Philippians 3:12** when he said, we are to “*work out your salvation.*” He did not say work *for* your salvation, rather work *out* your salvation, in other words, the salvation that was given to us should come out of us – it should come out in our character and our behavior. There should be evidence that exists in my life and in your life that proves we are saved. The greatest proof of being born again should be that person sitting in your seat – and if not, then there is a need for some serious soul searching, and that leads us to our passage for this morning.

So, turn in your Bible to **2 Peter 1**, and we will begin with **verse 10**.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

Our passage begins with the word “**therefore**” which prompts us to go backwards to consider what Peter has said to us thus far. If you recall, the first thing that Peter expressed to us was that the day we came to Christ in faith, God gave us everything we would ever need to live a godly life, to live the Christian life, and if we truly wanted to be *growing* Christians, then we needed to be *knowing* Christians – knowing Christ through a personal and intimate relationship.

Then last week, we learned that our relationship with God can be described as a divine partnership which requires our cooperation with Him. God has given us everything we need to grow spiritually, to grow in grace and knowledge, to become more Christ-like. God has done His part – and now we have to do our part by applying and putting to use what God has graciously given us. We got to take advantage of it – and that requires effort on our part.

Last week we also looked at seven character-related qualities that we are to add to our faith like spiritual growth supplements. Faith in Christ is foundational, it's the starting point for all believers, but our faith needs to be expressed in something concrete like our character. What God has given to you, has to come out of you in your character – but if it does not, if you are not doing your part, if you are not making the effort, if you have become useless and unfruitful, Peter says this is because you are blind and have forgotten what God has done for you. You have forgotten the truth of the Gospel, you have forgotten the reality of your salvation, and no one will know you are saved – maybe not even you.

Peter says, since you are fellow believers, since you have been provided everything necessary for godly living, be even more diligent, give even more effort to make **certain**, to confirm God's **calling** and His **choosing** of you. **Now, what's Peter saying here?**

First of all, God knows who belongs to Him, so He needs no confirmation. God knows who He has called and chosen, and He is able to tightly secure their salvation. God knows whose names are written in the Book of Life because He put those names there. God has no questions, He's not confused, and He has no doubts as to whether you and I are saved or not. God is not the issue here – we are. We are told to be sure of our salvation, to be certain of our salvation – especially when we are not growing and living like we are saved. It's a terrible thing to lack assurance in your salvation, to worry about hell, to always be wondering "*am I in or am I out*" and what Peter is urging us to do is to live out our calling, to give evidence in our lives of our salvation, so that we will **never stumble**. Now, that does not mean that we will never have a problem or that we will never sin. We all stub our "spiritual toes" and lose our footing and focus at times, so that's not what Peter is talking about.

When it comes to stumbling, in context, if you recall from last week, believers who have forgotten what Christ has done for them are blind, shortsighted – prone to doubt and getting tripped up. So, instead of knowing they are in the faith, instead of being assured of their salvation and never stumbling due to a lack of confidence

– those who *are not* growing and progressing, those who *make no effort* to do their part to become more like Jesus are left blind and stumbling and guessing and wondering and doubting about their relationship with Christ.

It goes back to the question. **If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?**

A story is told of a seminary professor who taught for 40 years until he retired. Occupying himself in his retirement years, he poured a new concrete driveway to his house. Finished, he went in to rest and to get a glass of iced tea.

Returning later to view his proud achievement, he discovered that the neighborhood kids were putting their handprints all in the wet concrete. The angry professor chased the kids down in a rage and beat the tar out of the ones he could catch.

Hearing the commotion, the professor's wife rushed into the yard, saw her husband thrashing the kids, and began to scold him: "What a shame," she said. "For forty years you had taught love, and forgiveness, self-control and patience. Now look at you." To which he replied: "That was all in the abstract – this is concrete."

Your faith has to be more than just abstract ideas, and philosophies, and “pie in the sky” beliefs. Your faith should be concrete, it should be reflected in your daily life – in your character, in your behavior, and in your walk with Christ. If God has changed your heart, and your relationship with Christ is really a priority, you will know Him better, you will grow, and your faith will become concrete – giving evidence and assurance of your salvation.

Then Peter goes on to tell us why in **verse 11**,

for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

The picture Peter gives us here is that of a returning war hero who is welcomed into the city with great fanfare, and that's how we want to enter heaven. We know, we are laying up treasures in heaven, and as believers, we will be rewarded for how we lived our lives on this side of heaven. Listen to what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**.

¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to get to heaven by the skin of my teeth, so to speak. I want to be abundantly rewarded like a returning war hero.

A pastor and a taxi driver both passed away and they went straight to heaven, and Peter was waiting for them at the pearly gates.

"Come with me," said Peter to the two of them. So, they followed Peter to this grand luxurious place. It had everything you could imagine, from a bowling alley to an Olympic size pool. Peter told the taxi driver "this belonged to you." "Wow, thank you," said the taxi driver.

Then Peter led the pastor to a rugged old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set. "Wait, I think you are a little mixed up," said the pastor.

"Shouldn't I be the one who gets all that luxury? After all I was a pastor, I went to church, and preached God's word."

"Yes, that's true" said Peter, "but during your sermons people slept, when the taxi driver drove – everyone prayed."

So, try to stay awake. Throw me a bone. I'm not asking for much. Okay, let's go to **verses 12-14**.

¹² Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. ¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

This is a passage that really shows Peter's heart, because he knows his time is short, he knows he going to be put to death soon – it had been revealed to him by the Lord, and he needs to say what he needs to say.

Peter uses the phrase “**laying aside of my earthly dwelling**” meaning he is putting off, putting aside his physical body – and when describing his physical body, Peter uses the Greek word *skēnoma* which means *tent*. Peter saw his body as nothing more than a tent. The Apostle Paul gave us the exact same description in **2 Corinthians 5:1-5**, where he said,

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

Both Peter and Paul describe our bodies are nothing more than tents – places of temporary lodging. They are not meant to last, they are easily torn and worn out and broken – and Paul even says they **groan** – and boy, he’s got that right. I would actually say, “*moan and groan*,” but that’s just me. Our physical bodies are only temporary, and there will come a time for all believers to put off these temporary dwellings, to lay our bodies aside, to break down these tents, and to take on new and improved bodies in our real home.

Peter says I know I am laying aside this earthly body very soon, and **how did Peter know that?** Well, we aren’t really told. Maybe Peter had been recently told by the Lord – that could be the case, but if you recall, there was that interaction with Jesus about 40 years earlier, after Jesus had been resurrected, where Peter was given a clue.

Turn to **John 21**, beginning with **verse 18**. After Jesus restored Peter following Peter’s denial of Jesus, Peter is told this:

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” ¹⁹ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”

So, Jesus told this to Peter. He said remember when you were young. When you were young, you just did whatever you wanted. You got to spend time on the

water, doing what you love – fishing. You wore what you wanted, and you went where you wanted, but when you are older – it's not going to be that way. Peter, there will come a time when you won't be free to do what you want, instead someone will take you, stretch out your hands, and lead you where you don't want to go – signifying the kind of death he would experience.

Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified, in fact, tradition tells us that Peter, from what we understand, didn't feel worthy to die in the same way that Jesus died so he asked his executioners to crucify him upside down.

Jesus told Peter here's how you're going to die, and then right after that, Jesus says, ***“Follow Me.”***

Talk about full disclosure. Peter, it was better for you when you were young. You know you had your freedom to go wherever you wanted to go, but for following Me, people are going to crucify you Peter. For following Me, that's how you will die – but still, follow Me.

So, Jesus told Peter you're going to die, and here in **2 Peter**, he's explaining that he knows his time has finally come, **and what does Peter do with the last few moments of his life?** Look at **verse 15**. Peter says,

And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

Peter is not focused on himself, instead he says, while I have a short time left, while I am still with you, I am going to make every effort to remind you how you should live for Christ. I'm going to work so hard at making sure those who are left behind here know how to recall these truths of Scripture and the things that they have to do. I want to make sure that once I am gone, you are still following the Lord, and your salvation is clearly evident in your lives. Peter is following the example set for him long ago by Jesus.

Today is Palm Sunday, and just like Peter, Jesus knew His time was drawing near. As Jesus rode closer and closer to Jerusalem to make His triumphal entry as the King, He also knew He was getting closer and closer to the cross. Like Peter, Jesus knew His death was at hand, and yet His focus was on others.

While making His way to Jerusalem, after everyone passed by the blind beggar Bartimaeus, Jesus stopped and healed him. He regained his sight and followed

Jesus. Continuing on the way to Jerusalem, a hated tax collector named Zacchaeus found a new treasure in Jesus – for Jesus had come to seek and save the lost, even though Jesus could not save Himself. His love for others would not allow it. Later in Jerusalem, just hours before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples, and while they were still together, Jesus – their Lord, their King washed their dirty feet, one by one, like a slave.

Think about this for a moment. The weight of the world rested on Jesus, the cross had to have been an unbearable burden to carry, and yet while facing the cross, Jesus healed a blind man – a man considered cursed by God. He saved a dreaded tax collector – a man considered to be a traitor in their culture, and Jesus gave His disciples an object lesson they would never forget – He did the unthinkable and stooped low to wash the feet of His own disciples. His focus was on others all the while He faced the cross.

Earlier, we talked about how our lives should reflect our salvation. Our lives should give evidence that we are saved. Here's another piece of evidence that Jesus gave. He said in **John 13:34-35**,

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

A story is told about a man who was born with an awful facial deformity. He grew up alone and lonely. When reaching adulthood, he decided to move from his town to begin a new life. On his way he discovered a beautiful mask that fit his face – making him look handsome. At first the mask was uncomfortable and he was afraid that people would find out who he really was, but he continued to wear the mask every day.

In his new hometown, he made many friends and fell in love. But one day a wicked woman from his old home came to his town and discovered this man's true identity. In front of his friends and fiancé, she forced him to remove his mask. When he removed the mask, it revealed a handsome face, for his face had conformed to the mask.

Go ahead and put on Christ. At first it may feel unnatural or uncomfortable, and maybe you may think, "who am I trying to fool?" But every day just keep putting on Christ, put in the effort, don't give up, and every day you will grow to look more like Him.

Source Material:

Holman New Testament Commentary, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude – Max Anders, David Walls
Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible – David Brown, A.R. Fausset, Bobby Jamieson
James, 1, 2 Peter & Jude, The Randall House Bible Commentary – Robert E. Picirilli & Paul V. Harrison
Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Peter – R. E. Picirilli
Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter – Charles R. Swindoll
Exposition Commentary – Warren Wiersbe
The Most Important Lesson I Could Ever Teach – Francis Chan
Constable Notes – Thomas Constable
Faithlife Study Bible - Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Bomar, D.
The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Walvoord & Zuck
Enduring Word – David Guzik