

The Sure Salvation

2 Peter 1:1-11

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This is an uncertain world and time. Many things that people had put deep reliance in and thought would never change have now changed. This is the way of the world. It is fallen and falling. It has failed you and will continue to fail you. But in the Scriptures, we are told of many, absolutely sure things. Peter highlights four of those for our thinking together.

Illustration: what is sure in an unsure world?

During the uncertainties of our time and day, we need to know the sureties that Peter wrote about. We need a deep sense of the reality of the real things.

Peter begins by arguing for the sureness of our salvation.

Our Sufficient Resource (v.1-4)

Peter begins by pointing to our sufficient resources. They are mighty resources available to all of us and to each of us. What are those resources?

¹ Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Through a Genuine Faith (v.1-2)

Peter puts the Christians he is writing to and the apostles on the same footing. They, like him, have received faith and thus an equal standing before God. Because it is by faith, all Christians stand equal before God. For Peter, this means that the apostles have no greater standing before God. We are all equal and full recipients of God's righteousness in Christ.

Why? Because apostles and people have received the grace of righteousness by faith.

I want to keep saying this over and over again to you. If salvation is by grace through faith, then so is transformation. We fight sin with faith. And the faith we receive is the same kind of precious faith that the Apostles and the first generation of the church had (v.1b). The Apostles and disciples and first-generation Christians faced the sin the same way we do with the same resource of *a faith from God*.

The possession of this kind of faith flows from the profusion of God's grace. This is a multiplied grace that yields the kind of peace that trusts and rests in God. Grace is that power of God enabling sinners to glorify God through Jesus Christ without obscuring His holiness.

This shared faith results in the knowledge of Christ. It is not just a faith that knows facts; it is a faith that intimately knows a Person. It is a faith that embraces Christ and trusts Him and believes Him in an obeying way. Notice how important this knowledge of Christ is:

(v.2) - A knowledge in which grace and peace are multiplied.

(v.3) - A knowledge through which God's power gives us all we need.

(v.5-6) - A knowledge that must be cultivated and grown and added to.

(v.8) - A knowledge that has prerequisites to be useful and fruitful.

(v.10-11) - A knowledge whose certainty results in a glorious entrance and sojourn in the Kingdom of God.

The first component of this resource is *a real and genuine knowledge of Jesus Christ by faith*.

From a Divine Provision (v.3)

There is a super abounding of grace and peace to us seeing that the power of God has given us all we need. The full and sufficient provision of God is His power for all of life and godliness. It is an "all we need" kind of provision. So grace is the projection of God's power into our life informing the mind, enabling the will and stirring up the affections to a life of obedience. Thus, we have a salvation that is sure - God will bring about all that He has saved us for.

The objective of this grace from God's power is to give us *all we need* for life and godliness. We don't need substitutes or designated hitters. We have all we need. Though the world offers all sorts of interesting and tantalizing alternatives, none of them are able to bring us God's grace. The therapeutic, psychological and New Age substitutes are like cough syrup labels on bottles of poison. They often are astute observations of the old nature. Those who follow them may often appear to be good, moral people who are concerned for character and virtue (and sometimes not). But they lessen the immediate impact of the guilt. They suppress the ever-present knowledge of God that speaks through conscience and culture. And they are not God's way of imparting the divine power of God for life and godliness into a believer.

Why is this so? Because all of these are *insights about the nature of man*. They are ever increasing knowledge of man. And this text tells us that it is through an ever growing, intimate knowledge of God that God gives us all we need for life and godliness. It is no wonder that in the constant barrage of books on How To that are framed as Christian and filled with the world that we have Christians who are constantly losing the battle with sin. So, they wait impatiently till the next thing comes along.

But the shaping and sustaining power of God is given or conveyed to us by knowing Him. As the Scriptures teach elsewhere, there is a transforming power in beholding Christ. A true and genuine knowledge of Christ that is both intellectual and experiential does change us.

All this comes from a God who is glorious and good. That He is glorious and good is evident in His calling of us, in His summoning us to a kind of salvation that makes people holy. It is evident in His own commitment to be known by those who approach by faith. It is exhibited in a people whose obeying trust makes God look large in their lives - that is to say,

The second component of this resource is the *power of God's grace as all we need for life and godliness*.

By the Great and Precious Promises (v.4)

How do we come to know Christ in such a way that the power of His grace changes us? By faith, by believing in an obeying way His great and precious promises. Through His glory and goodness God has given us these promises, supreme and valuable. These promises are

great in that they magnify God in His goodness and sustain and strengthen saints in their holiness. These promises are valuable because by them Christ is treasured and we are transformed. John Piper writes, "When we are entranced by the *preciousness* of them [the promises] and the *magnificence* of them, the effect is liberation from the lusts, which are, in fact, not precious and not magnificent."¹

What do these promises do? Because we have already escaped the corrupting effect of worldly lusts by believing the promises of God for salvation, we are able to share in the transforming power of God's essential holiness and nature by believing in the promises of God for growth and change.

Some have taught and still teach today that participating in the Divine Nature here is at the level of essence. It is taught that God's promises cause us to share in Divinity. There are strains of this running all through the Charismatic movement. That is not Peter's point at all. The word here is a *koinonia*, a sharing that is joint participation. Paul used this word to describe his partnership in the ministry with Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23) and his relationship to others. Does that mean that Titus and Paul merged into one composite being of some kind? No, of course that is absurd. But Titus and Paul shared the ministry together. So, our sharing in the divine nature is sharing in its righteousness (v.1), grace, peace (v.2), power, glory, and goodness (v.3). It is the kind of sharing that is like sharing the fire. We know that we cannot become the fire without great damage, but we can snuggle up and share in the warmth and flickering beauty of the fire. Therefore, through the promises of God we share in God like sharing the warmth of the fire.

The last component of this resource is the *promises of God by which we share in God and escape the corrupting power of wrong desires*.

Now these are not *resources* (plural) but *resource* (singular). This is one mighty resource as all we need for life and godliness. Faith that knows God and receives the power of His grace by believing promises.

Here it is: Our glorious and good God has given all we need to live godly lives to those whose faith receives the powerful grace of God through believing the promises and embracing Christ in true knowledge.

The final phrase here, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" points us to the truths of Romans 6. There are decisive actions that are a part of the ongoing action of having run away from or fleeing the corrupting influences of worldly desires. That shifts the emphasis then from what God has done to what we must do; from God's provision to our participation.

Our Demanding Responsibility (v.5-7)

There will be progress through spiritual growth.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

In the Diligence Required (v.5a)

Having these great and precious promises that cause us to know Christ in a way that brings transforming grace is not a justification for being passive. In fact, because these things are so, we must apply all diligence and bend in effort of our mind, will and affections to progress in spiritual growth and win over the remnants of sin in our lives.

It is at this point that most Christians begin to fail. Does the way you go about your spiritual growth look like diligent effort?

In the Development Expected (v.5-7)

The command to **supplement** (ESV) or to **supply** (NASB) translates a Greek word from which come the English words "chorus," "choreograph," and "choreography." In ancient Greece the state established a choir but the director, the paid the expenses for training the choir. Then the word came to be used of one who provides for or supports others or supplies something for them in abundance. So, a believer is to "furnish, supply, or support" his life with these virtues or qualities.²

Now it is not my aim to expound on each one of these. But I want to capture them and the truth of them for you. These are not just a list of things to work on nor is there a progression implied. The simple formula is designed to be an aid to memory. The way it is written implies parallel and simultaneous development. These are not steps in spiritual progress, but rather spheres in which we are to make spiritual progress.

Moral excellence (Virtue) - This is the positive moral goodness that is a reflection in our world of God's great goodness. It is more than just values. It is not the refining of human qualities. It is being excellent because we are what God has designed us to be. True moral excellence has a purifying effect on those exposed to it. It is not merely not sinning, but a positive power to be and do good.

Knowledge - A Christian is to be a person who values knowledge applied to life. We are, according to our gifts and abilities, to pursue a knowledge of God in His Word that gives us insight and true knowledge of people and life.

Self-control - No Christian is without self-control. Self-discipline is the union of structures with objectives. We define what God wants us to be and do and then, by grace, create structures for us to achieve them. It is a will submitted to God that is not mastered by anything else.

Perseverance - Just simply endurance. Frankly, we are weak and fragile. We need a strong, internal commitment to enduring perseverance. And every believer who wants to make progress must supply a mega-dose of endurance.

Godliness - The word is more like reverence or piety. Has to do with the way one carries oneself before the face of God. It means to "worship well." Therefore, we must cultivate a lifestyle characterized by the constant recognition that we are in God's presence.

Brotherly kindness - This is a lesson hard to be learned. We must constantly be cultivating a kindness with our brothers and sisters in Christ that is rooted in love for God. This is primarily a kindness in word, but also a kindness in deed.

Love - In the words and deeds of brotherly kindness, we must also be developing a sacrificial and submissive love. While brotherly love may grow because of our likenesses, sacrificial love will overcome our differences.

Beloved, are you actively engaged with real diligence and effort to be aggressive in overcoming sin with radical obedience? Do these qualities more and more characterize the way you live?

And I must ask this: do you even care? That may be a bit shocking, but it is meant to awaken you just as verses 8-9 are meant to awaken you as well.

Our Compelling Reason (v.8-9)

Peter wants us to see how important our resources and our responsibilities are. He underscores it with two compelling arguments.

⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

The Product of Cultivating these Graces (v.8)

If we possess these graces and they continue to increase, then we will reap an abundant harvest. In the soil and from the seed of these virtues grows the harvest of a useful and fruitful knowledge of Christ. Now that means that there are two grave dangers here:

It is possible to be useless and fruitless in our knowledge of God. We all have experienced this. We allow our spiritual progress in these graces to lapse and our intimacy and walk with God falters. How many of you, if you were honest, would say that a great deal of your struggle with sin arises from a knowledge of God that does not change and transform you?

It is possible to so little value knowing God that this is no motivation. In other words, we do not treasure Christ enough to even be concerned that our knowledge of Him does not produce what it ought. That is serious, loved ones. I wonder how much of our losing the battle with sin simply is exposing how little we value Christ and how little we embrace Him in His promises.

But O the joy of making spiritual progress and finding a growing reality in our experience and fellowship with Christ.

The Problem of Ignoring these Graces (v.9)

There is a kind of spiritual shortsightedness that sees only what is near and is oblivious of the mercy that has cleansed sins in the past and the grace coming to us through faith in the promises.

Some of us really know what it means to be near sighted and almost blind. Before my Lasik surgery many years ago, if I dropped my glasses while playing soccer, someone else had to help me find them. The world beyond 10 feet from me was a dizzying blur without my glasses. This near sightedness began after an exposure to poison ivy covered a great deal of my body and left me blind for an hour or so.

A Christian's myopia develops from forgetfulness; that is, you have forgotten what it means to have been purified from sin. The funny thing about the Bible is that faith is consistently tied to the idea of seeing. So when a Christian is nearsighted and blind it is because he has little faith. That lack of faith and spiritual blindness means that we will not believe the promises of God and soon will lose the battle with sin.

So, you must remember in order to see. And your seeing is believing, And seeing and believing the promises of God connects you to the power of God to be all that God's glory and goodness and holiness designed you to be.

Our Motivating Result (v.10-11)

Peter now shows us two great results from fighting sin with the promises of God.

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be

richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Assurance of our Heavenly Calling (v.10)

This is both a precept and a privilege. Here is the second thing we are to be diligent about. We are to be determined in our efforts to cultivate our sanctification and to confirm our salvation.

In the discussion over the doctrines of grace, I am often asked this question: how can you know that God has chosen you? That is a very important question and one the Bible answers. First, it presupposes that you can know. The Bible everywhere affirms that you can be sure of God's choosing and calling. How does one know? By doing these things.

I can know I am chosen by embracing Christ as the all-sufficient provider for my salvation and transformation. I will never stumble when, by faith, I believe God's promises and receive the power of His grace to make spiritual progress through diligent work at growth in these areas. I know it is a paradox: but it is God's way. We know we are chosen when we have been enabled and are continuing to be enabled to believe, trust, and embrace Christ.

The Abundance of our Heavenly Entrance (v.11)

What we do in supplying for our spiritual growth (v.5-7), God also does in abundantly supplying an entrance into His Kingdom. Here is the grand end of it all. It can little better be said than Charles Spurgeon said it:

"Behold the harbor. Some will get into heaven gallantly with glory, while other with difficulty and much ado. A ship may come in with sails rent, anchors lost, cables and mast broken; another with sails up, banners waving, trumpets blowing comes bravely and beautifully in the haven: so do fruitful and active Christians into God's Kingdom."

Reflect and Respond

Do you have an abundant entrance?

- In the person of Jesus
- By the power of God's promises
- Through the progress of spiritual growth

We fight sin by:

- Treasuring Christ
- Trusting the promises
- Cultivating holiness
- Gloriously entering God's Kingdom

May we, as one has said, "sever the root of sin by prizing the promises of God."³

¹ Piper, John, *Future Grace*, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Press) 1995, P. 337.

² Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

³ Piper, *op cit*.