



## Be Reminded and Be Assured

*Series: A Divine Antidote to Heresy – Sermons in 2 Peter*

2 Peter 1:10-15

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**Introduction** As we get into Peter's message to us this morning, I want us to remember what we looked at last week. Peter was stressing the vital necessity of spiritual growth in the people of God. You remember the thrust of his message. Because of the sovereign work of Christ to redeem us, because we have been born again, because we are new creatures in Christ and have been freed from the power and the penalty and dominion of sin and have received a free and a full forgiveness of all of our sin, past, present, and future through faith in Christ's sacrificial and atoning death by which he made peace for us with God the Father, having received the promised Holy Spirit who dwells in us and who seals us to God until the day that Christ returns, and because our minds are being renewed by the Word of God, we must grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We must pursue spiritual growth.

Once we have come to faith in Christ, we are to diligently strive after godly character—for Christ has granted to us by His divine power all that pertains to **"life and godliness."** Peter's desire for us is that we would be effective and fruitful in our knowledge of Christ. He calls us to grow in virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love so that we may become more like Christ and becoming more and more like Christ, we will serve the purpose for which we have been called and redeemed. We will know the joy of fuller and fuller communion with Christ. Others will be impacted by the power of our saved lives and God Himself will be glorified in and through us. Last week we finished by looking at the danger of "spiritual amnesia." Peter gave this strong warning (**2Pe 1:9**) It was a warning meant to shake sluggish believers awake and spur them on to the pursuit of spiritual growth in light of God's grace. But it was also warning to the superficial, the Christians in name only, those who have made some profession of faith in Christ but whose spiritual fruitlessness is really evidence that while he may have outwardly made a profession of faith in Christ, the reality of a inward salvation never took place. So Peter called us to examine ourselves last week and this week we continue in the theme as Peter shows us first that:

**1. Spiritual growth produces blessed assurance and prevents apostasy. (v. 10)** Peter is saying to us, “Brothers and sisters, because of the greatness of salvation, because we have been given everything necessary for life and godliness, because of the promises of God, because we are partakers of the divine nature and because spiritual amnesia leading to spiritual blindness and regression is such a danger, be all the more diligent to make your calling and your election sure. Grow in grace, grow in the image of Christ so that you may make yourself to be sure that you have been called and chosen by God to be His own. The verb “to make” is a middle voice verb and it means to make sure for yourself that you belong to God. Peter’s desire for us is assurance of our salvation, assurance that we are children of God.

Peter says that spiritual growth makes our calling and election sure – that is certain, firm, stable. Now understand what Peter is saying here. He is using the words calling and election synonymously, both of them referring to God’s sovereign choosing out from the sinful mass of all of humanity all of whom deserve death, a people to be His own possession, a people upon whom He has placed His love and chosen to be the recipients of His saving grace before the foundation of the world. By growth in grace, we are made certain that we belong to God and are His chosen people, we are assured that we belong to Christ and have been redeemed by His blood and called by His Spirit to saving faith.

By calling us to make our calling and election sure, Peter is not suggesting that we earn our final salvation, as if God had sort of penciled us into the book of life and once we do enough he will record our names in permanent ink. Peter is saying that God’s calling and election is made known in a Christian’s life by its new-birth produced fruits: the more that faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness and love are made evident in our lives, the more humbly sure of our election we can be. Being sure of our election does not mean becoming, complacent, proud or haughty, as though we were privileged member of a private club. In fact, the faithful Christian’s security and assurance of his election has a directly different effect. It awakens awe, as it reminds us of the greatness of God and His grace; it humbles, for it reminds us that salvation is not the smallest degree one’s own achievement; and it encourages peace as it roots us safely in God’s promises to His chosen people.

We need to see that eternal security, that assurance of salvation is not some mechanical or automatic or impersonal thing. It is absolutely true that God will be faithful to preserve us and make His people to persevere to the end – the promises of God are true. Paul is telling the truth when he writes: **(1Th 5:23-24)** He is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the

Spirit of Truth when he wrote to the Corinthians and telling them that God the Father **will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Co 1:8-9)** And again when he testifies by the Spirit's power that: **(Rom 8:29-30)**

God makes us to persevere by growing us in grace as we partner with Him and He empowers us to become more and more like Christ and in that way deepens our security and assurance of our salvation in Him. Listen to the way that John Piper explains this. He says: **It is true that God will never forsake His own children. But the proof that we are His children is that He works in us the vigilance not to forsake Him. God's not forsaking us is the work He does in us to keep us from forsaking Him.**

This is so important for us to understand. You will hear people throw around the phrase “Once saved, always saved” in a very casual and flippant sort of manner, even defensively. Usually that happens when either they themselves or someone they love may have at one time or another made a profession of faith or prayed a prayer or been baptized and then has given no evidence of salvation at all or conformed for a time and then turned their back on Christ and His church. They say something like: “I know he/she/ I aren't living for the Lord, but I know he/she/I is saved because I remember when he/she/I walked down the aisle, knelt and prayed, got baptized, raised my hand at summer camp, etc.” If it does not lead to a change of life, if it does not lead to a continuing growth in Christ, no matter how embryonic and developing, it is not real saving faith. If the evidence is lacking, so should assurance of salvation. Rather than pretending someone is saved, or making a case that lacks biblical evidence, we should be on our faces crying out to God for His mercy, for His grace that He would grant His great salvation.

It is growth in grace, that continuing pursuit of Christ and knowledge of Him, that growing in our love for Him and for the brethren, that growth in virtue, in godliness, in steadfastness and in self-control that makes us sure of our salvation, that makes us certain that we belong to God. Peter is encouraging this in us because there are so many professing believers who are looking for assurance of salvation in the wrong place and who are deceiving themselves as a result. The assurance of the believer is not that God will save him even if he stops believing and has no discernable faith, but that God will keep him believing—God will sustain you in faith, He will sustain your faith in Christ and trust in His saving work, He will sustain your hope of heaven, firm and stable to the end. He will cause you to persevere and to grow in grace.

But beyond even this, Peter is seeing the ultimate and eternal picture here. Look at how he says this: **if you practice these qualities you will never fall.** Peter is not saying that we will never sin or stumble, that is not his point. He is saying that if we are pursuing spiritual growth, by God's gracious and faithful empowerment, if we are pursuing Christ and the personal knowledge of Him – fellowship and communion with Him, it will guard us from being among the number that may have professed Christ once and then renounced their faith in Him. We will not be among the number that profess Christ with their lips but clearly, convincingly and finally deny Him with their lives. There is a kind of falling away that is irreversible and that is what Peter wants to guard us against. He does not want us to be among the apostates, to be among the false teachers that were plaguing the church or to be drawn away by them. The false teachers were those who in the words of chapter 2 and verse 1 **had brought in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves quick destruction.** While they claimed to be Christ's, by their teaching and immorality, they despised the Lord Jesus Christ and proved their profession to be false.

Apostasy is a chilling and fearful thing. It is to fall away from a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and in so doing to demonstrate that you were never Christ's to begin with and it only happens in the context of the church. It makes me think of the words of **Hebrews 6:4-6** -- When somebody has been enlightened with the revelation of God, when somebody has tasted the heavenly gift, when somebody has seen what the Spirit of God has done, watched the energy and the ministry of the Holy Spirit and been associated with it, tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, when somebody's had all the revelation God can give, if they fall away, if they reject Christ, either with their lips or with their lives there's no way they can ever be restored to repentance and saving faith. Why? Because by their full and final rejection of Christ, they are declaring that Christ's cross is worthless. That was the fate of these apostate false teachers that were afflicting the churches to whom Peter was writing and it was Peter sought to protect his readers from. Now understand the point here, this warning from Hebrews and the promise by Peter of perseverance is not meant to encourage speculation regarding the spiritual condition of other people, but it is meant instead to call us to cling all the more closely to Christ and to examine our own hearts before the Lord.

How can I make my calling and election sure? There are two things that need to be guarded against here. First, we must guard against never examining ourselves at all and the second thing that we need to guard against is over self-examination that leads to morbid introspection and

moody self-absorption that keeps you from doing anything of worth in Kingdom. What is the NT way of being sure? First of all know and trust in the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came not for the righteous, but for sinners, not for the guiltless but for the guilty. See your sins and then let your sins drive you to the Savior and remind yourself that though in yourself you are a hell-deserving sinner, Christ has died for your sins and if you believe in Him and trust Him as Lord, then He has borne the curse of your sins away. Second, according to Peter, is to fill out your faith with likeness to Christ. Add to your faith and grow in the image of Christ. Thomas Brooks says of the genuine assurance of salvation: **Genuine assurance will be a spring of joy and comfort in you. It will make heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet. It will make you frequent, fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. It will strengthen your faith, raise your hope, inflame your love, increase your patience, and brighten your zeal. It will make every mercy sweet, every duty sweet, every ordinance sweet, and every providence sweet. It will rid you of all your sinful fears and cares. It will give you ease under every burden, and make death more desirable than life. It will make you more strong to resist temptation, more victorious over opposition, and more silent in every difficult condition. Genuine assurance will turn...every winter night into a summer's day, every cross into a crown, and every wilderness into a paradise. Genuine assurance will be...a sword to defend you, a staff to support you, a cordial to strengthen you, a medicine to heal you, and a star to lead you.**

It is the assurance of salvation born of the pursuit of holiness that gives the church great power. If you look through the history of the church, you will find that at all time of revival and reformation, when the church has really been alive, nothing is more characteristic of her life than this fact, that her people have this assurance of salvation.

**2. Spiritual growth prepares us for the eternal glories of heaven (v. 11)** Two things are in view here. First, Peter is encouraging them and telling them, as you pursue godliness and the assurance that comes from it, an abundant entrance into heaven would be furnished to them; there would be no doubt about their admission into the kingdom of Christ's glory. The gates of glory would be thrown wide open, and they, adorned with all the bright train of graces, would be admitted there. The Kingdom of Christ, the empire of God's glory which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. But the second thing that is in view here is this. Though salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace and a work of His hand, we live our Christian lives in the light of an eternal reward. It is for that reason that we are told to **lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.** (Matt 6:20) It is for this reason that Paul tells us: **(1Co 3:11-15)** For those who have diligently and faithfully pursued holiness, they will receive great

reward from the Lord. And so it seems that Peter is encouraging the pursuit of holiness and the assurance that attends it so that those to whom he is writing would receive the fullest possible reward. This is not meant to encourage competition as if we are all competing with one another for a finite prize from God. Instead, it should foster in us the desire to encourage and help one another since the storehouses of God's reward are as infinitely deep and plentiful as is His character and grace. Rather than competing with one another, we must heed the admonition of the author of Hebrews: **(Heb 10:24-25)** Peter is concerned to do just that in this letter and he does it knowing that

**3. Reminders of the truth are the fuel of faithfulness. (v. 12-15)** What is Peter's concern here? Why so many verses just to say essentially, "Don't forget what you have been taught?" Because the barrage of the dangerous falsehoods and heresies and lies that are being introduced among them are exceedingly treacherous. The great threat to their souls is that they may be led away from the truth, that they may forget the truth that they had been taught. For that reason, it is Peter's intent to remind them of the twin realities of faith and works, of grace and pursuit of holiness, of monergistic justification and of synergistic sanctification. Such is the forgetfulness of the human heart that one of the prime functions of a pastor must be to keep the basic facts of Christian truth and living always before the minds and hearts of the church and to do it in a plain spoken way. That is why those who teach the bible have a great responsibility before the Lord. The answer to heresy and error is not new and improved teaching; it is not a new spin on a familiar passage or doctrine; it is not a new and novel interpretation of a text of Scripture; it is not Christianized philosophy, the plucking of a phrase from one verse and constructing a theology around it, or even biblically inspired human reasoning. The answer to error and heresy is the correct understanding of the old teaching, of the faith once delivered to the saints. It is faithful proclamation of the Word of God, . the entire counsel of God. Charles Spurgeon said: **We are not merely to preach new truths which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old truths with which they are familiar. The doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of truth things both new and old;-new, that the hearers may learn more than they knew before; old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.** Because of the popularity and attraction of the false teachers and prophets, there will always be the temptation to hold people's attention with something flashy or trendy. Teachers and pastors must be humble enough to see that we are not the creators or shapers of the message of Christ – we are stewards only and our only function is to faithfully proclaim the mysteries of the gospel, to establish the church in the word of truth, the gospel (Col 1:5), the apostle's teaching (Acts 2:42), the testimony of God (1 Cor 2:1), the truth that Jesus said would set us free.

Notice something with me. In verse 13, Peter expresses the knowledge that his life was close to its end and so he is concerned that his life would count for something eternal. Knowing that his time of death was imminent, Peter wanted to ensure that he made the best use of his time that he had remaining. Strikingly he has no new teaching to impart, he finds that the best, most Christ-honoring, most eternally worthwhile thing that he can do is to refresh their memory and remind them of the truth. Peter is not particularly interested in being theologically or methodologically creative. He does not care about being impressive; he cares about being faithful. One of the chief issues in the American church today is that as a result of all of the ear tickling and creative attempts at sounding profound, the story telling and the entertainment we have a whole host of people who are being led astray and who are in spiritual danger because they have a general knowledge of spiritual things but lack any specific understanding of the apostolic faith and doctrines of the Word of God. Over 130 years ago, JC Ryle wrote these words of the church in England and it sounds as if he could be writing them of the church in America today. This is from his book, ***Holiness: There is much in the attitude of professing Christians in this day which fills me with concern and makes me full of fear for the future. There is an amazing ignorance of Scripture among many, and a consequent want of established, solid religion. In no other way can I account for the ease of which people are, like children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. There is an Athenian love of novelty abroad and a morbid distaste for anything old and regular, in the beaten path of our forefathers. Thousands will crowd to hear a new voice and a new doctrine without considering for a moment whether what they hear is truth. There is an incessant craving after any teaching which is sensational and exciting and rousing to the feelings. Inability to distinguish differences in doctrine is spreading far and wide, and as long as the preacher is clever and earnest, hundreds seem to think it must be all right, and call you dreadfully narrow and uncharitable if you hint that he is unsound.'*** He goes on to say: **'The times require at our hands distinct and decided views of Christian views of Christian doctrine. I cannot withhold my conviction that the professing church of the 19th century is as much damaged by laxity and lack of distinctness about matters of doctrine within as it is by skeptics and unbelievers without...For your own soul's sake, dare to make up your mind what you believe. Dare to have positive, distinct views of truth and error. Never, yes never, be afraid to hold decided doctrinal opinions. And let no fear of man, and no morbid dread of being thought party-spirited, narrow or controversial, make you rest contented with a bloodless, boneless, tasteless, colorless, lukewarm, undogmatic Christianity.'**

Beloved, listen, there are a million voices that would draw you away, ministries that have a temporary attraction, that are cutting edge, that are faddish and fashionable and seem to have some great energy to them. But here is the question...what is it about them that moves you? With what are you captivated? What does it anchor you to? What is the attraction? Is it the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ? Is it the truth of God and of His glory? Is it the character and the nature of the Triune God or is it something else?

**Closing questions for reflection:**

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- 1) What are you trusting in for your salvation on the day that you stand before God?**
  
- 2) Are you enjoying the assurance of salvation in Christ alone? Do you know yourself to be called and elect of God? What is the basis for your assurance?**
  
- 3) Are you living in light of eternal reward?**
  
- 4) Is your chief desire to be established in the truth and to be reminded of the truth of God as it is in Jesus Christ?**

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