

2 PETER

REMEMBERING THE PROMISES

Make Your Election Sure **2 Peter 1:10-15**

In 1914, the British explorer, Sir Ernest Shackleton, set out with a crew of 27 sailors to sail to Antarctica. Their goal was to be the first team to trek across Antarctica from sea to sea.

PICTURE 1

Their story has become infamous because of what happened to them. As they neared Antarctica, their ship became trapped in packed ice and was slowly crushed and eventually sank to bottom of the Weddell Sea, just off of the Antarctic Peninsula.

For over one hundred years, Shackleton's ship remained undiscovered until just a few months ago, perhaps you heard or saw this on the news, when a group of explorers and marine archaeologists finally located the ship.

It's an incredibly interesting story of adventure and survival, but what stuck out most to me when I learned about the sunken ship that was found in March, was actually the name of the ship. Sitting at the bottom of the Weddell Sea is Shackleton's ship, ironically named *The Endurance*.

PICTURE 2

This ship, which was meant to carry these 28 men to their destination and ultimately back home, which was meant to endure the frigid temperatures of Antarctica and dangerous icy obstacles, was unable to endure. Rather it succumbed to the harsh environment it found itself in.

If I could borrow Shackleton's story and make an illustration out of it of the Christian life - The longer I'm a Christian, the longer I'm in ministry, the more I've wondered, will my faith endure? Will I finish faithfully? Will I endure the harsh environment of our culture, the ministry, the obstacles of my own sin and selfish heart? Will I finish well?

Or, I have moments when I think, man, I really should be more Christ-like by now. And because I'm not I will have a moment of insecurity, wondering, well, maybe I'm not as Christ-like as I should be because I'm not in Christ *at all*, maybe I'm not even really saved?

Maybe you've wondered the same thing about yourself. Maybe your friend, who once was an example of faithfulness and encouraged you in your faith, recently deconstructed and now no longer professes faith in Christ. Maybe a pastor or ministry leader you once looked up to disqualified himself because of moral failure. Maybe the mounting pressures of a culture that is at odds with a Christian and biblical worldview feels heavier and more pressing as each day goes by. Maybe you too, recognize that on some days you fall way short of Christlikeness.

I mean, life is hard, being a Christian is hard, and you catch yourself wondering, maybe for the first time, is this really worth it? And maybe that scares you, that that thought came into mind.

And so you think, will my faith become "shipwrecked"? Not only was this true of the literal ship, *The Endurance*, but this is actually the language used in the Bible about some who once seemed to have a strong faith but eventually left that faith for the love of this world...

1 Timothy 1:18-20

18 This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, **19** holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith, **20** among whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

So, Paul is saying, Timothy, I am charging you, strongly encouraging you, wage the good warfare, hold faith and a good conscience, because not everyone does! Some shipwreck their faith. They don't make their final destination. Their remains are found at the bottom of the sea.

Further, Jesus, himself, warned at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about false assurance of faith...

Matt. 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' **23** Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Jesus warns that there will be those who profess to be Christians but are actually not in the kingdom of God. They will not stand at the last judgment.

So, we need to ask ourselves, can we guard ourselves from shipwrecked faith? Can we walk in full assurance of our salvation? And if so, how? And further questions come up like God's role in preserving us and our responsibility to endure and so on....?

Well, this is what Peter is addressing in our next passage in 2 Peter...

2 Peter 1:5-11

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. **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. **10** Therefore, brothers be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, 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.

So, last week as we kicked off our series through 2 Peter, Kevin walked us through the opening passage in which Peter tells them, and us, that God has, through his divine power, given everything we need to walk in holiness, therefore we should make every effort to add these qualities to our faith. And he lists them: virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

All of that to say, we can and should see these things in our lives if we are born again, if we are in Christ. So, in the next few verses Peter says, since those things should be evident in our lives, we can, and should, "confirm our calling and election." In other words, we can be sure of our salvation. "Be diligent," he says in verse 10, "make every effort," he says in verse 5, that we are growing in our faith, and in so doing we can be sure that we are truly in the faith.

And he goes on to say, "for if you practice these qualities [the qualities listed in verses 5-7], you will never fall." And the question is why does that matter? And what does he mean by falling? Well go on and look at verse 11 again...

2 Peter 1:11

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.

He says the goal here is that we enter into the eternal kingdom of God. We are all moving that direction, we, by our faith in Jesus, are on a pilgrimage through this land that is not our home, on our way to our true home in the eternal kingdom of God, but we aren't there yet, and so it is going to take some focus, and perseverance, and endurance to see that we make it there. He is warning them and us to be careful that if we are unable or we neglect to confirm our calling and election, we will stumble or fall on our way there so as to not make it.

Now, to understand what is going on here and why Peter is wanting them to hear this we have to understand a very influential worldview at that time. Worldviews matter. What we believe about our world, ourselves, meaning, identity, where history is headed, all of it matters in shaping our hearts, minds, and behaviors. And that was certainly true at this time as well.

What was extremely common at this time was a worldview identified as “Epicurean.” And Epicurean thought at its core was the belief that there is a god, but that god has no interaction in the affairs of man. God has no interest in what is happening in our world or our lives so he does not interfere. In other words, there is no providential deity. We cannot look at this world and explain events by the providence of god, because he is not active in this world.

Well, that thought continued, if there is no providential deity that interacts with man, then there must not be a final judgment. What we do or don’t do doesn’t really matter. Again, god isn’t interested and won’t interfere. And it continued, if there is no final judgment, then there is no afterlife. When we die our bodies just return to dust and that is the end of us. So, ultimately, there is no providential deity, which means there is no final judgment, which means there is no afterlife, therefore, if that is all true - “eat, drink, and be merry.” It was ancient version of YOLO. You only live once, so live it up.

This is what Paul was battling in his defense of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15...

1 Cor. 15:32b

If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Peter will address Jesus’ return more specifically in chapter 3, but here he wants to tell them, there is an afterlife, there is an entrance to strive for, so don’t give up. Don’t begin to feel settled here. Don’t love this world too much. Don’t become nearsighted, he says, so that you lose sight of what is to come further down the road.

We are going to come back and wrestle with the idea of confirming our calling and election, but let’s look at the next few verses real quick...

2 Peter 1:12-15

12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. **13** I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, **14** since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. **15** And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

Peter here, at the end of his life, is writing to these believers to say, I want to make sure you remember this. Don’t forget this life isn’t all that there is. In fact, we don’t see it English but in the original Greek where Peter speaks of his “body” in verse 13 and 14

he is using the word for “tent.” In other words, this temporary dwelling place of my body, I am about to put off this “tent” and enter into the presence of the Lord.

And he is saying, you all are merely dwelling in tents too! Don’t get too comfortable! We are on our way to an eternal kingdom!

And we should just pause here for a second to consider this relationship between Peter and these younger saints to whom he is writing. They needed this reminder from this older, more mature, experienced believer in Peter. And we need this too. Not just from Peter and the other apostles, but from the older, mature, more experienced believers in our church family.

It is not only right, but necessary, for the older generation to speak truth to younger saints. So, older saints, stir them up, encourage them, challenge them!

Those of you who have retired or are nearing retirement, please don’t retire from the Christian faith. Please don’t retire from meaningful involvement in your church family. Because we need you, myself included. I need you to remind me to persevere. I need you to be the example of a man or woman who has clung to Jesus despite life’s trials and difficulties. I need you to remind me how to persevere: to continually look to Jesus, to rest in the gospel, to trust him with his plan for our lives and this world, to keep my eyes on the horizon waiting for his return and striving for my entrance into eternal kingdom, to not put my life out of balance by giving too much attention to my career or material possessions, to not give too little time to my spouse and children. We need you to remind us that jobs come and go, stuff comes and go, but Jesus will always remain. Older Christians, we need you!

And younger Christians. Let’s look to older Christians with respect and humility. Let’s learn from them. Let’s listen to them. Let’s glean as much wisdom as we can from them.

You might feel like, who am I to encourage younger Christians? My walk with Jesus hasn’t been perfect, I’m not perfect, I don’t have much to offer younger generations. I’m no role model. I could never be a mentor. I can’t disciple anyone else, because I’m a lousy disciple myself only here by the grace of God.

If that is you, consider Peter. Peter is a wonderful example. Peter, who was once zealous, boldly declaring his unmatched faith, swinging a sword at a soldier to defend Jesus, to only then deny knowing Jesus at all just a few hours later. Peter knows what it feels like to be a lousy disciple. However, if you remember the story after Jesus resurrection, he restores Peter back to service, extending his grace, and now here is Peter years later who can say to younger Christians, I’ve been there. I know what it is like to care too much about my self. But I also know what it is like to experience the grace of God in my life, I know a little better what it means to follow Jesus through the various seasons of life. I don’t have it all figured out but I can help guide you.

So, older Christians, either in terms of physical age or spiritual maturity, let's commit to stir up one another to remember the ultimate end to which we are headed, an entrance into the eternal kingdom of God.

Now, with all of that said, we still need to grasp what Peter means when he says we need to "confirm our calling and election" and his warning that if we don't we are in danger of "falling."

It is important for us to have a biblical understanding of our salvation which entails, among many things, election, calling, our depravity, and regeneration.

Calling/Election

Though it is hotly debated in Christian circles, we need to grasp that the Bible teaches election. That is the term Peter uses here. It is used in many places throughout Scripture and it refers to those whom God has, by his sovereign grace, elected to salvation.

Again, many places we could look in Scripture, but consider just one passage by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1...

Ephesians 1:3-6

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

When Paul speaks of those who are "chosen" and "predestined" he is speaking of the elect.

And so, Peter in 2 Peter writes to them, confirm your election. In other words, make sure that you are among the elect!

Now, how do we confirm that? How can we know for sure what God has sovereignly planned?

Well, Peter in this chapter is calling on them to examine the fruit of their lives. He says to look at whether they are practicing those qualities in the opening verses and they can confirm whether or not they are saved.

And this is an important truth we find taught over and over in Scripture, that the proof of our repentance, the proof of our salvation, can be seen by the fruit of our lives. Now,

does that mean we are perfect? No, of course not. Does that mean we never struggle with sin and temptation? No, of course not. But it does mean that over the course of my life I will be more and more conformed to the image of Jesus, because that is the inevitable end for those who are in Christ.

The Bible teaches that salvation is a new birth, spiritually speaking. That before salvation we are spiritually dead, hostile to God, unable to seek out God. But by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit our hearts of stone are replaced with hearts of flesh and though we were dead in our sin we are now alive in Christ. And so, if that is true, then there should surely be a change in our lives. I mean, living people act differently than dead people!

R.C. Sproul said that in his ministry when people would come to him and express that they were struggling with assurance he would ask them three questions. He would first ask, "Do you love Jesus perfectly?" Of course, the person would always respond, "No." None of us love Jesus perfectly.

He would then ask them, "Well, do you love Jesus as you ought?" The answer would inevitably, "No," because he deserves to be loved perfectly and so if we answer the first question no, then the second question is no.

But then he would ask, "Well, do you love Jesus *at all*?" And he would clarify, when he says Jesus, he doesn't mean a caricature of Jesus or Jesus as a good moral teacher, but Jesus as presented in the Bible, the eternal Son of God, God in the flesh, who died for your sins, rose again to new life, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. Do you love *him* at all?

And if you can answer "Yes," to that question, then we know based on the Bible's teaching that the Spirit has transformed your heart. Though we might not love Jesus perfectly, having any love at all for him is only possible for the regenerate.

And this is part of the list Peter gives in chapter 1, love being the final virtue, which would include in its truest form, love for God.

And so to confirm our calling and election, it is right to examine ourselves and ask, well, is there evidence of a changed life? Is there evidence that I am growing in the fruit of the Spirit, love for others, and love for the Lord?

However, with that said, I think that basing our assurance merely on self-examination can be tricky. And I say that, because we all fall short of living up to the full measure of what we say we believe. And so, if we put all of our attention simply on our performance, walking in real assurance becomes very difficult.

Though that is true, we are called to examine ourselves to see if we are truly saved, if we truly are bearing fruit in our lives, and yet, the surest foundation for assurance is not just in our performance but in the promises of the gospel.

Here is what the Bible says about the status of those who are elect...

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Philippians 1:6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."

Romans 8:29-30

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Notice the argument there, *all those* who are foreknown by the Father, are predestined. *All those* who are predestined are called. *All those* who are called are justified. And *all those* who are justified are glorified.

Historically, this was referred to as the "golden chain" of salvation. No link in the chain can be broken. None are lost. In other words, all those who are elect will enter into the eternal kingdom of God.

But, what about those warning passages in the Bible that warn us of the possibility of falling away? 2 Peter being one of those examples.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

Those who, in the end, walk away from Christ, were never truly saved in the first place. They might call Jesus Lord, but Jesus does not know them, as he said in Matthew 7.

Those who are saved, in Christ, born again, regenerated (all terms the Bible use to describe those who have eternal life), will not fail to make it to the entrance of the kingdom of God when the time comes. We will run in with joy and gratefulness, but we are called to run. This doesn't relieve us from our call to strive and endure and work out our salvation, but we do so knowing that we will enter into the kingdom. Now, some might be stumbling in their run, falling into the entrance. Have you ever started to lose your balance when running and to keep from falling you do that funny looking run where the top half of your body is on its way down but your legs keep moving? That might be some into the kingdom of God, but they will be on their feet nonetheless. They won't fall as to not make it.

CONCLUSION

To go back to the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton and his ship *The Endurance*, what happened after the ship got stuck in the ice is absolutely amazing. The men set up camp on the ice, eventually decided to try and trek from there, but realized that there was no way they could do it.

So, their plan changed from adventure to simply survival. The crew, led by Shackleton, were able to get the lifeboats and row to a nearby island. Shackleton then, took a boat and rowed 800 miles in the open ocean to get rescue for him and his men. He eventually made it to civilization and every single member of his crew survived. Shackleton became a hero because of it.

Well, we too have a captain that will not lose any of his people. Jesus who has done what we could not do by entering into our world, living a perfect and faithful life, went to the cross to make atonement for our sins. And now because of our faith in his finished work we can be saved, not only today but for all eternity.

John 6:39-40

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. **40** For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone** who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I **will** raise him up on the last day.”

If you've never trusted in Christ, turning from your sin and putting all your hope in him, we implore you to do that. Jesus invites you to come and he welcomes you into his presence for all eternity.

If you have trusted in Christ, it is good and right to examine yourself, to see if there is evidence of fruit, love for Jesus being one of those, but ultimately, rest in the unchanging promises of Scripture, that if you are among the elect, Jesus will preserve you unto the end, and nothing will change that.

CONFESSION

Spend just moment in with heads bowed and eyes closed in a moment of confession, confessing the ways we fail, but also thanking the Lord for his grace that overlooks it all and the assurance we can have that he will never lose us.

PRAYER

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Again, for those who have a saving faith in Christ, know that you are saved not by the strength or purity of your faith, but by the object of your faith: Jesus.

1 Peter 5:10-11

10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

With that in mind, let's stand and continue in worship this morning...

SLIDES/VERSES

Picture 1

Picture 2

1 Timothy 1:18-20

Matthew 7:21-23

2 Peter 1:5-11

2 Peter 1:11

1 Cor. 15:32b

2 Peter 1:12-15

Ephesians 1:3-6

1 Peter 1:3-5
Philippians 1:6
John 10:27-30
Romans 8:29-30
1 John 2:19
John 6:39-40
1 Peter 5:10-11