A DEEPER LOOK

KNOW YOUR SALVATION

2 Peter 1:1–11

Opening Thought:

After a lifetime of ministry in thousands of churches and student Christian organizations, Bill Bright, founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, has estimated that as many as 50 percent of all professing believers in Jesus Christ do not have assurance of their salvation. Though they claim to believe that Christ died for their sins and that He is the only way to heaven, they are not convinced that if they died, they would spend eternity with God.

1) Why do such a large percentage of believers live in fear? What explains this epidemic of insecurity?

Background of the Passage:

The churches of Asia Minor faced a growing problem. Numerous false teachers had infiltrated their group and were teaching dangerous, false doctrines. Apparently, some in the church were embracing these heresies, prompting the apostle to write this stern condemnation of all who would lead God’s people astray.

More than a jeremiad against wolf-like teachers, however, this letter is a warning to the church. In fact, the message of this brief epistle is that the best way to defend against spiritual error is to know the truth.

Consequently, in his opening paragraphs, Peter counseled the flock of God in Asia Minor to take pains to grasp the full implications of their salvation. Specifically, those believers needed to be reminded that their salvation was sustained by God’s power (1:3–4), that it was confirmed by fruitful growth in the faith (1:5–7), and that it would eventually result in honor and abundant reward (1:8–11).

Because false teachers and heretical doctrines continue to flourish, the church at the dawn of a new millennium also needs to hear, understand, and heed the warnings of 2 Peter.

Bible Passage

2 Peter 1:1–11:
Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

a bondservant and apostle (v. 1)—a balance of humility and dignity, so important for those who would serve Christ and His church

To those (v. 1)—The audience for this letter is the same as for 1 Peter.

obtained (v. 1)—probably means “attained by divine will”; in other words, by grace and not human effort

like precious (v. 1)—All Christians, both “high” and “low”, have received the same priceless, saving faith; there are no first- and second-class believers.

faith (v. 1)—the Christian’s power to believe; a gift granted by God

by the righteousness (v. 1) —All Christians share in salvation only because of the righteousness imputed to them by God.

our God and Savior Jesus Christ (v. 1)—a clear statement of Christ’s deity

knowledge (v. 2)—The Christian faith is based on historical, objective, revealed truth.

His divine power (v. 3)— Christ’s power is the source of the believer’s sufficiency and perseverance.

godliness (v. 3)—To be godly is to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God.
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**knowledge of Him (v. 3)**—implies intimate knowledge; not a mere surface awareness of facts but a **sharing of life**

**called us by glory and virtue (v. 3)**—God’s call to salvation requires that sinners understand Christ’s revealed majesty and moral excellence as the only Lord and Savior.

**partakers of the divine nature (v. 4)**—At conversion Christians do not become little gods, but they are regenerated; that is, they become “new creations” by virtue of having been born again into Christ.

**escaped the corruption (v. 4)**—At the time of salvation, believers are freed from the power that the rottenness in the world has over them through their fallen, sinful nature.

**giving all diligence (v. 5)**—In light of all of God’s blessings, the Christian must be totally dedicated and make a maximum effort to live for God.

**add to your faith (v. 5)**—to supply lavishly; believers are to add their full and complete devotion to the marvelous faith and grace given first by God

**virtue (v. 5)**—moral excellence demonstrated outwardly and powerfully in life

**self-control (v. 6)**—literally, “hold oneself in”; to exercise self-restraint and self-discipline

**perseverance (v. 6)**—patient endurance in doing right

**brotherly kindness (v. 7)**—affection for others that is willing to sacrifice

**barren (v. 8)**—inactive, indolent and useless

**unfruitful (v. 8)**—unproductive

**shortsighted, even to blindness (v. 9)**—A professing Christian who is missing the virtues mentioned above is unable to discern his or her true spiritual condition and thus can have no assurance of his or her salvation.

**make your call and election sure (v. 10)**—Though God is “sure” who His elect are and has given them an eternally secure salvation, the Christian might not always have assurance of this salvation, unless he or she pursues the spiritual qualities cited by Peter.

**stumble (v. 10)**—into fear and doubt as a result of an unproductive life

**abundantly into the everlasting kingdom (v. 11)**—A rich entrance into heavenly reward is the hope and reality for every believer who lives a faithful, fruitful life here on earth.
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1) What is significant about Peter’s exhortations to “give all diligence” and to “add to your faith”? What does this teach about human effort in the Christian life? (verses to consider: Philippians 2:12–13; Colossians 1:28–29)

2) List some character traits that we need to work to instill in our own lives.

Consider what Romans 8:31–39 says about the Christian’s eternal security:

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1) What in your life demonstrates that you have become a “partaker of the divine nature”? In other words, what evidence is there that you are “a new creation” in Christ and that “all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17)?

2) Consider your own spiritual knowledge. On a scale of 1–10, with 1 being “spiritual simpleton” and 10 being “Bible scholar,” how would you rate yourself?


Bible Verses to Memorize:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word, which is also at work in you believers.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.
Hebrews 4:12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, *sharper than any two-edged sword*, *piercing until it divides* soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

“Add to your faith”: Supplement it, flesh it out. Being a Christian doesn’t mean believing and then just sitting around. Now that you have faith in God’s part, make every effort—that’s your part. That’s disciplines. That’s regular “holy habits.” That’s pacing yourself for the cross country run to your future. Says Henri Nouwen, “A spiritual life without discipline is impossible.” Tighten your belt. Get tough on yourself. GO FOR IT.

A woman once said to the great Paderewski, “Sir, you are truly a genius.” “Well,” he answered, “before I was a genius, I was a drudge!”

To get there, to win—your life needs discipline, order, and arrangement.

“If one examines the secret behind a championship football team, a magnificent orchestra, or a successful business, the principle ingredient is invariably discipline” (James Dobson, Discipline of the Home).

You will only discover excellence on the other side of hard work.

PRAYER

Father, you know our weaknesses. You know we are prone to be undisciplined in spiritual matters. We need you to come alongside us and help us. We ask you to guide us, and give us perseverance and discipline so that we can grow in our knowledge of you. Let us not be content with less than your best. Show us how much more you want to teach us. May we always hear your voice and obey.