

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Reward of Our Salvation

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:8-11

Code: 1397

Father, again this morning with a sense of holy awe, we come to Your precious truth knowing that we are inadequate to understand it in ourselves and utterly dependent upon Your Spirit. So teach us, Lord, what You'd have us to know from this portion of Your revelation. And may we learn it well so that it changes us to make us more like You would have us to be and we'll thank You in Christ's name, amen.

Turn with me, if you will, to 2 Peter chapter 1...2 Peter chapter 1. We started a couple of weeks ago upon return from our sabbatical just to share with you some things from the heart and in preparing to do that, I was studying 2 Peter chapter 1 and it seemed as though Peter began to frame my thinking. Peter gave me the words that in myself I couldn't say. He pulled it all together for me and so what began really as just sharing out of this chapter has turned into a careful look at the chapter, at least in my own heart. And the Lord has really begun to open it to my understanding and it's been a special joy to share it with you. I never had intended to do a series on the first chapter of 2 Peter, but that's what it's become. And I trust God in His infinite judgment that it is His plan.

And you'll notice that we took as kind of the basic verse that unlocks the chapter the twelfth verse where Peter says, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and are established in the present truth."

In other words, Peter says my ministry is a ministry of reminding you. It is a ministry of remembrance. And we noted that in verse 12 he says, "Remembrance of these things." And that takes us backwards, the "wherefore" takes us back and the "these things" takes us back. And what he wants us to remember are the things listed in the first eleven verses.

And then if you go down to verse 15, he says, "Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." It's as if the "these things" of verse 15 push us into the remainder of the chapter. So you have a "wherefore" and "these things" in verse 12, and you have a "moreover" and "these things" in verse 15 as if the "these things" of verse 12 are the first part of the chapter and the "these things" of verse 15 are the "moreover" or the second part of the chapter.

What I'm saying is that right in the middle Peter says what he's doing and then he does it surrounding in the verses that fill out the chapter. He calls us to remember. I told you that after so many years of discovery at Grace Church that we had laid the foundation and taught the basic principles and I suppose faced a crossroads of two things, either to go on to somewhere else and do that again or to stay and begin a ministry of remembrance. And the Lord in His wonderful providence brought me to this chapter and affirmed in my heart that His commitment is that we stay here and begin the ministry of remembrance, to teach you what you already know and to bring to your mind what you have already had established.

And as I began to think about that, it seems like week has gone by after week and I began to see more and more in the Bible about this whole area of remembering. Jesus said to the Twelve, for example, "Remember the word that I said unto you." Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Remember the words of our Lord Jesus." Peter said to the Jews, "And then remembered I the word of the Lord." And John records that when Jesus was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this. And they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus spoke.

Jude said to his readers, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this..." And then further Jude said, "Remember thee the words which were spoken before by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ." In the third chapter of 2 Peter and the first verse, it says, "This second epistle, beloved, I know write unto you in which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

I think James put it another way. In chapter 1 verse 22 he said, "But be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves, for if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror, he beholds himself, goes his way and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. But whosoever looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

It isn't enough to look and turn away, you'll forget what you saw. But if you look and continue to look and continue to look, you'll remember what you saw. And thus it's important that you be reminded to remember.

You say, "Well, I've got these things so well established, I question whether I need much of a reminder." Well may I offer you a very interesting illustration? Turn in your Bible to 2 Timothy...2 Timothy. Second Timothy may well be the last epistle of the beloved Apostle Paul, his swan song. And he writes it to a young man in whom he has placed a great amount of trust, whom he loves, whom he cherishes, whom he considers his son in the faith, a young man who has had the best of all that life could give in preparation for spiritual effectiveness, a young man whose mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice, were godly, virtuous, righteous women and who thus had instructed him in the Scriptures from the time of his childhood. He then had the amazing occasion of being called by the Apostle Paul himself to be his companion, to travel with him to be disciplined by him, to be

nurtured by him, to be taught by him. And he spent years with him.

And Paul invested all that he had in that young man. He taught Timothy all he could teach him about the revelation of God. He taught him all he could teach him about the effectiveness of ministry. He taught him all he could teach him about power. Paul was able to manifest in the presence of Timothy the signs and wonders and mighty deeds of an Apostle. He saw miracles, he saw ministries that were beyond human description. He saw it all. And not only that, but he felt the touch of God in his own life as he preached and ministered with great power. He had the marvelous occasion to be Paul's understudy and to pastor churches that Paul himself had founded. He was a man who had the best that everyone could get.

And you add to what he received from Paul and what he received from his parents and his grandparents, what he received from God. He had tremendous giftedness. He had capacities that seemed to be unlimited. He could preach. He could teach. He could evangelize. He had it all. And now what would be the sort of the *sunum bonum* of his life, the great reality of effective ministry, and something's gone wrong...something's happened. Has he forgotten? But could he forget? How? When he had so much from a child.

Well, let's look at see. Verse 7, chapter 1, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear." Now wait a minute. Fear? Timothy? What's he afraid of? The word literally means "timidity." God hasn't made us timid. If you're timid, Timothy, you're functioning in the flesh. God didn't do that. God doesn't function that way. God doesn't produce fear, intimidation, timidity. But God produces power, love, a sound mind. God helps you get it together. And if you're falling apart and you're impotent, it isn't God. I sense the implication here is that something has happened. Something has happened. Timothy is faltering. I believe he's at a low ebb. I believe 2 Timothy is an utterly crucial letter to restore a young man who is really faltering in his faith. He has become unproductive. He has become weak. And Paul speaks to the issue.

Verse 8, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Now that's shocking. The implication is that there was a sense of shame. He got tired of being identified with Jesus Christ and taking all the flack and the abuse. And, I mean, he wasn't down at the ground level with the folks, he was up there shooting on the front lines and having to battle the philosophers and the religionists and the God haters. And he got a little tired of it maybe.

And then he became ashamed even of Paul. "Nor of me as prisoner," he says. I mean, when you get to the place in your Christian life where you're ashamed of the Lord, and you're ashamed to be identified with people who love Christ, you're really at a low ebb, wouldn't you say? And he was timid and fearful to speak out.

Now I see thirdly there in verse 8 that he even got to the point where he was unwilling to make the necessary sacrifice to preach the gospel with power. He says, "Be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God who saved us and called us." Timothy, you can't...you can't say well it's tough, so I'm not going to do it. In chapter 2, Paul says in verse 3, "You should endure hardness as a good soldier and you've got to do it to please the commander, not the ones that you're being attacked by." You don't have to please men. You're going to have to give yourself to this.

Imagine, Timothy...timid, powerless, loveless, impotent, ashamed, didn't want to be identified with the world's greatest prisoner, Paul. Unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices, his commitment level was at a low ebb. And Paul says to him, "You know, I suffer these things. I suffer them," verse 12, "but I'm not ashamed. Why should you be?" And verse 3 of chapter 2 literally translates, "Thou therefore suffer hardship along with me as a good soldier," I'm doing it. "Let my life be an example to yours and you can surely be persuaded that He's able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." God will sustain you in it.

And then you know what's really shocking? Apparently Timothy began to vacillate in his doctrine. He was so fearful of what was going on around him that he didn't want to be bold anymore and so he began to kind of change the message to fit the crowd. Verse 13, Paul says, "Hold fast the form of sound words which you heard from me." Don't change the message. Don't accommodate your society. Don't fit the situation. That good thing that was committed unto you, keep it...keep it.

I get the picture that he was even looking away from the ministry. Verse 15, "This thou knowest that all they who are in Asia turned away from me of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." Don't you do it. You feel that almost pathos in Paul's heart. Hey, everybody else has left me, don't you leave me. He says, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain." He wasn't ashamed of me that I was always in prison.

And you know what? I guess maybe he even wasn't very faithful in studying the Word of God. And so in verse 15, Paul says, you better be diligent or study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed. You better get back to the book.

Now this guy's in the ministry. And he's timid and powerless and loveless and ashamed of Christ and Paul and unwilling to make a commitment that means a sacrifice and he's vacillating in his doctrine and he's looking away from the ministry. And he's even beginning to fight over his own faith. And he's failing to pursue the study as he should. And verse 16, he's involved in profane and vain babblings. In other words, he's fooling around with liberals and he's talking to the religionists and the philosophers.

Now I don't know how deeply he was involved in this but these seem to be indications of some real problems. He said, "These people's word eats like a gangrene," verse 17, stay away from that. He was fooling with the Christless false teachers. That's why in verse 21, Paul says, "If a man therefore

purge himself from these, he'll be a vessel unto honor." And who are these? That modifies the gangrenous false prophets. You have to purge yourself from those...those dishonorable men, those erroneous men. And verse 23 he says, "Those foolish and unlearned questions, you should avoid."

And Timothy lost apparently some of his humility. He was becoming defensive. Verse 24, "The servant of the Lord must not fight," is what it means, "but be gentle in meekness." Timothy was becoming defensive and fighting, argumentative. Verse 22, "Flee youthful lusts." Apparently he was being pulled by the power of those youthful lusts.

And I think over in chapter 3 verse 14, Paul says to him, "Look, evil men are going to get worse and persecution is going to get worse, Timothy, don't quit. Hang on to the things you've learned and been assured of. Hold on to all Scripture which is given by inspiration of God." I mean, the guy was beginning to let go of the foundation, the Word of God.

And then in chapter 4, of all things, in verse 1, "I charge you," and this is really strong language, "therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ," now that doesn't sound like just advice, I mean that is laying it on really heavy. "I charge you, preach the Word." Get out of that wrangling about theology and religion and profane and vain babblings. Preach the Word. Be diligent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine because you don't have much time. I mean, the guy was kind of folding it up in the pulpit. In verse 5 he says, you watch everything and you take suffering, and you do the work of an evangelist and you make full proof of your ministry. This is really a powerful letter.

Four times in this letter Paul hints at the idea that Timothy was coming to a place of abandoning him. Verse 8 of chapter 1, he says, "Don't be ashamed of me." Verse 15 of chapter 1, he says, "Everybody else has turned away from me." Chapter 4 verse 10, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." And back in chapter 2 verse 4, "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this world." He says don't you get into what Demas got into. He left me.

Chapter 4 verse 16, "At my first defense, no man stood with me but all men forsook me." I get a pathos in this that Paul is saying to Timothy, "hey, don't do this to me...don't do this to God."

What's the solution to get him back on track? I think it's very simple. Chapter 1 verse 6, in order to go forward you have to go backward. "Wherefore I put thee in...what?...remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee." In other words, Timothy, remember that affirmation of a Spirit-given gift affirmed unto you by the laying on of apostolic hands which was the custom then. Remember that. You have that power and that gift and that affirmation.

And then in 2:14 he calls on Timothy to go back and to even put his people in remembrance. And in chapter 3 verse 14, continue in the things you've already learned and been assured of.

But the capstone is in chapter 2 verse 8. If you never remembered anything but this, it would be enough. Remember, here's the Greek rendering, remember Jesus Christ born of the seed of David, risen from the dead according to my gospel for which I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds, but the Word of God is not bound. He says--Look, when the tough times come and you want to quit and you bail out and you start to fall apart, remember Jesus Christ born of the seed of David...born of the seed of David is His humanity, risen from the dead is His deity.

In other words, remember Jesus in His sympathy as a man, in His power as God, is all available to you. And go and preach, the Word is not bound.

Now what am I saying? I'm saying simply this, that the best of us can forget...the best of us can forget. Back to 2 Peter chapter 1. And I want you to watch carefully what I'm going to say this morning, believing that this is what the Spirit of God has put in this passage and knowing how important it is, there's a sense of urgency in my heart as I speak.

Now we understand why Peter says remember, because if you forget, all kinds of disastrous things happen...as they did to Timothy.

What are we to remember? Well, verse 12 says to put you in remembrance of these things. What things? Well, we said that the "wherefore" takes us back into the first eleven verses. The first thing we're to remember is the reality of our salvation...the reality of our salvation, verses 1 and 2. That we have obtained or been given by divine allotment a like precious faith, through the righteousness in God and our Savior Jesus Christ, that we have had grace and peace multiplied unto us through a deep knowledge, a genuine knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.

In other words, don't forget your salvation. Remember your salvation. Remember that it came from God, that you have a faith of equal value that gave you an equal standing, that multiplies unto you grace and peace. Remember the reality and the greatness of your salvation. Don't ever forget.

I think that's why the Lord gave us this table so that we would remember and remember and remember and remember whose children we are and what God has done for us. I think it's so wonderful and we sing the hymns about our salvation and we hear messages again and again about it so that we would never ever forget to whom we belong and never forget the extent to which God went to redeem us and the magnanimous nature of His love in expression at Calvary.

Secondly, we are not only to remember the reality of our salvation, we are to remember the riches of our salvation. Not just that we were saved, but what it means to be saved. And verses 3 and 4, that it has been given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, that we have received great and precious promises exceedingly great and precious promises, that we have been made partakers of

the divine nature. We have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We talked about that, didn't we? Incredible dimension of riches that are ours in Christ. And we said that the word "glory" and the word "life" refer to the internal. The word "godliness," the word "virtue," the external. We have all things that pertain to spiritual life to transform us on the inside and to manifest that transformation on the outside. We have it all. All in Christ. All spiritual blessings complete in Him, able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the power that works in us. If you go around with a sense of impotence, you've forgotten the riches of your salvation. You can confront any situation in the power of God.

Thirdly, and we looked at this in detail last time, the responsibility of our salvation. That's so easy to forget. We say, "O, the Lord has done it all for me." And then you just kind of sit back and do nothing. But that's what comes baring into our hearts in verse 5. "Because of this, give all diligence and add to your faith." God has done it all and yet we have all we can do to add to it.

What an amazing and mysterious paradox. And we are to add virtue. What does that mean? Excellence and excellence as far as the excellence of a man is concerned is to be like Christ, the perfect man. And to excellence we add knowledge, and that means practical wisdom, a living goodness. And to knowledge we add self-control which is breaking the will to sin. And to that we add patience which is persevering courage that never gives up. It's like Ephesians 6, having done all to stand. And we add to patience godliness, eusebeia, reverence, awe, a sense of the awareness of God's presence. And to that we add brotherly kindness which is deep compassionate friendship, caring for one another. And to that we add love which is self-sacrificing, humble service.

In other words, we are to add these things, have you forgotten? Have you thought that all you have to do is go to church? All you have to do is just hold your Bible once in a while on Sunday? Throw it on a shelf the rest of the week? Make little or no investment and you're all right forever? Then you've forgotten the responsibility of your salvation.

Fourthly, Peter says I don't want you to forget the result and the reward of your salvation...the reward of your salvation. What is it that God wants to reward you with in your life? What is it God wants to produce? Verse 8, this is so good, "For if these things," there's that same phrase, "these things" again as over in verse 12, "if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the deep knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now listen to what he's saying. When in your life all of these things previous elements are true, faith and virtue and knowledge and self-control and patience and godliness and brotherly love and love, when all of these things are manifest, what happens? You are neither barren nor unfruitful. Therefore the reward of your salvation to which he speaks is your fruitfulness. God wants to produce in you fruitfulness. But He can't do it unless you follow the pattern in the previous verses.

Now look at the word in verse 8 "abound." If these things be in you and abound. Fascinating word. It literally means to grow and to increase...to grow and to increase. There's an interesting translation in the intransitive use of this verb which gives it the meaning "to have more than is necessary." And I think that's a most interesting use. To have more than is necessary. In other words, there ought to be enough fruit in your life to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt to whom you belong. God is not interested in marginal manifestation.

Now you look at some Christians and you say, "Well, I just...every once in a while I see a shriveled grape, but I can't be sure. I mean, there seems to be some productivity...and then there's not..." God isn't in that marginal stuff. The manifestation of fruitfulness in a believer's life should be that which is more than is necessary to prove the point.

The reason some people have so hard a time figuring out what Christianity's all about is because there are Christians who manifest no fruit. They make the claim but there's nothing there to support it and that's very confusing. But the transitive sense of the verb means to bring forth in abundance, to bring forth in great increase or to become rich.

See, if you are in your life rich in faith, rich in virtue, rich in knowledge, rich in self-control and patience and godliness and brotherly kindness and love, if there is more than is necessary of this, then there will be in your life the product of fruitfulness. Where these things are in abundance and where they increase, they evidence a true epignosis for you're not barren and you're not unfruitful.

Now listen, these two words are very potent and I want you to watch them carefully. First of all, the word "barren." Most fascinating. I decided to trace that word through the New Testament this week and find out what I could about it. And I found something very interesting. The word is argos. It means "useless or unproductive." It is used in the New Testament eight times...eight times. Sometimes it is used in a secular sense in the New Testament and there it means to be unemployed. It's translated very often by the word "idle." And a person who is employed is not idle, it is used to speak of an unemployed individual who is absolutely no good to society. In fact, in Titus 1:12 it talks about people with idle bellies, lazy, gluttonous idle bellies. In other words, who just sit around and do nothing. So in a secular sense it means unemployed. But in a spiritual sense it means producing no good for God. Spiritually useless.

Now that's interesting. Just how useless can a Christian be because it's talking about a Christian? Somebody who is in the epignosis of our Lord Jesus Christ, somebody who knows Christ. But has become barren and unfruitful. Now by the way, not if you're a true Christian you will bear fruit, but listen to this, some Christians don't always bear fruit. There are times in their lives when they're barren. First Corinthians 3, Paul says to the Corinthians, "I can't write unto you as unto spiritual but as unto fleshly." There are times when a believer gets to the point that Timothy was fast getting to where

they forget that they are to add, they are forgetting their responsibility. And they become barren.

And just how barren? And just how unfruitful? Most interesting. Look at James chapter 2. I'll show you an interesting comparison. And he's talking here about people who claim to believe but give no evidence. What, but wilt thou know, verse 20, listen, "O vain man," James 2:20, "O empty man, O godless man, O Christless man, O unredeemed man, hell-bound man, empty man, that faith without works is...what?...dead?" The word dead is not the normal New Testament word for dead, it is the word *argos*, unproductive, useless, idle, or barren.

May I submit this to you? The same word used to speak of the deadness of an unbeliever is used to speak of the barrenness of a Christian. Amazing, isn't it? But an unproductive Christian is of no more use to God than an unbeliever. Did you get that? That is why in Matthew 18, the Lord says if a believer is sinning, go to him. If he doesn't repent, take two or three witnesses. If he doesn't repent, tell it to the church. If he doesn't repent, treat him like a heathen man. First Corinthians 5 says if a brother continues to live in immorality, put him out of the church and turn him over to Satan. Literally, give him back to that kingdom.

Now he doesn't lose his salvation. But he is utterly indistinguishable from a believer. And he is of no more value than an unbeliever to God. He is unproductive, barren. And you want to know something? That really helps me solve a lot of problems. People say to me, "You know, I've got a friend and they used to come to church and they received Christ and they came to the Bible study for a while, and now they never come. And they don't seem interested. And I can't figure out whether they're a Christian or not." You know, I have the same problem. I have a fellow who used to come to Grace Church and teach in the children's department, never darkened this door and hasn't for three or four years. I've had people say to me, "Well, is he or isn't he?" And you know what? I haven't got the faintest idea because he is utterly indistinguishable from an unbeliever. He is *argos*, dead, barren.

Look at the second word in verse 8, unfruitful. It is a word that means the same thing only instead of being used of employs and employees, it is used of trees in the New Testament, it's used seven times. And in a spiritual sense it means the same thing, no fruit, no results. It's the word *akarpos*. But I traced this word around just to find out how it was used and it's used in Jude 12 to speak of an unregenerate apostate, one who denies the faith, who curses Christ. And it says he is *akarpos*, an apostate is. And then in Ephesians 5:11 it speaks of the works of Satan as the unfruitful works of darkness. And in Matthew 13 and in Mark 4 it is used of the superficial believer who receives the word for a little while but it's choked out. And then in Titus 3:14 and here in 2 Peter 1, it's used of a believer.

It's amazing, but a believer can be just as barren and just as fruitless as an unbeliever. And therefore completely indistinguishable from an apostate, an evil doer, a superficial false Christian and of absolutely no more use to God. That's why, beloved, 1 Corinthians 11 says some of you are weak

and sickly and some of you...what?...sleep. The Lord just took them out. First John 5 says the Lord just removes...some Christians He gets them out of the way. I have to say that when a Christian is indistinguishable from a non-believer, in a sense that's worse than being a non-believer because it's so confusing to people when you claim to be a Christian and your life is utterly barren.

You say, "Well, how can you be fruitful?" You be fruitful very simply, verse 8, "If these things be...where?...in you." When you remember the responsibility of your salvation, you will come into the result of it which is the fruitfulness. And if you don't see the fruit, you want to know something? Nobody can tell whether you're a Christian. And listen to this, not even you can tell. And we'll see more about that in a few moments.

Now it doesn't start this way in a Christian life. I believe if you're a true Christian there's going to be a product, there's going to be fruit. But we...by our sin can enter into times of barrenness when it becomes impossible to tell. In Matthew 7, Jesus said by their fruit you shall know them. If they're barren, how you going to know? And many are self- deceived. They're going to come and say, "Lord, Lord, we did this...we did this..." And He's going to say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you are barren."

You say, "Well, then we're to bear fruit." That's right. Herein is My Father glorified, John 15, in that you bear much fruit. Paul said to the Colossians that you be filled with the fruits of righteousness. In other words, if you add to your faith virtue and you add to your virtue knowledge and to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control patience, and you go through all of those things, you know what's going to happen? God's going to be producing in your life and the fruit's going to be there. Remember to be fruitful.

You know, this church has always been dedicated to a productive fruitful people. When we first came here 12 years ago, it was my own conviction that if we would give ourselves to the perfecting of the saints, the saints would do the work of the ministry, that if we'd feed them the Word, they'd grow and they'd build up and they'd begin to do the ministry. And now God has blessed us with ministries all over the place and I never started any of them, I just keep doing what I've been doing all the time. Because I believe God will raise up a fruitful productive people and produce fruit through their lives when they obey. And we've seen that.

But there's a fear in my heart that as our church grows people get stuck on the outside and their lives are barren and fruitless and they have sort of a just a bottom-line, well, they were saved at one time, but they've drifted into some kind of terrible fleshly patterns. And they will be a dishonor to Christ and a confusion to His church and they will be utterly useless. I guess that's one of the reasons we've begun after about two years of prayer and work to open up our Flocks ministry, because we are accountable to God. Hebrews 13 says that we have to give an account to God for the souls that are given to us. And that is a fearful responsibility. And so we have found that we don't even know who

they all are, they're so many of you here. And so we're beginning now to kind of put you together in your neighborhood and find out where you live and have an identification for you and a little flock in your community and a shepherd who will know where you are and what your needs are and care for you. And that's what the Flocks are all about. And 20 of them begun this week because we want you to be a fruitful productive people. We're not content that you're here, just here. Some of you need to be serving and praying and giving and working.

One pastor introduced me this summer, I got to preach in this church, and he said, "This man pastors a church where they're not just talking, they're doing." And you know, I always kind of cringe at those kind of introductions and I say, "Lord, I hope so," cause I always feel like I'm not doing what I ought to be doing, not praying like I ought to be praying, not giving like I ought to be giving, not serving like I ought to be serving, not studying like I ought to be...I never ever get the sense of "Well, I've finally arrived, I'm doing it." Have you ever had that? If you do, leave because you just make it hard on the rest of us poor sinners. You're too intimidating.

You see, I hope we're doing it. All these great visions lay at our feet, all the ministries that people have built up in this church and I just pray to God so often, I hope our people, I pray our people are still committed to being fruitful. What is fruit? Hebrews says the fruit of your lips is praise. Philippians 4 says the fruit of your heart is giving money to the support of the ministry, in Paul's case. Paul says that I want some fruit among you as in other places, to the Romans, which was souls. He called in one place of the first fruit of Achaia. It's winning people to Christ. It's investing in His Kingdom. It's praying. It's praising. It's every righteous act. And behind the act is the attitude, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. And you begin with the fruit of the Spirit and then the act. The attitude and then the act, if you have the act without the attitude it's legalism. I pray God we're a sacrificial productive fruitful people.

And it doesn't come by just standing around grunting and groaning. And it doesn't come by signing on a dotted line to get involved in a ministry. It comes when these virtues are manifest in your life and then God produces the fruit. Remember the reality of your salvation, the riches of your salvation, the responsibility of it and the result.

And that will bring you to the rest of your salvation, and I'm going to close with this point...the rest of your salvation. Oh, this is such a great word. I hope you catch this. My heart is really concerned about this point, I have a letter I'm going to read you in a minute. And that just really broke my heart because it illustrates this very passage, get it good.

Listen, Peter says this, when there's no fruit because you're not taking up your responsibility, because you've probably forgotten your riches and because you're not thankful for the reality of your salvation, you will forfeit the rest. In other words, you will forfeit the confidence, the security. When there's no fruit in your life and you are barren and fruitless, no one will know you're saved, not even you.

Many people have doubts about their salvation. From the time I was a little child I had times when I doubted it. I must have asked the Lord into my heart a hundred and fifty times. Every time I did something wrong, I'd wonder if He's still there. It was always connected to something I did. One of my children came to me recently and said, "How do I know Jesus stays in my heart?" And I knew that they were reflecting upon something they did that was wrong and they knew they had violated the standard as they understood it from the teaching they had received and wondered whether the Lord would stay. Yes, He'll stay, but the question is you will lose the sense of that confidence. Why? Because confidence and security is a gift of God given to the obedient.

One person in our church, upon my return, expressed severe doubts about the reality of their salvation. I was shocked. Why? Have you ever had that problem? Have you ever wondered whether you're really saved? Have you ever struggled with that? Have you ever been fearful that you might die and you'd miss heaven? Why? Look at verse 9, it will explain why. "He that lacketh these things," what things, there's that these things again. All those virtues and all that fruit. And if it isn't there, he that lacks these things is blind. He is blind.

Now that is the main verb in verse 9. He is blind. The fruit isn't there and he is blind. What is he blind to? He has forgotten, there's that concept again, forgotten...now here's the way the Greek phrase reads...the cleansing of his sins in past times. In other words, he's forgotten that he's been saved. In other words, he's filled with doubt. When he looks at his life and he sees barrenness and fruitlessness, he doesn't know if he's a Christian. And he enters into fear and doubt and anxiety.

A wonderful young man came up to me in the service this morning, after I preached this message, and he said to me, "John," he said, "that message, oh," he said, "that message was my life." He said, "I got into such sin as a Christian that I forgot that I was saved and the anxiety and the fear of hell was so severe in my life that I wound up in a mental institution, I was insane because of that anxiety." And he said, "Only now in my life when I have begun to put into practice the commitment to be obedient to God's Word no matter what the cost, do I have the rest and the confidence that I know Christ." And he told me of an incident where he was told not to speak for his faith and I remembered what you said about Daniel, he said, who always spoke no matter what the consequence, and I spoke. And I saw God at work in my life and I know now that I'm saved. And as long as I'm faithful, I have that confidence.

What a testimony. But if you're not and the fruit isn't there, and the principles aren't there, then you will be blind. And you will not remember that you have been cleansed, *katharos*, a cleansing from your past sins. And what kind of blindness is it? There is a modifying participle in verse 9, is blind, and here's the participle, and the kind of blindness that cannot see a far off. He's nearsighted, spiritual myopia. And by the way, the verb participle here is the word from which we get our word myopia, nearsightedness. You know what the myopia means? I looked it up in the dictionary cause I

really wasn't too familiar with the thought until I began to chase it around, but I looked in the dictionary and it says that myopia is due to focusing parallel rays immediately in front of the retina. In other words, nearsighted people focus right here and those rays cross and the further out they go the worse it gets. You can't get the distance in focus. And so people who are nearsighted focus right here. And that's what he is talking about spiritually.

You know what happens to a person who has no fruit and who has no virtue and knowledge and self-control and so forth added to his faith? He goes blind because his perspective is right here. He never gets past this point. He's looking at the earth and the earthy things and the baubles and the bangles and the beads of society, the passing fads and fancies and fashions of time, he is caught up in the stuff of the world and his view never gets past here. And by the time he tries to look into eternity, the whole thing is so out of focus he can't perceive anything. He has spiritual myopia.

And that's what he's talking about. The believer is blind. And it has to be a believer here, one who has a deep knowledge, epignosis of the Lord Jesus Christ. But a believer literally cannot see into eternity. He loses the eternal perspective, focuses on the earth. Some people spend all their time puddling around with money and material things and cars and clothes and houses and fashions and all that, that's all they ever think about, the passing fads. And you know what happens? When they look up to try to see eternity, it is utterly out of focus, they cannot perceive it. There's no fruit there and they've lost their ability to see and there goes their confidence and there goes their security and there goes their rest. And in its place comes doubt and fear.

And by the way, the same terms of such blindness are used in 2 Corinthians 4 verses 3 and 4 to speak of an unbeliever. You know what? A Christian who is barren is just as blind as an unbeliever to the realities of God.

What a statement. You ignore the eternal perspective and you just stare in here long enough and you'll look up some day and be so out of focus you won't be able to see it. Beloved, be fruitful. Don't be barren. Add to your faith. Don't be blind.

Verse 10, Peter calls us to remember. "Wherefore, the rather," in other words, instead of this blindness, instead of having forgotten that you've been cleansed in past time from your sin, "brethren, give diligence," there's that same phrase that was over in verse 5 and he's taking you right back, "give diligence to add to your faith." Why? "Therefore making your calling and election sure, or firm or certain, a word used of deep roots. What do you mean make your calling and election sure? Not to God, He's very sure about who's elected, isn't He? He wrote their names in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world. God is not the issue here. You are. And, brethren, if you give diligence to adding these things to your life, then your calling and election will be sure and certain and if you will do...there's that phrase again...these things that are listed there, you will never fall. Not fall from your salvation, but fall from your confidence...fall into doubt.

Be diligent, brethren, make your calling and election firm. I tell you, nothing is worse than to fear hell, to fear you're not saved.

You know, I really enjoy life. I shared this with some people this summer, I enjoy...I love my wife, I love my kids. I mean, I just love...I love life, I love my car, my house. I mean, I get...I don't even...smog, you can't convince me smog is bad. I mean, I just...I enjoy life. I enjoy every day. I enjoy the things, I enjoy my friends, I love the church, I love the men and women that are a part of this fellowship. I'm a happy person. I'm...I love life. And sometimes I think I've got more than my share...I know I have more than my share. And I can enjoy life and I can enjoy everything and I...I will enjoy it, but if for a moment I was in doubt about my eternity, I would never enjoy one day of life. Cause I'd live in fear. But I don't worry about that. I know...I have confidence, I am sure about my forever and that frees me to enjoy every day as a gift from God.

On the other hand, if you don't know you're saved because you're blind, because you have not added to your faith but you've sinned and in your sin and disobedience you have forgotten that you've been redeemed and then you're going to live in fear.

Let me read you this letter. I received this two days ago, after I prepared this message.

"Dear John, I've been attending grace for several years and as a result of a growing conviction in my heart, the result of your diligent preaching and seeming to be powerless against the temptations which arise in my heart and constantly succumbing to them, and talks with pastors and godly men about my growing doubts, I have been led to believe I am not saved.

"How sad it is, John, for me to not be able to enter in because of the sin which clings to me and from which I long to be free. How bizarre for me who teach in ACTS, a trainer in evangelism, a seminarian at Talbot, a discipler. John, so many times I have determined in my heart to repent, to shake loose my want to sin, to forsake all for Jesus, only to find myself doing the sin I do not want to do and not doing the thing I want to do.

"After my fiance and I broke up, I memorized Ephesians as part of an all out effort against sin, only to find myself weaker and more painfully aware of my sinfulness, more prone to sin than ever before, grabbing cheap thrills to push back the pain of lost love. Mostly in the heart, John, but that's where it counts and that's where you live. I sin because I'm a sinner.

"I'm like a soldier without my armor, running across a battlefield getting shot up by the fiery darts of sin. I couldn't leave the church if I wanted to, I love the people, I'm enthralled by the gospel of the beautiful Messiah. I'm a pile of manure on the white marble floor of Christ, a mongrel dog that snuck in the back door of the King's banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor. And by being close to Christians

who are rich in the blessings of Christ, I get some of the overflow.

"I ask you to pray for me." He signed his name.

Well, that's a heartbreaking letter. I followed it up. I talked to folks who know him. He was contacted. Everyone who knows him says he's a Christian. They have confidence in that. But he doesn't know that. And the reason he doesn't know that is because he's barren, busy but barren. And there's no confidence and there's no rest in barrenness. He has fallen from his confidence.

"Rather, brethren," back to verse 10, "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." How? "If you do these things." So pragmatic, isn't it? And the result in verse 11, your rest will not only be now but forever, "An entrance will be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Now watch this, even a barren Christian or a Christian who goes through times of fruitlessness is going to enter into the kingdom. But what is the key word here is the word "abundantly." In other words, when you are fruitful, your entrance will be abundantly into the Kingdom. Oh, that's a great thought. The Greek text puts it in the right order. For so richly will be supplied to you the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now all Christians are going to enter the Kingdom. But some of us are going to enter and all our works will be burned up, right? And we'll be saved so as by fire, just slide in. And some will go in with rich rewards cause our works have been gold, silver and precious stone.

Wouldn't you want to enter the Kingdom with the fullness? Wouldn't you want to enter the Kingdom with the richness? Here was a young man, the letter I read, who got involved in sin. His sin became more severe. His life dried up. There was no righteousness manifest. There was no fruit. And he's lost his security. And he lives in fear and anxiety.

That's not what God intended. He intended us to know the rest of salvation and the tremendous confidence that in the future we can enter the Kingdom in an abundance. And so Peter calls us to remember. And no wonder when there's so much to remember.

Have you forgotten your salvation? Are you thankful? Have you forgotten the riches of it? What is yours? How about the responsibility? Are you fulfilling it? What about the result? Fruit? And do you have that rest? That confidence that comes to the obedient believer? Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the present truth.

Father, thank You for our time this morning. And we are deeply grateful for how You've spoken to us. We acknowledge that we fall far short of the standard and yet we know that in obedience to the Spirit of God we can fulfill all the good pleasure of Your will. It is that mystery that we'll not understand how we as sinful human beings can be required to do something we can't do and be held responsible if we don't. Lord, we know the answer is only in Your power and so, Lord, with the deepest commitment of our hearts, we will endeavor to do all we can do in Your strength, that we may never forget the reality of our salvation, its riches, responsibility, result and then its rest. Put us in remembrance that we may never forget. And may we know what James said, that if we just hear we will forget, but if we do, we will remember. May we be doers of this Word, for Christ's sake, amen.

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