

November 16, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Are You Sure That You Are Saved?

2 Peter 1:10-11

1. Make Certain Your Salvation (verse 10a).

2. Make Certain Your Hope (verses 10b-11).

One of the most terrifying passages in all the Bible comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. As recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, Jesus lays out for the multitudes a hard road to salvation. To enter God's kingdom, you need a perfect righteousness. Not only in deed, but also in thought (Matt. 5). Jesus also described what true righteousness looked like. It doesn't consist of public displays of religion, rather it consists of inward trust in God (Matt. 6). Near the end, Jesus says, ...

Matthew 7:13-14

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction; and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Jesus puts forth two paths for people to follow. The one is described as narrow and small and hard. The other is wide and broad and easy. The broad and easy way leads to destruction, but the narrow and hard way leads to life. What makes this passage so terrifying is that there are many who are on the broad road leading to destruction, who think that they are on the narrow road leading to life. And they never know that they were on the wrong road, until it's too late.

Jesus said, ...

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

Imagine the scene with me. These people have been religious all their lives. They have experienced the mighty hand of God up close and personal through miracles and wondrous things. It seems as if they were leaders in the church, prophesying and conducting healing meetings in the name of Jesus. They have prophesied in the name of Jesus. They have cast demons out of people in the name of Jesus. They have performed "many miracles" in the name of Jesus. These people thought that they were on the road to eternal life. And then, upon coming to the kingdom, they seek to enter, but are turned away. And when turned away, they aren't happy. They say, "Jesus, Jesus, look at all of the wonderful things that we did in your name!" And Jesus will say to them, "depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

When Jesus speaks about the broad and narrow gate, He isn't speaking about Christianity being the narrow gate and the world's religions being the broad gate. Rather, Jesus speaks about the narrow gate being within the realm of professing Christendom--those professing their allegiance to Jesus. To be sure, there are many in this world who are lost in their sins. But, Jesus says that there are many people who profess the name of Jesus who will arrive at the gates of heaven with His name on their lips, only to be turned away, because, in reality, they were walking on the wrong path. And I believe that this is one of the scariest texts in all of the Bible.

This passage is precious to me, because it is the very text that God used to inspire within me a holy zeal and passion for His name. See, I grew up in a church where everyone was assumed to be a Christian. If you came to church, and if you professed to believe in Jesus, you were in and had a good future to look forward to. But when I heard Matthew 7 expounded for the first time in my life, I was shocked. And I said to myself, "I don't want this to happen to me." It's one of the main reasons that I went to seminary. I wanted to make sure that I was on the right path. And so, I went to a place that taught the Bible straight up. Through my time there, I grew greatly in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). I'm thankful to the Lord what I learned. I'm thankful to the Lord that I know that I'm on the narrow path that leads to life.

My question to you this morning is the title to my message, "Are You Sure That You Are Saved?"

Perhaps the most influential reality in my life was when I realized that not all who call themselves Christians will be with Christ for eternity. When I understood that there are many professing Christians, who are not genuine believers at all, all of a sudden, my life and my experiences made total sense. I finally understood why there were people in the church who gave praise to God with their lips on Sunday morning, but lived for themselves the rest of the week. It's because their heart was far from God. Jesus said, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me" (Matthew 15:8). It's the sad reality of many today. There will be a terrifying day for many, who will suddenly realize that they have never been converted, only to realize that it's too late. And so, I ask you, "Are You Sure That You Are Saved?"

Let's get to our text.

2 Peter 1:10-11

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Peter's burden in these words is that we would know for sure that we are saved. I trust that you can see it in verse 10, "Brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you." Peter is calling us to a diligent pursuit of our assurance that we are saved. Peter is calling us to know for sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God has saved us from our sins.

Now, as we start looking at these words, we need to realize that they are really the conclusion of Peter's thought, which he began at the beginning of this letter. You can see that by how verse 10 begins. It begins with the word, "Therefore." This is a word of logical deduction. It summarizes a thought and makes the appropriate conclusion, based upon what preceded it. So, before we dig into these verses this morning, it would serve us well to spend a few moments review of the last two weeks, as my message this morning is dependent upon what has gone before.

In verses 1-4, Peter laid out for us the great salvation that has been given to us. The key thought is found in verse 3, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." Everything in these verses revolve around how God has given to us everything that we need to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. Verse 1 speaks of how God has given to us a faith in Christ Jesus. A faith in the righteousness of Christ as our hope before God, not our righteousness. Verse 2 speaks of how God has given us grace and peace. His grace and peace are sufficient for us to walk rightly through the trials that God brings our way. Verse 4 speaks of how God has given us promises. He has fulfilled his promises to us in Christ. He has given us promises to keep us until the end.

I entitled this section, "Ready to Grow." Peter's point was simple: Since God has given to us everything pertaining to life and godliness in Christ, there is nothing that we lack to grow in Christ-likeness. In verse 5, Peter builds off of the first four verses by saying that we ought to put forth "all diligence" to grow in Christ-likeness. As I preached on verses 5-9 last week, I asked the question of all of you, "Are You Growing?"

Peter wrote this, "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love." Since God has given to us everything that we need to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, Peter calls us to apply all diligence in living a godly life.

I pointed out last week of the importance of the logic in these words. It's so important, that I'll mention it again. We don't apply all diligence in living a godly life so as to obtain our salvation in Christ. Rather, we have been given a wonderful salvation in Christ, which stirs us up to apply all diligence to live a godly life. We are the little girl who has been given an American Girl Doll for Christmas. After Christmas, it's her delight to play with the doll. We are not the little girl who is working hard to save up her money to purchase an American Girl Doll. Do you see the difference? We are not the young man who has been working at McDonalds to save up to purchase a used car to drive. Rather, we are the young man whose parents have given him a car to drive. It is now his delight to drive the car and run various errands for his parents.

Likewise, we have been given everything that we need to live godly in Christ, so, we gladly pursue a godly life. In verses 5-7, Peter takes us through what such a life looks like. It's a life of faith, believing that Christ is the one who justifies us by His blood. It's a life of moral excellence, where others see Jesus in you. It's a life of knowledge, where Jesus is known and loved. It's a life of self-control, where one's passions are governed by God and not by self. It's a life of perseverance, which endures until the end. It's a life of godliness, where God is the pursuit of one's life. It's a life of brotherly kindness, where genuine love exists among the brethren. It's a life of love, where God's love shines through. That's the picture of the life that Peter paints.

And then, in verses 8 and 9, Peter calls us to examine ourselves. Are these qualities in your life? If they are in your life, are they increasing? Or, are you lacking these qualities in your life? If these things are present in your life and increasing, there's good news for you. Peter says, "if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." If these things are in your life, you can look forward to a life of usefulness and fruitfulness in your life. But, if these things are not in your life, Peter has bad news for you. He says, "For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins." If these qualities are not in your life, then, at best, you are living a life of contradiction, professing one thing, but living another.

It's at this point that we come to our text this morning at verse 10. Here's my first point, ...

1. Make Certain Your Salvation (verse 10a).

I trust that you can see why it is that I make this my first point. I pull it right out of verse 10, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;" In many ways, this is a repetition of verses 8 and 9. It's getting at the same thing. However, with a little bit different twist. In verses 8 and 9, Peter put forth the results of having (or not having) these character qualities (of verses 5-7) in your life. You are either on a good path or you are on a bad path. But, in verse 10, Peter isn't leaving it so much up to a question of whether or not we have these things in our life. Rather, he's calling us to apply some diligence to make sure that we have an assurance of our salvation.

In verse 10, we see that Peter is writing to professing believers (thus, the usage of the word, "brethren,"). And as he writes, his aim is for his readers to experience the assurance of salvation. He is calling them to make sure that they are indeed saved from their sins. This isn't to say that Peter's words aren't applicable to those who aren't Christians. If this is your case, the call to you is to repent of your sins and trust in Christ, that you may find yourself in a state where you knew for certain that God has saved you. Thus, my point, "Make Certain Your

Salvation."

God has given us a Bible, not to keep us in the dark about Himself. Rather, God has given us a Bible to reveal the truth of Jesus Christ to us. He has given us a Bible, so that we might know whether or not we believe in His name (see John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:13). When you look at 2 Peter, the entire thrust of the book is that you would Christ and grow in Him, that you might not be deceived about yourself or deceived about others. Or, as I have put it simply, "Know and Grow."

As we continue on, let's look closely at how Peter describes our salvation. He says, "make certain about His calling and choosing you." Now, in this phrase, Peter uses two words here to describe salvation: "calling" and "choosing." If we need to "be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing," then, we had better know full well what His calling and choosing are! So, let's spend some time thinking about each of these words.

The first word that Peter uses is this word, "calling." This word describes the call of salvation that comes upon every believer in Christ. Now, this word is not describing the general call of salvation to come to Christ and "be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40). The gospel is constantly going out to many. As people are faithful to bring this message to the world, there are many non-Christians who are hearing the message of the Bible every day. "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19). "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). The message comes in various forms and with various different words, but the heart of the message is the same. "Call upon God, confessing your sin, believe in Christ to save you from your sin!" And there are many who hear this "call" and reject it.

Now, this isn't the "calling" that Peter is talking about in verse 10. Peter is referring something more specific. He is referring to the effective call of God (or effectual call, as older theologians called it). ^[1] This word describes the time when the gospel is preached, and God summons those who hear the word in such a way that the listener responds to the gospel call. He's talking about the time when God summoned you into the kingdom of His Son.

The difference between these two calls can be seen in the different bells that are rung from time to time. Around Christmas time, you can go into many stores and see somebody standing outside ringing a bell (ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ...). It's the people volunteering their time for the Salvation Army to raise funds for their charity work. The bell is the general call. This bell is like an announcement that there is an opportunity for you to give your money. You can ignore this bell, walking right by this bell, as if the bell-ringer wasn't even there. This is like the general call of the gospel. It goes out to the world and is most often ignored.

But, there's another bell that you cannot ignore. This is your mother's dinner bell. When this thing rings, it means that you come. And you come right now, because you know whose ringing the bell, and you fully understand what the bell means. You cannot ignore this bell. If you do, mom's going to go looking for you, to try to understand why you didn't heed the call. And you know of the results that will take place if you ignore this bell. This is like the effective call of God upon our lives. It's when God summons us to believe and we come. We come because we want to obey the one ringing the bell. We come because we are hungry and are looking for our eternal food.

This is the "call" that Peter is referring to here. He's talking about the effective call of salvation. He's talking about the call of God that goes out in such a way that it guarantees a response from us. This is the way that Peter uses this word on many occasions this way. For instance, after preaching to the people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Peter he told the people to repent. And then he explained, "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" (Acts 2:39). Peter's talking about the sovereign hand of God upon the lives of some that God will bring into a saving knowledge of Christ.

In Peter's first epistle, he use the word this way on five occasions. In 1 Peter 1:15, Peter writes, "like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior." Here's the summons of God, calling you to live like the one who saves you. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Again, this is the effect summons of God, calling you out of a dark, sinful life into a joyful, righteous life. In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter writes, "for you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." It's the life that God has appointed for all who believe in His name: a life of suffering, following the example of Christ.

In 1 Peter 3:9, Peter writes, "not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing." Again, we see Peter using this word, "calling" in the sense of a summons. You were brought into your salvation to lead a life of kindness, even in the fact of opposition. Peter used this word one last time in his first epistle. 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." Here we see the Lord promising to us into His eternal glory in Christ. Peter's usage of the word, "call" is more of a "promise" that God makes with those who are His. After you have suffered now, you will receive the glory later, because that's what God has called you to.

There is one other place where Peter uses this word, "call" with reference to our salvation. It's in 2 Peter 1:3, and again, we can see the same thing. Peter is talking about the summons of God unto salvation. "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." Again, you can see that this call is something definite to those who believe. It's not general. It's a specific call unto salvation. When this call goes out, God will get results. People will come to faith. This is Peter's "call" of verse 10. It is God's sovereign hand upon our life, bringing us to Himself.

Now, let's spend a few moments on the second word, "choosing." "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you." The word here translated, "choosing" is translated as "election" in most other literal translations (ESV, NIV, KJV, NKJV). They translate it this way because "election" is the more literal term. Literally, this verse reads, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and electing you."

We know about elections. In our country, we just passed through a season of national elections. Citizens (eighteen years of age and up) throughout all of our country went to polling booths several weeks ago, went into a polling station, and voluntarily selected their choices for president, vice-president. People across America voted for governors and senators and representatives. It's what makes our nation great. Our leaders are elected democratically. The one who gets the most votes will rule over us.

You can take these same concepts and understand how our salvation works with God. This is God's election. God has gone into His polling booth and has selected those who He will call to Himself. He has done so willingly and not forced or constrained by anyone other than Himself. Unlike our elections, however, God's vote is the only one that counts. But, those whom God selected will come to Him. In fact, would the truth be known, this is the only reason why any of us ever come to God! We come because He calls us. He calls us because He has chosen us before the foundation of the world. This is clearly seen in Paul's "chain of salvation" in Romans 8, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, ... these He predestined, He also called; and these whom he called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

Peter was certainly familiar with these words. Most commentators place Peter in Rome as he wrote these letters where these words were sent. Peter was also familiar with Paul's writings (3:15-16), where these things are spelled out very clearly for us. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (Eph. 1:4-5). "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

The electing love of God is a fundamental concept in all of the Bible. In fact, it all starts in the book of Genesis with God's choice of Abraham. When you read the Old Testament narrative, you see God's sovereign, gracious choice to bless Abraham and make of him a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:19). There are many people that God could have chosen. But, he chose Abraham, an obscure man in a far away land, to be the father of his "chosen people."

Several times throughout the Bible, God identifies Israel as His "chosen" people (Deut. 7:6; 1 Kings 3:8; Psalm 105:6; 135:4; Isaiah 41:8; Amos 3:2). And then, astonishingly, Peter takes all of this Biblical background which he knew so well and said, "Just as God had chosen the people of Israel to be His people, now His chosen people consist of the church -- those who believe in Christ." You can see this back in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Peter takes the quote from Isaiah 43, which was referring to the chosen people of Israel and applies it to the church, many of whom are Gentiles (4:3). He says, "You who believe today are God's chosen ones -- God's elect."

Peter even referred to this at the beginning of 1 Peter, in the first verse. "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1:1-2a). Before the foundation of the world, God chose us. In time, He called us. And now, we believe in Christ and are saved.

So now, coming back to our text in 2 Peter 1:10, we can understand what Peter's talking about. He says, "Therefore brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you."

I have labored long and hard on these two words for a reason. I want for you to see that both of these words describe the active hand of God in our salvation. Peter is saying, "I want for you to be all the more diligent to make certain that you know and understand that God has called you and chosen you to bring you to salvation." Peter wants for us to have assurance that God is indeed working in our life.

Notice that we ought not to obtain this casually. Rather, we are to be diligent to make certain that God has called us to salvation. Look at how he said things in the first half of verse 10, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you."

Now, if you think about this for any length of time at all, you might easily come to think, "What a strange thing Peter is asking. He is asking for me to make sure that God is working in my life. He is calling me to make sure that God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world to believe in Him. He is calling me to make sure that God has rung His dinner bell, calling me to come to enjoy His wedding feast. Peter might as well be asking me to make sure that it will rain tomorrow. How am I to make certain that God isn't working in my life? What if He isn't? How can I dictate the working of God in my life?"

In some measure, you can't. God is sovereign and does what He pleases. When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus about the new birth, Nicodemus was a bit confused. But Jesus said to him, "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8). We can dictate God's activity in this world about as much as we can dictate which way the wind will be blowing tomorrow. The truth of the Bible is simply that God is far above us and "He does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Dan. 4:35). But, we can measure the wind. And, we can measure the rain. And Peter says, "Is there wind and rain in your life?"

Has God called you? Has God chosen you? Are you saved? Are you sure that you are saved? And now comes the million dollar question: "How can I know for certain that I am saved?"

Peter's answer is this: look at your life. What is God producing in you? In the last half of verse 10, Peter says, "for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble." What's he talking about? What are "these things?" These things refer to the character traits found in verses 5-7, which we talked about last week. Peter says, as we are diligent in cultivating these characteristics in our life, we can be certain of God's calling and choosing of us. This is how Peter is calling us to be assured of our salvation. He says, "Look at the fruit in your life."

Is God producing in you a **moral excellence**? Are your desires to live like Jesus increasing? Is God producing in you a **knowledge** of Him? Is your heart to know Jesus growing more and more? Is God producing in you a **self-control**? Have you experienced victory over sin? Is God producing in you a **perseverance**? When the trials of life come, are you experiencing the kind hand of God to sustain you through them? Is

God producing in you a **godliness**? Is your heart more and more eager to pursue God? Is God producing in you a **brotherly kindness**? Are you able, with increasing degree, to show kindness toward others in love? Is God producing in you a **love** for others? Are there ways in your life where you are loving others in such a way that your love can only be explained by God's work in your life? As you see these things grow in your life, then may you be assured of your salvation.

Jesus said it well with those memorable words, "You will know them by their fruits. ... Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Matt. 7:17-20). Peter learned the lesson well from his Master. When we get to chapter 2 in this epistle, we are going to see an entire chapter dedicated to false teachers. Throughout the entire chapter, we see Peter describing what terrible lives these men are living. And his point is that God isn't working in them. There is no fruit in their lives. That's one way how we can identify false teachers. When you are making certain of His calling and choosing you, you ought to look no further than your own life. What is God producing in you?

So, how do you make certain of your salvation? Look to your life. Look to the way that God is working. As you see God working in your life, you may know for certain that you are saved. You can be sure of God's "calling and choosing" you. Note here that there ought to be no pride in you because of your salvation. God has done it all! You ought to respond to the Lord in utter gratefulness and utter love to Him. So, ... "Make Certain Your Salvation (verse 10a)." Let's turn to our second point this morning, ...

2. Make Certain Your Hope (verses 10b-11).

There are two hopes that Peter lays out for us. The first is in the last half of verse 10, "for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble." What an incredible promise! As God is working in us, and as we are being diligent to cultivate God's working in our life, Peter's promise to us is that we will never stumble. I don't believe that Peter is saying that we won't ever sin. Certainly, Christians do sin. James said that "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). However, the promise here is that we will never fall. That is, we won't lose our salvation. God will bring us to His inheritance.

Peter's promise here is a bit like the promise that Peter made in 1 Peter 1:5, about those of us who believe in Christ. He wrote that we are "protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter. 1:5). If God has called us, and if God has chosen us, He will carry us through the sufferings of the trials of life into a glory that is so marvelous that it is difficult to describe! It will be imperishable. It will be undefiled. It will be unfading (1 Peter 1:4). It is unlike anything that we know of here on earth.

But, please notice how the promise of 2 Peter 1:10 comes. It comes to those who are diligently practicing these things in our lives. It comes to those who are eminently aware of God's working to grow him into Christ. Please note how our assurance of salvation comes not on the basis of some past experience, but upon the living reality of God working in our lives, conforming us more and more into the image of Christ. Our assurance comes as we trust in Him to work in us today. Iain Murray well observed, "Assurance is never to be enjoyed on the basis of a past experience. There is need of the present and continuing work of the Holy Spirit." [\[2\]](#)

Theologians often make the distinction between "security" and "assurance." Security refers to the truths taught in 1 Peter 1:4-5, in which those who come to faith in Christ will be eternally sure of their salvation. He who has called us with be faithful to bring us to heaven on the final day. However, in our lives we experience assurance. The assurance of our salvation comes by the way that we are living our lives today. An obedient life of faith that experiences the hand of God can have assurance of a heaven-bound life. But, in seasons of disobedience, the assurance will go away. If such a one is eternally secure (i.e. God has summoned him), then God will see to it that he will be turned back to walk along the righteous path.

So, if you want assurance of your salvation, you need to look at your life today. Too often, people look at some decision that they made in their life long ago, and they trust that decision, rather than trusting in God's present working in their lives. I've heard quite a few testimonies from people that go something like this, "When I was six years old, I prayed a prayer and walked an isle." That's all well and good. But as their testimonies unfold, it becomes clear that they look at this event that took place in the past for their assurance, rather than the present working of God in their life today that is conforming them to Christ. And this thought is prevalent in the church.

John MacArthur tells the story of the time that he spent some with a fellow pastor, who was driving him around his city. MacArthur writes, ...

We passed a large liquor store, and I happened to mention that it was an unusual-looking place.

"Yes," he said, "There is a whole chain of those stored around the city, all owned by one man.

He is a member of my Sunday school class."

I wondered aloud what the man was like, and the minister replied, "Oh, he's quite faithful. He is in class every week."

"Does it bother him that he owns all those liquor stores?" I asked.

"We've talked about it some," he said. "But he feels people are going to buy liquor anyway, so why not buy it from him?"

I asked, "What is his life like?"

"Well, he did leave his wife and has been living with a young girl," the minister replied.

Then after several minutes of my bewildered and uncomfortable silence, he added, "You know, sometimes it's hard for me to understand how a Christian can live like that."

MacArthur then comments, "I must confess that it is hard for me to understand how someone who teaches the bible can assume that a man living in wanton rebellion against God's standards is a Christian merely because he claims to be—even if he attends Sunday school every week." [\[3\]](#)

It's like people assume that they are card-carrying members of this thing called, "Christianity." [\[4\]](#) When they get to heaven, they may well take the card out of their pocket and say, "Look here, Jesus, I've got my card, which I received when I was six years old, and I've been carrying it

ever since, knowing that it is my ticket to heaven." But if God is not working in their life to produce in them these Christian graces, the card does nothing for them. You will be assured of your salvation when you see your faith working itself out in moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Finally, let's look at the last promise, which is given in verse 11. Peter writes, "for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." I love the picture that Peter gives us here. He is picturing a grand entrance into the kingdom.

I can do no better than borrow from the imagery that Charles Spurgeon used in his sermon on my same text this morning. Spurgeon used the illustration of two ships coming into the harbor. The one ship had encountered some rough storms along its voyage. To survive, they had to throw the cargo into the sea. In the storm, the ship had sustained a significant amount of damage. Its sails were tattered. And the ship was almost unable to sail. And as it entered the harbor, it had to be carried along by a tug-boat.

Then, Spurgeon contrasted that ship with another ship that had made a prosperous voyage. It had gone out to do business in a far-away land. Upon its return, the ship was full of cargo, with the water almost brimming over the edge of the ship. The sails were in great condition, full of wind. And it triumphantly entered the harbor, ready to enjoy the rich reward of a prosperous journey.

And then, Spurgeon made the connection to our lives. What a sad thing that it would be to end our lives like the tattered ship. We are on our death-bed, thinking about our life. We have been tattered and torn and our life has been a mess. We have failed to apply these things in our life.

There may be much regret in that day.

- Regret that many opportunities to serve the Lord went undone.
- Regret that children were not trained in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Regret that opportunities to witness went unsaid.
- Regret that worldly pleasures were often the snare of the soul.
- Regret that fellowship with the people of God was small.

In this case, death may come "in gloom, and clouds, and darkness." [5] It may be that such a person is saved, but barely, needing to be dragged home by a tug boat.

Now contrast that with the one who makes an entrance in the kingdom of heaven in abundant supply. He is on his death-bed with little regret.

- He has loved the Lord and found Him to be His delight.
- His Bible is tattered and torn from its over-use.
- Through the difficult times, He has learned of the faithfulness of God to carry him through.
- He has had many opportunities to testify of God's sustaining grace.
- He has seen his children continue on to serve the Lord.
- And, even now, as he is dying, his friends are around his bed, rejoicing and singing songs of praise to God.

In his case, death will come with the expectant hope that "He who did not spare His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will he not also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). He dies with full assurance of faith. When he arrives in heaven, He will meet Jesus, who will say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your rest" (Matt. 25:23). That's the abundant entrance of one who has seen God's calling and choosing in his life.

Are you sure that you are saved?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 16, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] For a good discussion of this, see "Systematic Theology" by Wayne Grudem, p. 693ff.

[2] Iain Murray, Jonathan Edwards - A New Biography, p. 265.

[3] Gospel According to Jesus, p. 73).

[4] I'm indebted to John Piper for this illustration. I have heard him tell it on a number of occasions. For instance, he mentions it in his March 20, 1983 sermon on Galatians 3:6-9.

[5] Charles Spurgeon used this phrase in a sermon entitled, "Particular Election" on 2 Peter 1:10-11.