

"Confirming Our Salvation"

Holiness

2 Peter 1:10-11

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Bruce: What's Christmas all about? It's not about Santa Claus. It's not about the date. It's not about the name. It's not about the cards. It's not about the gifts. Nor is it about the gift of giving.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: The prophet Isaiah says it best and foremost in my mind about what the meaning of Christmas is in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 5. *"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and together all the world will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

That's what Christmas is about. It's about the glory of the Lord.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You know, in John 17 Jesus was preoccupied with one thing. That was God's glory.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He says, *"I have brought You glory on earth by finishing what I gave You to do."* And when Jesus entered into human history, there was one motive for it, and that is not us. We are not the reason Christ entered into history. The reason Christ entered into history is because of God's glory, to put God's glory on display, as the prophet Isaiah said. *"And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and together all the world will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."* (Music.)

Let's pray. Dear gracious Lord, there is only one response to the glory of the Lord revealed, and that is to come, let us worship Him and adore Him. For Jesus' sake, may that happen this day, here in these moments. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Let's continue our examination of 2 Peter chapter 1, verses 1-11. I'll be specifically reading verses 10 and 11 today, beginning at verse 10 of 2 Peter chapter 1, reading again from the English Standard Version.

"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Peter has been teaching us about the divine life. We've learned that the two major components are the divine implantation, where God is pleased to implant through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, implanting the grace of God into us, redeeming us and calling us into a salvation relationship with Himself. He implants His life within us. It's called regeneration.

Our responsibility is the human utilization of those resources. When God implants us with His grace and all the resources of His own life, we now have the human responsibility to utilize those. We don't cooperate with Him because we don't bring any

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resources to our salvation. He gives us our salvation and all the resources we need. And we now have the human responsibility to implement, or utilize, all those graces that He gives us.

So now Peter comes and he deals with a very critical subject for us. He is going to deal with this issue very logically in verses 10 and 11. And that is this. What must I do to be saved?

Participant: Sir?

Bruce: What must I do to be saved? The second question is equally important. How may I know that I am saved? In verses 10 and 11 he deals with those two very critical themes. How can I be saved? And how can I know that I am saved?

It's obvious that these are two different questions. And it's just as clear that the Bible gives two very specific answers to these two very critical questions.

In answer to the first question,—how may I be saved?—the Biblical directive is unmistakable. One must repent of sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if he is to be saved. Acts 20, verse 21.

Transcriber's Note: Acts 20:21. *"Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Bruce: All Spirit wounded convicted sinners must be urged to look away from themselves and in a penitent faith to fix their gaze of their souls upon Christ alone for mercy, as He is offered to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the second question demands a different answer. And that is how do I know that I am saved? How may one know that he has truly repented and believed? It is not a question touching the ground or means of one's acceptance before God, but rather the proof and the evidence of one's having a relationship to Christ. The Bible's answer to this question is that we must examine ourselves and prove ourselves whether we are in the faith. 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5.

One of the things that we do not do well, men, is that we do not examine ourselves in answer to that question, how can I know that I am saved? That is what Peter is going to deal with in our passage today.

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion. And a great deal of subsequent delusion has flooded the church in our generation through a failure to distinguish the difference of the Bible's answers to these two vital questions. How must I be saved? And how do I know that I'm saved? Unfortunately, there is great confusion in the church. I hope to have Peter unpack that for us today.

Now in most evangelical situations or circles today, anyone who asks the question, "How do I know that I am saved? Have I been truly repentant and believing?", is encouraged simply to rest upon a text which declares that all believers are saved. Essentially, they are saying this. All you have to do is proof text it. The Bible says it. Therefore, it's true.

Now there is a degree of truth in that. But that can also be delusionary and deceptive. It is circuitous reasoning and fails to come to grips with the real issue of how I know that I am saved. And that is the answer that Peter is going to give us today to this vital

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question, because he proceeds along a different line because it has to do with some evidence.

Notice verse 10. *"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure."* Basically, he's saying, "Examine yourself." It's the same thing that Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 13:5. *"Examine yourselves to see whether or not you are in the faith."* Now Peter is going to give us some handles on how to do this because that's a critical issue for us.

Now Peter's thesis, promise and suggestion is this. There are distinguishing traits and distinguishing graces which give evidence that a person has been truly reborn. Notice what he says in verse 11. *"For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall."* For in this way you gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

You see, these traits are things that are a cumulative indication that God has done something in a person's life, that He has begun a good work within you. Philippians chapter 2, *"work out your salvation with fear and trembling,"* because God is at work in you to cause it to happen. In other words, God gives you the will to be willing to respond in repentance and faith.

Now, just as a review, notice verses 1-9. Peter has been teaching us the implementation of the divine life. And that is something that God does in His sovereign grace. And then he talked about the human utilization of those graces that God gives us by the divine implantation.

And now Peter warns us and he admonishes us and exhorts us to make sure that we do possess the divine life of God. We have to examine ourselves to make sure that we do possess the divine life of God which has been implanted in us.

So here is how he deals with this in these next two verses. First of all, he deals with the confirmation of our true saving faith, and then the condition of our true saving faith, and then the consequences of our true saving faith.

So let's examine, first of all, the confirmation. Notice the verbs that he uses. He says, "make sure" in verse 10. *"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure."* He says, "be diligent." In other words, examine yourself. Be diligent. Make sure of this. The two words that he uses are to do your best, to bend or make every effort to make sure that you have these graces within you.

Now he's not talking about earning your salvation. He's talking about the evidence of your salvation. He's talking about the evidence of the divine implantation that God gives us in His grace, which we already talked about as the divine life. He is now saying to examine yourself to make certain that the divine implantation is taking residence within your soul and within your life. Make certain.

In other words, it means this. Satisfy yourself that you are saved. Satisfy yourself that you can know that you are, and that you are satisfied because you've made every effort. Peter says that we are to live in such a way to make it certain to yourself and to other people that you've been chosen and are truly called into the kingdom of God by your conduct.

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Now there are two ways in which you can know for sure. The first one is this. It's either by giving up and going to heaven, or by going down into yourself and examining yourself. You either go to heaven and find out, or you examine your life and find out.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Peter says that you've got to do this. You've got to examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. That means that it's about self-examination. Those are verses 10 and 11. After the divine implantation and the human utilization, he says to examine yourself. Do these seven qualities possess your life and are they altering the conduct that you have?

Now unfortunately, friends, there is a great deal of teaching today on assurance that is very anemic. And it produces in my mind a group of people who might have a spurious conversion and a false conviction of their salvation. It springs from two different concepts.

The first one is this—that the assurance of salvation is something that a person can tell somebody else that they have. In other words, they say this. You can assure somebody of their salvation because you take them to a couple of verses and say, "Do you believe that?" If the answer is yes, then you can say, "I confirm on you the fact that you are in Christ and that you have your salvation confirmed."

That is the first error. That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit alone. The Holy Spirit can be the only One who can confirm your salvation and true saving faith. That is not a ministry that we have the right to impose on other people. We cannot do that.

So the first fallacy of modern evangelism today is this idea that we can confirm to somebody that he is a Christian. You don't even know that I'm a Christian!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You can't impose that upon me. You can't confirm that upon me. You have to tell me to do the same thing that I'm telling you to do, what Peter says, to examine yourself. So the first fallacy is this. We cannot pronounce that somebody else is confirmed in their saving faith.

The second one is this—that assurance rests only on Scripture promises. Now let me walk you through a very, very popular evangelical ministry which teaches evangelism this way. I'm going to walk you through the verbal presentation that they make. Just listen to this. They're going to say this. You can confirm somebody in his salvation, you can pronounce it upon them, when they answer a few questions. Follow along. Here's how it works. This is modern evangelism in its clearest form.

Immediately after saying a prayer, we are to say this. "How is it that you know that Christ is in your life?"

The printed sequence goes on like this. "Did you receive Christ into your life According to the promise in Revelation 3²⁰, where is Christ? Right now, in relation to you, where is He? Christ said He would come into your life when you opened the door. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer and that you have true saving faith?"

And the response is this. "The trustworthiness of God Himself and His word."

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Now that's modern evangelism. What have they done? Two things. I can prescribe and I can confirm salvation upon you. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That vacates that.

The second thing is this. It is based solely upon Scripture promises. Now while those sequences do contain certain truths, they are potentially very misleading because they agree to certain facts, even though they may not have been given a new heart. All they are saying is that if you agree with certain facts, then you're saved. Somebody can do that, but he may not have been given a new heart with the divine implantation. Peter is going to deal with this.

Peter makes it very clear that there is a very close relationship between assurance and obedience—conduct. Listen to this statement and tell me if it's absolutely Biblically correct. This is taken from the Scofield Bible. Here is what it says. "Assurance is the believer's full conviction that through the work of Christ alone, received by faith, he is in possession of a salvation in which he is eternally kept. For this assurance rests only upon the Scripture promises to him who believes." Where is the fallacy in that?

Participant: Only.

Bruce: It's the word *only*. Notice. "And this assurance rests only on the Scripture promises to him who believes."

Anybody can agree with some facts. But that does not necessarily mean that you have been divinely implanted with the life of God.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: There is more required than that when you examine yourself, and Peter is going to deal with that. Peter says this. Be diligent. Be eager to make sure, to make it certain.

And the Bible teaches us a threefold approach to one's assurance which only the Holy Spirit can give. First of all, this. Only the Holy Spirit can give you the assurance of your salvation.

Scripture promises are based upon the character of God. That's the second thing. Did you repent and believe? Are you saved? That's a Scripture promise, yes. So it's based upon the work of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8. The confirming work of the Holy Spirit says this. "*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*"

The first thing is the work of the Holy Spirit. The second thing is Scripture promises. And the third thing is increased righteousness. That is what Peter is going to talk about.

Now notice. Sometimes you may be in a situation, just in your own life, where you are somewhat discouraged, somewhat downtrodden or depressed, and you might even question your salvation. Sometimes the best defense is this. I just know because I know. And what is that? That is the work of the Holy Spirit confirming in you the divine implantation of the life of God. And the Holy Spirit does that. You may not even see the evidence in your life for a period of time. You may not even trust the Scripture promises. You just know them. But there is something in you that says this. I just know because I know. What is that? That is not agreeing with a set of facts. That is the wonderful ministry of the confirming work of the Holy Spirit confirming your salvation because the Spirit of God works in your spirit to confirm it.

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So number one, only the Holy Spirit can do that. So the threefold teaching of the Scripture of assurance of salvation is this. It is the work of the Holy Spirit confirming in your spirit according to Romans 8:16. Secondly, it rests upon Scripture promises. Repent and believe. Have you repented and believed? You can trust that because of the trustworthiness of God in His word. And the third thing is this—increased righteousness.

Now I'm always quoting the Puritans because I did my doctoral work on them. I have told you before that how they evaluated their evangelistic ministry after they went into a village, into a city and preached, they would come back three to five years later and evaluate a couple of things. First of all, was there increased righteousness in the people of the city? Secondly, was there a decrease in crime? And thirdly, was there increased church attendance?

Now they looked at those three things and said, "Therefore we had a revival. We had an implantation of the divine life of God." They didn't just say, "After we said a prayer." They confirmed it by answering these questions. There had to be some divine evidence of the divine implantation.

And that is this. The character and conduct of the converted is what Peter is talking about, as both the character and the conduct of the convert are evidence of salvation. Do you understand these three things? It's the work of the Holy Spirit confirming in your spirit, Scripture promises and increased righteousness.

Now salvation is instantaneous. Righteousness takes a while.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Righteousness takes a while. That's not going to happen instantaneously.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: How can I say to somebody, "You are now righteous" five minutes after a prayer? Why do I do that? Because it makes my statistics look good.

You see, there is some deception here. There is some delusion. And I believe that some people will have what I call a spurious conversion. They may have been emotionally moved, but they may not have been divinely implanted.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Through regeneration. That may not have happened. There needs to be some evidence. That's what Peter is saying. Make certain of this, folks. It's so critically important. You know how to be saved by putting your trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. But the real issue is how do I know that I am saved? You've got to see some evidence! Do you sense this by the Holy Spirit? Do you trust the Scripture promises? Do you see some evidence in your life? Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. Isn't this what Jesus was getting at in His parable of the four kinds of seed?

Bruce: Oh, absolutely. The parable of the sower is a great illustration and cross reference of that. That's exactly what he's talking about.

Participant: Bruce, I guess you might have taught us about that before. I used to think, growing up, that the sower was Christ or the disciples. But in actuality, I think you said that the sower is anybody. You could throw out the gospel and it's going to take seed.

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Bruce: We're going to get to that in a moment, yes. Whenever the truth is proclaimed, that is the seed, and anyone can proclaim that. Now certainly Jesus is the primary One.

Participant: Right.

Bruce: But certainly, when we have the chance to proclaim the Biblical gospel, we are spreading the seed. We're doing the same thing. I'll get to that in just a moment.

Now the exhortation here by Peter is that the believer should make sure of the fact that he is saved by seeing to it that the Christian graces that he has just described in this passage a bound in your life. Notice. *"For if you practice these things, you will never fall."* Practice what things?

Participant: The seven virtues.

Bruce: That's not agreeing to Scripture passages. It's agreeing to these graces that God has implanted in your life.

Participant: Yes, sir.

Bruce: The divine implantation is followed by the human utilization. We utilize the graces that He gives us. And he says, "Make sure that those seven things are appearing in your life." That's going to be some of the evidence of your increased righteousness which will help us understand the confirmation of our salvation.

And that may not happen immediately, folks. Salvation is instantaneous. Righteousness takes a while. Yes, Thomas?

Tom: It seems to me that the big problem of the evangelical church in America is that they're focused on "you are one of us," rather than "you are one of His."

Bruce: Very good point.

Tom: (*Unclear.*) And when someone is converted, it makes sense.

Bruce: Thomas made a good point. He said that the emphasis is that you are one of us, rather than that you are one of His. And the lack there is a lack of follow-up. That's the one thing that we don't do well in our evangelism. We don't follow up because we don't do this. We don't help people make certain, make sure, that these graces appear in them. We don't help them to understand that righteousness is a process. It takes some time. While your salvation is instantaneous, righteousness takes a while. And that's why we have to make sure. Some time is required to see that the divine implanted life of God produces the divinely revealed conduct and character. That takes some time. If you don't possess the divine life, you don't reveal it. And when you do possess the divine life, you will reveal it.

There is quite a vast difference, friends, between a life of divine accomplishment and a life of human achievement. That's why Peter uses the terms to *"make your calling and election sure."*

Let me try to explain the difference between calling and election. They are so wrapped up and so intertwined. It's basically this. Calling has to do with time and place. Election has to do with eternity.

Let me try to explain that. Calling has to do with time and place. Election has to do with eternity.

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There is what we call a *general call* and a *universal call*. Any time the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and the seeds are planted, that is the invitation. When you proclaim the gospel of Christ, that is a general call to repentance and faith. It's a general call. It goes out to everybody. Do you really need to have an invitation after an invitation has been given?

You see, the invitation is this. It's the proclamation of the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. That is the invitation. That is the universal call. That goes out to the world. We plant seeds to everybody.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: What is the directive to the church? Go into the world and convert? No! Go into the world and proclaim the gospel. That is the universal invitation to repent and believe. That goes out to the whole world! It's a universal call. It's a general call.

But then there is another part of the calling, and that's the effectual call. That's where something happens. When somebody hears the effectual call, something happens by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit where He divinely implants that life into you. And what is your response? Repentance and faith! You see, there is the effectual call. It has its effect upon those who are elected.

You see, election has to do with eternity. Look at Ephesians chapter 1. "*Just as He chose us in Him from before the foundation of the world.*"

Participant: Hallelujah!

Bruce: Calling has a time and a place. There is a time and there is a place where that happens. And the effectual call takes place in your life at a time and a place because of the universal call of the proclamation of the gospel. Do you see the difference between the universal call and the effectual call? It has the effect of God implanting His divine life into you. And your response is what? Repentance and faith. That's the response. That's why the Biblical gospel includes this—the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and work of Christ, and repentance and faith. It's the response of the effectual call where the work of the Holy Spirit works in your life because you were chosen before the foundation of the world.

Now let me read something for you. I'm always quoting the Puritans because of my great admiration for them. And I refer to them as friends because they have such a wonderful impact on my life. I'm going to read a quote from another friend of mine by the name of Bishop John Rodgers.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I want to take you to his book. This is a wonderful book, men. Page 344. Let me read this for you to help you understand what I just described about the difference between calling and election.

Bishop Rodgers writes this. "How, you may ask, are we to become sure of our calling and election? The answer, first and foremost, is that assurance comes by faith in Christ. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary sign of election." See that?

"Faith is the primary sign of election. Therefore our focus as the elect of God is to be upon the excellence of Christ as Savior and Lord. Faith rests upon Him, His work, His

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initiative, and His trustworthiness. We must trust neither ourselves nor our faith. Rather, we trust Him who found us to keep us and to never let us go."

This is a critical statement. "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the primary sign of election. Secondly, there is given to all who are in Christ Jesus a painful inner struggle against indwelling sin. This is a lesser or subordinate sign of our election.

"In the first epistle of John there are a number of signs of the new birth mentioned—faith in the Son who has come in the flesh, the love of God, sacrificial love for the brethren, sanctification or walking in the light in keeping the commandments of God, confessing sin and receiving forgiveness from God. These are all signs of election.

"However, because we are all imperfectly sanctified, and since therefore all signs observed in us are ambiguous in varying degrees, the chief assurance remains that Christ has claimed us to be His own. Our election rests in His excellence and His sacrificial love that will not let us go. Election is anchored not in us, but in Him. The words of the old gospel hymn tell it all.

'Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, Purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.'

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Let me read one other portion of this, because this is very helpful to understand—the difference between calling and election, and what it is not.

"Another objection frequently raised is that God's sovereign election robs us of our free will. Much depends on what one means by the term *free will*. If, on the one hand, by free will we mean free agency—that is, that we live by choosing and making decisions that are responsible for the choices we make—then it is clear that election does not rob us of our responsible free agency. There is a difference between free will and free agency. Election never removes your responsibility to make a decision, to make the choices that you make in life and to be held accountable for them. That is not free will. That is free agency.

"The Holy Spirit does not bypass our choosing and deciding, but rather the Spirit sets us free from the bondage of sin to choose to respond to the Lord in repentance and faith. *'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you.'*

"On the other hand, if by free will one is proclaiming that we fallen sinners are free to change our hearts so as to love God with all of our heart and soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, free to repent and believe in the Lord in our own strength, then one has not taken the depth and slavery of sin with Christian seriousness."

What a great statement! We don't take it seriously enough.

"Freedom, in the full sense of being free to choose and live rightly, is by grace alone."

Who has free will? Those who are in Christ.

Participant: Amen.

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Bruce: We all have free agency. We're the only ones who have a free will. We all have free agency. But the only ones who have free will to now make that choice as a function of grace, is because of our divine implantation. That's why Peter says, "Make certain, folks, that you have this. Be sure that you've got this."

"Freedom, in the full sense of being free to choose and live rightly, is by grace alone. Such freedom is the fruit of election, not the cause."

We've got to look at our passage, men. Make sure of your calling and election. Make certain of that. Do you possess these seven graces that he just walked us through these last couple of weeks? Do you possess those graces? *"Examine yourselves to see whether or not you are in the faith."* There is a difference between calling and election. Election is in eternity. He chose us from before the foundation of the world.

And one other thing, friends. The first thing that you and I know about our calling is that you possess repentance and faith. Repentance and faith is the first indication of your election.

Now notice this. We can't tell whether we are elect until we feel that we're called. Do you see that? You cannot understand if you are elect until you know that you have been called. Has the effectual call been accomplished in your life by the divine implantation? Remember that there is a general universal call. That's the proclamation of the gospel worldwide. But the effectual call is the divine implantation in your life by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

And the first thing that happens is this—repentance and faith. That's the sign of your election!

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It's a consequence; it's not the cause.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It's not the cause' it's the consequence. We must first of all prove our calling by repentance and faith. And then our election will be most certain. It will be most certain. And this is a matter about which you and I should have great concern.

"Therefore brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure."

Let me say something about election. I mentioned that it's in eternity. *"God chose us in Him from before the foundation of the world, that we should be made holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through the counsel of His own will."* Ephesians chapter 1. What a great verse! Read those verses in Ephesians chapter 1.

Let me say something about election. The fact that Peter mentions this doctrine should not be a surprise to any of us. For the Bible, as well as everything else around us, reaffirms the concept of God's divine election. When we observe the ways of God, we will always observe God's election.

Let me just try to give you a couple of simple examples from the material world. Nothing could be clearer than that some objects have endowments that others don't. In nature, certain things are very, very appealing and certain things are very, very obnoxious. Some attract us by their beauty and by their fragrance. Others repel us by being

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unsightly, offensive or obnoxious. What is that? It's election. Not everybody is the same.

Not everything is the same. All the stars differ from one another. In all of creation there is variety. Isn't that the evidence of election in nature?

So we ought not to be surprised when the Bible speaks of God choosing certain people.

Let me give you some history from the Bible on this. First of all, a summary statement is this. To deny election says that God has no mercy. Who does He choose? He chooses people who are dead in their sin. That's an act of mercy! Do you see that? Do you understand how merciful God was to you or to me? In the deadness and heinousness of my sin, in my cosmic treason to God, He chose me before the foundation of the world. That's an act of sheer mercy! And to deny His election is to deny the fact that God can be merciful!

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Let me give you some Biblical history of election in people's lives. We should not be surprised that God elects certain people and not others. We have to entrust that to the counsel of His own will. We can't understand that. Why does He do that? Because of the counsel of His own will.

Notice this. Noah was elected of God to be the second father of the earth. He chose Noah. That is what?

Participant: Election.

Bruce: Election. It's mercy. Abraham was the father of the elect people of God. Moses was elected to be their legislator. David was elected to be their king. Samuel was elected to be their prophet. Christ was elected to be their hope. The apostles were elected to be their witnesses.

And catch this one. Just take a look at the nation of Israel. You should be able to take one look at the nation of Israel and understand the whole merciful act of election.

The ground for election has nothing to do with excellence on the part of the people. The nation of Israel never possessed excellence. There was never a more troublesome, murmuring, rebellious, disobedient, faithless people in the annals of history as the nation of Israel, and they were what? Elected before the foundation of the world.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Can I understand that? No! But I trust it, because God is merciful.

Take a look at the nation of Israel. There was never a more ruthless group, a murmuring group, a troublesome group, a disobedient group, an un-loyal group. And He chose them to be the means by which He was going to demonstrate His glory to the world. That's divine election. That's divine mercy.

Now Peter is saying this. "Look, friends. I've just told you about the divine life." There is this divine implantation from the Holy Spirit. He implants within you these graces of Christian character. Work on those things. Make sure those things are evident in your life. Most of all, friends, do this. Make certain of your calling and your election. Make certain of it. Work at it! Do I really have the desire to be obedient?

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And what is the confirmation of your salvation? It's the work of the Holy Spirit—Romans 8:16—the Holy Spirit identifying with your spirit. It's faith in the Scripture promises. And it's increased righteousness, by seeing the evidence of the divine implantation in your life over time.

You see, righteousness is this. It's moving in the direction of holiness.

Participant: C'mon! Hallelujah!

Bruce: Interrupted by occasional sin. We're moving in this direction. And what do you do when you sin? You what?

Men: Confess it.

Bruce: Repent and confess it. Repentance is not a one-time act, men.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Repentance is a constant style of life!

Participant: Thank the Lord!

Bruce: I'm going like this. I repent of that. Modern evangelism says this. You're moving in the direction of sin with occasional goodness.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: That's the difference. Salvation is instantaneous because it's of grace. Righteousness takes a while.

So what's the conclusion? Election is the sovereign will of God, unaffected by any foreseen conduct. As for the persons elected, Scripture tells us nothing. We don't see the names in the Bible. We don't know the names of the people who are elected. Peter says to make certain that you are. Don't worry about somebody else. Make certain that you are. We need to make sure that we are the elect of God. We prove our election by the loftiness and excellence of our spiritual lives in the graces and resources of God. And that is the only proof that can be given which should be acceptable and reasonable as we examine ourselves.

Albert Barnes, a theologian, writes this, as I conclude. "God has given no assurance to us by name that he intends to save us. We can rely on no voice or vision or new revelation to prove that it is so—no internal feeling of itself, no raptures, no animal excitement, no confident persuasion in our own minds that we are elected can be prove the case. And the only certain evidence on which we can rely is that which is found in a life of sincere piety."

Therefore brothers, make certain of your calling and election. *"For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall."* May God give us the grace, men, first of all to do this. As we come into the Christmas season, which is a season, 365 days a year because it is the glory of the Lord revealed,--

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And all the world together will see it, because the Lord has spoken. As you consider the glory of the Lord revealed, ask yourself this question. Has that glory been revealed to me? If not, come to Christ. Beg for His mercy. If God has done a work of grace in your life, come to Him because He alone can save. May it be so for Jesus' sake. Blessings to you. Have a great Christmas. We'll see you in the next year. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)