

Introduction:

- A. *Illus.*: I saw this *New Yorker* cartoon. Picture two monks walking a cloister hallway. They're both in long black hooded robes; bearded, the bald-top monk haircuts, hands tucked in their sleeves. One says to the other, "I could be a saint if I really wanted to."
- I guess that's funny because we're not sure he wants to. Even monks may not be all that eager to be saintly.
- Maybe that cartoon is funny because he's kidding himself. Like "I could play pro ball if I want to." Maybe his companion is thinking, "*Are you serious?!*"
- B. But the guy raises a good question: **do you really want to be a saint?** In the Bible, a saint is someone made holy by the mercies of God, and whose life shows it. The Bible says all believers are saints. **So do you want to be a saint?**
- C. Turn to **2 Peter 1**. These are Peter's "famous last words." The wolves were at the doors of the churches—false teachers preying on believers. Their teachings were bogus and their lives were worse. They led Christians not only into error but into deadly sin. Peter is like the old lion seeking to stir up the strength and faith of those who will come behind him. **He tells us how we can be a people who will reach home safely.**
- D. Our focus today will eventually be the last 3 verses of chap. 1, but as I studied, I felt it would be important to back up and stride through this chapter one more time, because Peter emphasizes how important it is to **remember** this.
- E. Vv.10-11 are the centerpiece of this chapter. The verses before it and after it point to this: "*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never*

stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

That is Peter’s goal—that we reach home safely.

- F. He began with this greeting in v.1, “*To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.*” That’s how we became saints—the free gift of our faith in Christ. We must live in such a way that someone could say, “*Yes, sir! There’s a saint!*” So vv.3-9 answer the question...

I. WHAT MUST WE DO TO CONFIRM OUR CALLING AND ELECTION? (1:3-9)

- A. **V.3-4...** The Lord “has given us everything we need for a godly life.” Everything we need to be a saint! How did God manage to do that for the likes of us, who are not exactly saint material?
1. This equipping comes through God’s power, glory and goodness. It is no small divine endeavor to make saints of the likes of us!
 2. “***Through our knowledge of him*** who called us by his own glory and goodness.” Knowing Christ changes *saint-li-izes—sanctifies*—us. He is not just our great example. Knowing him in his glory and goodness really changes us at heart because his Holy Spirit is in us.
 3. His glory and goodness are also the reasons, according to **v.4**, that “***he has given us his very great and precious promises.***” Promises of forgiven sin, of the Holy Spirit living within us, of changed character, of a family and a name; promises of Jesus’ second coming, our resurrection from the dead, and our everlasting life.
These promises change us: “so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.” We are now

in Christ. We are welcomed into the holy fellowship of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No wonder we become saints!

4. **These promises are also our great escape: “*having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*”** The world is a cesspool, a growing contagion, fed by the evil desires of mankind. The psalmist called it *miry clay*. But God has lifted us out of that, put our feet on a rock and given us a new song to sing.
- B. **Vv.5-9...** Since the Lord has given us everything we need for a godly life—*since* he has made us saints--even in the midst of this corrupt world, and *since* we are not yet safely home, “make every effort” to grow godly virtues from your faith. These virtues are the opposites of the “evil desires” that can corrupt us. I likened our God-given faith in Christ to a garden he has given us, already planted, all set to grow. But we need to be gardeners or our faith will die. Our faith in Christ will produce these qualities if we simply bend our will to do them. If we do not grow in godliness we will find ourselves blind and back in that corrupt world, controlled once more by our evil desires. We won’t be able to see the promise of Christ’s return in the future nor the way God offered his forgiveness in the past.
- C. So that brings us to Peter’s urgent point in vv.10-11, *“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*
 1. Those who profess faith in Christ but have no fruit to show for it stumble in their blindness. They fall away. They lose sight of home, and don’t even know it.

2. But those whose behavior confirms their calling through their godly lives “will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. The wedding feast is soon ready. The friends of God whom we have served here will welcome us into eternal dwellings, and we will be with the Lord forever.

That’s what we must *do* to make our calling and election sure. So the first verses point to that challenge and promise. Now the verses that follow also do that. But here Peter turns his attention to what we must *remember*.

II. WHAT MUST WE **REMEMBER** TO CONFIRM OUR CALLING AND ELECTION? (1:12-19)

- A. In **vv.12-15** Peter says to us, “*Even though you know these things and are grounded in the truth,*” I’m going to refresh your memory anyway because you are accosted by voices who would twist truth and erode your faith, by people who tell you Jesus is never coming back for you. So I want to make sure you remember the truth! The old hymn says, “*I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the , rest.*” That’s what we must be like.
- B. So Peter refreshes their memory about the most astonishing thing he ever saw—the transfiguration of Jesus. It was when he, James and John, all saw Jesus in all his glory, shining from inside out brighter than lightning or the sun. **Vv.16-19... We have reliable eyewitnesses of Christ’s glory who heard God the Father’s affirmation with their own ears.** The Greek word for *majesty*, used twice here, is *mega-worship-worthy*. It was astonishing to *see* Jesus in his glory with their own eyes, but then to *hear* God

the Father with their own ears—well, they needed no more proof that Jesus is the Great King, God’s beloved Son, who fully fulfills all God’s “*great and precious promises.*” Including the promise to come again *in power.*

This Jesus whom they saw—**not in a vision, but in reality**—is the Jesus we also shall see when, as Paul describes it, “*the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*”

What Peter, James and John saw, we also will see when Jesus comes back.

- C. So never forget that there were reliable eyewitness and *ear-*witnesses of Christ’s *mega-worship-worthiness.* **But wait! There’s more!** And that brings me to our text for this morning: **vv.19-21...** Not only must we remember that Jesus appeared to eyewitness in his full glory, we must also always remember the absolute reliability of the Scriptures as God’s Word. Not *man*’s religious writings, but **God’s word.**

Prophets and prophecy are mentioned five times in these verses. In the Bible prophecy doesn’t just foretell the future. Biblical prophecy is all of God’s authoritative words to people—stories, psalms, proverbs, and the prophets. Peter is speaking of all the Old Testament Scriptures, but also the New Testament Scriptures which were emerging in his later years. Look at **3:1-2...** The writing of the apostles—those who were with Christ—is put on the same

level as the OT writers. Then look down at 3:15-16... “*as they do other Scriptures.*”

Back to **1:20**... We rely on our Bibles because every word comes from God. Each book bears the style and reflects the times of its author, but no prophet ever sat down to write his own take on God’s plans. No prophet ever controlled the process by his own will. That little phrase in **v.21**, “*spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,*” uses a word from sailing. God’s Spirit—his Holy Wind—caught the sails of each writer—caught the imagination and language, faith and understanding of each writer and inspired all they wrote. Paul says, “*All Scripture is **God-breathed.***”

At Jesus’ transfiguration **God spoke from the Majestic Glory**, “*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*” **And in Scripture—all that is in our Bibles—God speaks—God breathes--through human writers.**

So, since our Bibles are “*completely reliable*” **v.19** says, “*You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*” Paying attention to Scripture is how we remember what our precious faith means and how it works. Scripture matters to Christians. We read and study it. We puzzle over it and pester it. We memorize and sing it. We test our lives and our hopes against it.

We pay attention to Scripture “as to a light shining in a dark place.” Our word *dark* doesn’t do justice to the Greek word behind it. It means murky, like the squalor and gloom of a dungeon. Remember how we’ve “*escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires*”? That dark place. In that dark place our Bibles are light. They show us

where we are and they shine a light out to the future. Through the Holy Spirit, the Bible remedies our blindness and cures our near-sightedness. The Bible reminds us again and again that we *“have been cleansed from our past sins.”*

That curious phrase, “and the morning star rises in your hearts,” suggests, I think, that on that day we will no longer need the witness of Scripture in our hearts, nor the quiet work of the Holy Spirit, because Jesus himself—*bright morning star*—will not only be before our eyes but bright and beaming in our hearts, even as the glorious light which shown forth from him. On that day we will no longer need our Bibles for the Truth himself will have dawned within us.

Conclusion

“I could be a saint if I really wanted to.” So do you want to? This chapter has laid out the way we can live out our faith so as to receive *“a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Our special focus today was those last three verses guaranteeing the reliability of our Bibles. The Scriptures are the very Word of God and we would do well to pay attention to them as surely as we would a light in a midnight of evil.

As I was studying I came across a story by Pastor Chuck Swindoll. He writes of his friendship with Dr. Bruce Waltke, a world-class Hebrew scholar.

When Dr. Waltke led me down to the basement of the house where he lived, it looked like a library had exploded. Old Bibles in Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Latin were strewn about, various editions and versions of the Bible covered long tables and pages of notes lay everywhere.

“Bruce, what in the world is all this?” I asked, trying to figure out what kind of work he was doing....

“Well,” he said, “I’m helping in the cross-referencing of a new Bible that’s coming out. It will be known as the New American Standard Bible.”

I looked at all those books again, Remember, this was before Bible software or online search engines. If you wanted to cross-reference, you did the work by hand—agonizing, tedious, painstaking work. Only somebody like Bruce Waltke could do this sort of thing... and enjoy it. But the words that came from his mouth next had a profound impact on me....

“Oh, Chuck,” he said with a smile, “This has been absolutely life-changing. I’ve read very verse in the Bible at least five times.”

Now that’s passion for God’s Word!