

Confirm Your Calling and Election!

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Have you heard of the man who forgot he was married? The day after the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon, the wife decided to make a special supper for her new husband. But her husband was three hours late coming home from work. Needless to say, the supper was burned and the wife was burning mad. What was his excuse? He had absentmindedly gone to his mother's house for supper. You see what happened? After work, instead of turning right to go to his new home and his new bride, he turned left as he had done for many years to enjoy supper with his mother. He fell into an old habit.

I am sure years later they laughed about it. But when people who are Christian suffer from a similar memory loss, it isn't as funny. How often do we fall into old habits, that is, habits of the sinful flesh? How often have we forgotten we are the redeemed children of God and live, think and act like the rest of the world? Dear confirmation students, soon you will stand up before this congregation and confirm your faith. Good. But don't make this a once in a lifetime confirmation. Our text, with the Holy Spirit's help, will encourage you to confirm your faith often, every day, as you turn right instead of left, as you turn away from your old sinful habits, and live the new life you have in Christ.

I. You are escaping a corrupt and evil world.

We are fresh off the victory of Easter. Jesus conquered death and rules eternally. Because he died on the cross and rose from the dead, we share in his victory. Now, when we speak of that victory, please understand that there really are two victories. We have victory over sin's guilt, and we also have a victory over sin's power. We need to understand the difference between those two.

What does it mean that we have a victory over sin's guilt? Let me quote you the two verses before our text. ¹ **Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,**

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: ² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. I remember the day I drove a welfare mom to the courthouse. She had been ticketed and was most likely going to lose her license. I give her credit. She going to plead guilty. When we got there, she checked in and the bailiff said she wasn't on the docket. The charge and ticket were dropped. I thought for sure she was going to do cartwheels out of the courthouse.

That is what it means to be free from the guilt of our sins. We committed the sins which demand an eternal punishment. All we can do is plead no contest.

We are guilty. But all charges are dropped. It wasn't because the arresting officer decided not to put us on the docket. It is because God paid the price for our sins. That is how Peter started his letter, and it is where we begin today. He reminds them they are saved. God sent Jesus into this world with a mission. He was righteous when it came to that mission, that is, he fulfilled it to the "t." He obeyed God with a perfect, sinless life. And he obeyed God by offering his life as the ransom price to pay for our sins. God drops the charges because they are paid in full. The only difference is we don't have to wait until judgment day with fingers crossed hoping God will drop the charges. He tells us that already.

This means we live under God's grace and peace, not under fear. We are free from the guilt of our sins. They will not keep us out of heaven. Remember, though, we have two victories. The other is victory over the power of sin. Let's see what that means.

II. So confirm your calling and election by escaping from a sinful life.

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

If you cross the street and a car is coming, you don't just stand there. You cross the street. That is what he is telling us here. We are saved. We are escaping this corrupt world. Don't just stand there. Keep moving. But where? How about towards God? He

says we can now participate in the divine nature of God. Confirmation students, remember what happened to mankind? We went back to creation and how God made mankind in his own image. Everything was good as we shared in God's holiness and righteousness. Then man sinned and that image was thrown away. Man developed another image, the image of man. That is the sinful nature. But this passage tells us that we can now participate once again in the image of God. That doesn't mean we become Gods. No. it means we get a chance to enjoy that image with God again.

And he tells us how. ⁵ **For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.**

This almost reads like a recipe. We start with faith. Faith is the key ingredient. Without flour bread is nothing. Without faith, we are nothing. So, add to your faith some goodness. What is good? Ask God. He tells you in his Word like, for example, you defend a person's reputation instead of gossip. To that add knowledge. Know God more and more just like a husband who knows his wife better after thirty years of marriage. You do this by spending time with God through his Word. Add some self-control. When tempted to sin, you say "no, I will not do that." This is what I meant when I said we share in the victory over sin's power. We are free to say no to sin. Then add endurance or perseverance. This sinful world will beat us up. We don't lose heart or give up; it will end soon. Then add godliness. Then brotherly love, being close friends even with strangers. And finally love, that same kind of love God has when he chose to give up his own Son to save us. Love feels, but it isn't a feeling. It is a choice, a choice to do what is best for the other no matter the cost.

Do you see what is happening here? Faith saves, no lived as the saved. I enjoy watching the old home movies. I love watching the kids grow up year by year. Faith isn't a snap shot, one picture of one moment in time. It isn't like, "I believe," and that is it. It is a home movie, it is a motion picture of that faith growing up. Like a baby learning to crawl, then stumble, then walk, then run, and then run in a track meet, our faith wants to grow and walk and talk and be more and more like God.

Look at the promises. ⁸ **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** I remember mowing my lawn one day. Behind me was one of my boys, kindergarten age, pushing a toy mower just like me. That is what faith wants to do. It wants to be like the Father. It wants to be productive. It wants to be effective. It wants to know Christ more.

But do you want the same things? Remember the man who forgot he was married? He was happy to be married, but he fell into an old habit. He turned left to eat dinner with his mother which he always did in the past. Christians can fall into old habits. That is why a warning is attached here. ⁹ **But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.** A blind or nearsighted person doesn't know where he is or where he came from or where he is going. A person who doesn't want to participate in the image of God, who says he or she believes in Jesus, but then doesn't want to act like it, is blind. They act as though there is no heaven. They forget they are forgiven.

That is why it comes back to faith. God gives you everything you need. He gives you his Word and Sacraments. These are the food of faith. Through them we have his promises, promises like sins are forgiven, God is always with you, you are not alone, heaven is your home, you will rise from the dead. In other words, it starts with faith, saving faith. Faith in Christ means we are escaping this corrupt world.

Now, he gives you a chance to see your faith. ¹⁰ **Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** It is like a parent teaching a child how to ride a bike. There may be some crashes or near crashes. But with practice the child learns. The parent lets go and the child rides. You can almost hear him, "I am riding." Let faith grow arms and legs. Add to it all the things associated with the image of God. Let it run and jump and do these things. And as you see them, you, too, will say, "Look I do believe!" You will not stumble. You see your faith in action.

Confirmands, soon you will confirm the faith that is in your hearts. Don't let your confirmation be a snapshot, a one day event. Picture yourself in a home movie. Confirm your calling and election as God's redeemed children. You do this as you add to your faith goodness, godliness, a better knowledge of Christ, and love. You do this as you live the new life you have in Christ. Then you can see yourself escaping right into heaven where you will be welcomed. Amen.