



Central Peninsula Church

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2 Peter 1:3-11
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A Confident Future

This past Christmas, Diane and I visited her family in New Jersey where they own a chocolate store in a local mall. Some people marry into money...I married into chocolate. We always help out the week before Christmas because it's their busiest season. One day, one of their regular employees was punching in a credit card purchase and when the response came back over the phone line, she turned around to the customer and in a very loud voice said, "DECLINED!" The store got very quiet. They must have heard her halfway down the mall. Fortunately, the customer was very gracious about it and she was able to complete the purchase with another credit card.

But what an awful feeling...to have your credit declined. It would raise all sorts of doubts and questions about the confidence you place in your finances. Diane's parents live right across the river from New York City and, while we were there, we were able to visit "Ground Zero." Since the September 11 attacks, I'm sure each of us has had to deal with fears and a loss of confidence in our personal safety and security. The man in a hospital bed who has just heard the results of his tests has his own set of fears and doubts to wrestle with. His confidence that tomorrow will always be there is gone.

Death comes to each of us sooner or later. It creates a mountain of fears and doubts. Death raises the one question that we all have to deal with: "When I die, am I sure heaven will be my new home?" To answer that question you have to have a confidence in what God's Word says about your future as a believer. So, when I asked that question, how did you respond?

If you hesitated because you don't think it is possible to answer that question either way, then I've got good news for you. You can answer an emphatic "yes" about your future in heaven, when we know what Jesus did for you and have entered into a personal relationship with Him. You know what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus...you've had one for years. But you also hesitated with your answer. You don't have the confidence you once had in answering. And it troubles you...you don't know why that confidence is gone. We'll discover how to regain and maintain your confidence in the future.

Here's my point. You may fear that, like the woman in the chocolate store, when you face death, you're going to hear "declined." But you can replace those fears and doubts with a confidence that comes from God Himself, through His Word. So are you confident about your future? My desire is that this passage of Scripture helps you to see

how you can confidently respond "yes" regarding your future with God. That confidence will also impact the choices you make and the quality of life you experience today. So, as a believer, why can you be confident about your future?

I. You Have Good Reason For A Confident Future (vs. 3-4)

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

A. God supplies our future needs through His promises. In these two verses, Peter gives us the reason for why we have a confident future, EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS, that is our future, has already been GIVEN to us. We can only understand this provision based on our KNOWLEDGE OF HIM. This is not mere "head" knowledge. The word describes much more than a simple mental perception. This is an ongoing and growing knowledge that occurs as we experience Him in our daily lives. It's knowledge that stems from a personal relationship like the growing knowledge we have of a spouse, child, or parent.

And with the same GLORY AND GOODNESS God displayed when He CALLED or placed us into His family, He has given us promises that we can count on. They are GREAT AND PRECIOUS because they changed your future forever.

There are hundreds of promises throughout the Bible intended to supply us with what we need to live in a way that's pleasing to God. They were given so that we may PARTICIPATE IN THE DIVINE NATURE AND ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION IN THE WORLD. God wants us to participate, to partner with Him, so we can have confidence in our future. His promises help us to develop godly character qualities: 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us, **"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"** He also gives promises to help us escape or flee from the sinfulness of this world system: Paul writes in Romans 8:32, **"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"** Again, Jesus Himself speaks in John 14:16, **"...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."**

We also need to remember the promises God gave us

when He called us. Ephesians 2:8-10 says: **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."** This passage makes two things clear. First, my salvation had nothing to do with me or anything I have done. It was a gift. I didn't earn it...I only receive it. It follows that there's nothing I could do to lose it because it had nothing to do with my efforts in the first place. Secondly, after God saved me, it's clearly stated that He has plans for me to do something with my future.

So my future relationship with God is a cooperative venture. As Mark said last week: It's 100% me and 100% God. God wants me to take an active role in what lies ahead. My KNOWLEDGE of God begins with my belief and acceptance of the truth of the Gospel. This Gospel explains that Jesus died on the cross in my place repairing my broken relationship with God. But as I spend more time with Him, I experience Him in deeper ways and experience a more intimate knowledge of Him. Not to earn or keep my salvation. That's been settled once and for all through my faith in the grace provided through Jesus' death on the cross. The "good works" Paul is talking about flow out of a gratitude and appreciation for what God has already done.

With such a great start, what would cause you to lose confidence about your future with God? You lose confidence when you fail to live by His promises. So how can you avoid losing your confidence about the future?

II. What You Can Do To Maintain Your Confidence (vs. 5-9)

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 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. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."

First, you need to choose to renew your commitment to God's promises by developing character qualities that reflect His nature.

A. Choose to develop godly character qualities.

When Peter says, FOR THIS VERY REASON, he is telling us that what follows will nurture and produce the divine nature and ability to escape corruption mentioned in verse 3 and 4.

And to MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ADD means you are to be diligent and to literally, make lavish provision to foster the qualities that follow. You are to give it your best effort. Each of these eight qualities supports and enhances the others. They are not successive steps, done in the order given, but rather all of them are to grow together side-by-side.

You can almost think of these qualities as wood to be placed on a fire. When the fire is first lit, it burns hot and bright, like our confidence when we were first saved. But if you don't continue to put new wood on, to develop these qualities, then the flames start to die down. If you want the fire back, you've got to develop the qualities Peter is about to describe. Peter offers eight qualities, which will cause you to get to know God in a deeper and more intimate way. Briefly, they are:

1. First of all, FAITH means to believe something or someone so strongly that it affects every other aspect of your life. For the believer, this faith is in the completed work of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection to life. It is the beginning of a personal relationship with Jesus.

2. GOODNESS is the second quality Peter mentions. It's the same word used to describe God in verse 3. It's the mastery and excellence of all virtues. For us it could mean making godly moral choices even at the risk of popularity or friendships.

3. Next on the list is KNOWLEDGE. This word has a different meaning from the previous word for knowledge used in verse 3. This word implies an effort to understand better the will of God revealed through His Word.

4. SELF-CONTROL is a quality we need to keep our life balanced. It's being able to recognize when you've lost control of your behavior or attitude and then succeeding in bringing them back under control. When a restaurant menu says, "all-you-can-eat," it's an option, not a command.

5. PERSEVERANCE is the fifth quality mentioned and implies the ability to remain steadfast in the face of opposition. You are to learn how to patiently endure until God brings the victory.

6. With GODLINESS, we see another quality used to describe Jesus in verse 3. It's behaving the way you would if God was in the room with you. Of course, the sobering thought is that God is always in the room with you.

7. In identifying the quality of BROTHERLY KINDNESS, we find the same root word from which we get Philadelphia, the "city of brotherly love." This quality involves a mutual love and care for others.

8. Finally, Peter identifies the quality of LOVE, from the Greek word, "agape"...that unique Greek word that describes the active love God displays towards all of us through our salvation. It's a high calling and challenge to display this kind of love to others. The best description I've found for this love is in 1 John 4:10: **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved**

us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

This verse describes God's agape love for us. It is self-initiated and self-sacrificing.

These eight qualities can't be produced solely on your own power. This is where God's 100% is so crucial. In pursuing these qualities, you must rely on God to produce them in you. This list has many similarities with the "fruit of the Spirit" described in Galatians chapter 5.

One of God's promises was to send the Holy Spirit to assist us in living for Him. So, the pursuit of these qualities is not a matter of works alone. Even though you must make an effort, the real power to develop these qualities comes from growing in your relationship with Christ. For as your behavior falls short, you are forced to go to God in prayer for confession and renewal. There is another way you can maintain confidence. That is by being able to appreciate how your choice to develop godly character makes a positive impact on your life.

B. Appreciate the benefits of making a wise choice.

Peter gives us a glimpse of what happens in the life of someone who chooses to develop these qualities and someone who chooses not to develop them. First, the person who pursues, who is INCREASING in them is KEPT, literally escorted away from, being INEFFECTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE. That's the same as saying that they will be effective and productive. The person who chooses to develop these qualities will see changes and growth in themselves and others. This person displays a spiritual vitality that is felt by all those around them.

This is why it is so important to get involved in opportunities to help others. Whether it's here at CPC, in your community, or in your family – people need to see you growing and changing and becoming more godly and Christ-like. Being involved in the lives of others is the best way to insure that your KNOWLEDGE of God doesn't just become an excuse for you to sit, soak, and sour.

But what about the one who chooses not to pursue these qualities. Peter says this person eventually becomes NEARSIGHTED AND BLIND. These aren't good things. I know. I don't wear these glasses because they make me look more intelligent. I'm nearsighted. I can't see things up close. It's a pain. The "spiritually" nearsighted person can't see what's going on in their life. They no longer can see what God wants them to do. They're blind. They're forgetful too. They've FORGOTTEN that what Jesus did on the cross once and for all CLEANSED them of the penalty of their SINS, past and future. This is a very sad, fearful, and unconfident person.

But remember we all have the option to choose either course. When you see the outcome of each choice, it should be obvious which one is wisest. But how does choosing to make this effort give you confidence in your future? What can you anticipate? What will you experience?

III. What You Will Experience When You Choose Wisely (vs. 10-11)

"Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Peter says THEREFORE or, in other words, because of all the evidence I've just given you, I am encouraging you to make the wise choice. Because, if you do, you're going to have even more confidence in your future. First, you'll have ample evidence that you have a genuine personal relationship with God.

A. You'll experience security. Your CALLING AND ELECTION have to do with your elevated position and status due to God selecting you to be part of His family. This is another way of referring to your salvation. Peter tells us to make it SURE. But sure to who? God knows whether we're part of His family or not. It was totally His doing and He knows what He did. So who's left that isn't sure? Remember the person who chose not to pursue the qualities Peter laid out? That person became blind and forgot that he had been CLEANSED FROM HIS PAST SINS. It is you and I who can lose confidence in the certainty of our relationship with God. The believer has eternal security because their relationship with God is based on what God did. But you and I can only maintain a sure and confident future as we listen and follow Peter's advice. Next, you'll be safeguarded from falling into sin.

B. You'll experience stability. Peter adds that IF YOU DO THESE THINGS, you will NEVER FALL. Falling does not mean falling from grace or losing your salvation. This refers to stumble or falling into temptation that leads to sin. The one who does these things prevents themselves from getting off track. When you do these things, you are less likely to be pulled back into your old sinful behaviors. Romans 8:37 says, **"...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."** Finally, you'll have the confidence of knowing that you will be greeted with great joy when God calls you to your eternal home...heaven.

C. You'll experience hospitality. You can look forward with confidence to the day you will meet Jesus in heaven. Heaven will be your new home. When Peter says YOU WILL RECEIVE A RICH WELCOME, he's describing a triumphant entry. You will hear Jesus say,

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21). You are going to receive the warmest reception you could ever imagine. Not only will Jesus be in the reception line to welcome you, but all the friends and family that arrived ahead of you will be there too. You can have this confidence because **"...those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."** (Romans 8:30).

And Heaven is going to be the best home you ever could imagine. Remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.**" Think of the most lavish stylish furnishings in the most beautiful location in the world and you're still not even close.

So how will you respond to the opportunity you have to live confidently both now and in the future? If you're looking for answers to the reasons for your fears and lack of confidence about your future, you can change that by beginning a personal relationship with Jesus. If you already have a personal relationship with Jesus but still worry and have doubts about your future, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that your salvation and future with Jesus is "rock" solid and guaranteed. The bad news is that, until you choose to develop the godly qualities we just looked at, you will be missing out on the joy and peace salvation offers. I encourage you to cooperate with God and rediscover the confident future that is yours.

I have one other suggestion. It's hard to go it alone. We need the encouragement of others or we tend to give up. I suggest that you take advantage of one of CPC's Community Groups. They are provided so that you have a place to be encouraged and to grow in your relationship with God. You can call the church office for more information and also to find out what groups are currently available. Finding a Group to join in your spiritual journey may be just what you need to restore the confident future you once had.

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