The Right Way to Confidence

2 Peter 1:10-11

We are nearing the end of our spiritual project to memorize 12 key verses in a row from the book of 2nd Peter chapter 1. The reason we chose these verses is so that each of us can be better prepared to live a meaningful life. This week we’re going to memorize verse 10 together and next week verse 11. But I will be explaining both verse 10 & 11 today. Then next week, I will explain verse 12 even though we will not memorize v 12 until the week of the 17th. This then puts us in position to recite these verses together to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the first time at our two morning Christmas Eve Candlelight Services. In other words, you & I are going to bring a personal gift to Jesus this Christmas that is from your heart, that we have been working on for months and one we know will delight our Heavenly Father. It doesn’t matter if you can only do 4 verses or all 12, every verse you share by memory on Christmas Eve will be a fragrant gift to the Awesome and Almighty Lord of all! So keep pushing these next 3 weeks even if you are just starting with today’s verse. We have a most special gift to present to Jesus. Now let’s go to our topic for today – the right way to confidence.

Confidence! Some people have too much of it, some people have too little of it, some people have confidence in the wrong things, but all of us recognize its importance in life because when we have confidence in the right things, we simply do more meaningful, fun and/or significant things in life than where we don’t have confidence. For example ...

If you head out to Big Rocks on the Mad River next summer, climb up on the biggest rock and have no confidence you can jump into the water from there, your trip will be somewhat of a bummer. You will miss the thrill of the jump into the river AND there is no easy way to climb back down that rock. However, if you have confidence that you can jump into the water, it is lots of fun because that is a very safe place to jump from a rock: the water is deep, the bottom sandy and there are no boulders there. Confidence allows us to do things we would not do otherwise.

If you head out to the glades at Sugar Bush ski area (glades are those areas where there are a lot of trees, but they have cleared out the underbrush so you can have the thrill of zipping around trees on your skis) – if you head into the glades this winter with lots of confidence but very little ability to ski, you will probably get hurt. Your confidence is in the wrong thing – you don’t have the ability to ski fast through trees that are close together. Confidence causes great pain when it is in the wrong thing.

So there are really two parts to confidence – first how reliable is what we put our confidence in and second how strong is our belief that what we are putting our confidence in will actually succeed. So an arrogant person has all kinds of strong personal belief in their own abilities but those abilities are not as strong as they think, so they will waste a part of their life. The timid or constantly worried Christian rightly puts their confidence in God who always does what He says, but then they lack the personal belief that God will actually carry out what He says in their
situation. So they rarely step out in faith to see God do what only God can do. God can't use
their efforts to do mighty things because they are too busy trying to protect themselves.

So the right kind of confidence is important for us to make the decisions and do actions that will
genuinely lead to living a worthwhile life now and for eternity. Too timid or scared and we miss
the opportunities God gives us to live a meaningful life. Like at Big Rocks, we won't ever jump
in. In a similar way if we have too much confidence or it is in the wrong things, like money, our
own abilities or other people, then like the novice skier trying to go fast in the glades, we will
end up crashing in life.

Many weeks ago we looked closely at verse 3 and saw that God gives us everything we need to
finish well. READ v 3 ("His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly
life..."). So we can be confident in God and His plan. As we said then, it doesn’t matter
whether you’re an introvert or extrovert - a white collar or blue-collar worker – an intellectual
or emotional person. It doesn’t matter if you grew up in a Christian home or a secular one, if
you were rebellious or a pleaser, if you like rap or country music. God has given us everything
we need. Don’t believe the lie that “you can’t” or “you need something different”. But we
then must do something with what God has given us. READ v 5-7. We are to put our own
effort into 8 virtues. When we do then our lives will NOT be ineffective or unproductive for
Jesus. But if we don’t then we are spiritually blind because we have just focused on the here
and the now – that is verses 8-9.

As we come to our verses today, we are now going to see the right way to confidence. READ v
10-11. Contrary to popular opinion it is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are
saved; it is our progression in the faith that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be
a child of God but whose character and conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is
deceiving themselves and heading for judgment.

PROPOSITION: True Christian confidence is to come from a combination of humility,
gratitude and responsive effort to God’s work rather than our personal achievement or
evaluation.

I. A worthwhile life

We’re actually going to go backwards today starting with the last part of v 10 and all of
verse 11. Then we will go back to the beginning of verse 10. Let’s start with what living a
worthwhile life will result in. READ v 10b-11.

A. On earth "never stumble"

“For if we do these things” – that is if we do the things referred to at the beginning
of v 10, then “we will never stumble”. What is that talking about? “Stumble” or
“fall” is from a Greek word that means “to trip up” or “to experience a reversal.”
This is talking about our life now – Not stumbling means we will not forsake God,
abandon him, and commit apostasy. We will not waste this life like someone who is
spiritually blind because they are too focused on themselves or this world.
Interestingly, the words do, never and stumble are all an alliteration in the original Greek – that is all three words start with the same letter “πι”. When I see that I am cautious to go too deeply into some minor aspect of the word, but rely more on the context. We will not stumble or fall on God’s path and thus fail to arrive.

B. For eternity “a rich welcome”
Instead, READ v 11. So if we do the things pointed to in the beginning of v 10, not only will we not wash out spiritually in this life, but we are going to get this incredibly warm and lavish welcome when we get to heaven. Let your mind be blown by that. Here we are fallible, limited people who have failed, sinned, gotten lazy, thought bad thoughts and as we enter the perfection of heaven there is this incredible rich welcome like an astronaut gets coming back from space, an Olympic winner gets when they arrive at their hometown or the wayward son got when he returned home. This is based on what Jesus has done for us and then we have responded rightly to by staying on God’s path in life despite our occasional detours. SO, stay on this Jesus’ path and there is a confidence not only of getting to heaven, but receiving an incredible welcome when we get there! That makes fearing death a rather foolish thing when it is in God’s timing instead of our own.

A couple of details as you memorize
1. The word “and” at the beginning of v 11 is actually 2 words (gar houtōs) which means “for thus” or “for in this way”. So there is more of an interconnection here than just the English word “and”. We simply can’t get a rich welcome in heaven without living in a godly way. This is not salvation by works, but salvation with works.

2. You will receive a rich welcome is, literally, “the entrance will be supplied richly for you.” What does that mean? You will receive a rich welcome – that is dynamic equivalency – trying to say it in a way we will understand.

3. The word received here is from the same verb as add in v 5. Most English versions have a different translation here. When that happens we know it usually means we don’t have a single English word that corresponds to the original word, so combine the translations together instead of fighting over the so-called “right one”.

4. Eternal Kingdom makes it clear we are talking about our future eternal life. The Kingdom refers to the ‘rule and reign of God’, of Jesus refers to His reign in the millennium & then the new heavens & earth and eternal focuses specifically on the future beyond this life.

5. 2 Peter is the only book with this phrase “Lord and Savior” – since I regularly say Savior and Lord, maybe I should switch them around! Don’t worry, because Jesus means the Lord saves, so every time we say Jesus & Lord together we are saying Savior and Lord.

II. Our part 2 Peter 1:10a
So what is the path that gives us confidence we won't waste this life and we will not just get into heaven but be richly received? READ v 10a. Whenever you see the word “therefore”, you want to ask yourself “what is it there for?” “Therefore” connects this verse with verses 8 and 9. It means “in the light of the blessing in verse 8 and the warning in verse 9 ...” do these things. Verse 8 and 9 are the reason why v 3-7 are so important. God has done some incredible things in the life of a Christian solely by His grace and not because of our merit – that is v 3-4. We are to respond to God's gifts by putting time & effort into growing in 8 virtues: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection (phileo love) and love of the will (agape). God then takes our feeble, but hard for us, efforts and transforms us more than would happen just by our human efforts. Notice there are two aspects to “our part” so we may rightly have the confidence God wants us to have for this life and the life to come.

A. Our part

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READ 10a. “Make every effort” is to be zealous, be eager, strive harder, exert greater effort. It is the same word group as make every effort in v 5. God calls us to make a high priority of this and put intentional effort into it – that is how stay on the right path to confidence. God’s grace and goodness does not lead to relaxing morally but pushing forward as we have been memorizing.
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The word translated “confirm” was often used in Greek in a legal sense. It means “to ratify,” “to guarantee,” “to make certain of,” “to make sure,” “to make secure.” It denotes that which is valid, ratified, or confirmed. In this verse believers are to confirm our “calling and election”. While the NT also talks about God confirming or making the Christian certain, here it is the Christian themselves who can and should do something to enhance that confidence we are to have in our own calling and election. It is not by religious rituals, regular devotions or even being nice that is the path to real confidence in life – it is by putting effort into our character development which God then multiplies to transform us. The question is, “Are these 8 qualities increasing in our lives? Not every day, but over a period of time?”

B. Be overwhelmed by God’s part

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The second part we have is to be positively overwhelmed by God’s part in our salvation, transformation and future glorification. We are confirming Jesus’ ‘calling and election of us.’ Notice, we again have a word-pair here – something that God has inspired Peter to do often in this book. So we are not to think of “calling and election” as 2 separate things – but see these two words as describing the same idea. That idea is more than either word can say on its own. If a distinction is to be made between them, we would say election is a prior decision to select someone, while call is the actual process of inviting those to share in the privileges and responsibilities of the call. Biblically, both “calling” and “election” are done by God. These two terms especially together stress the fact that it is through God’s initiative that we have come to experience a personal relationship with Jesus. This is what God does simply by His love and grace. No merit of our own. Now the words “election and grace” are always
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spoken about in the positive in the Bible – so if we become uneasy about either of these terms then we don’t understand the words Biblically.

III. Clear statements on confidence in our Christian life

**Turn to Matthew 7:21-23 (repeat).** So let’s go through some clear statements the New Testament gives us about confidence in our Christian life to make what we have seen clearer.

A. A person can be confident they are a Christian, but they are not

The first clear statement is that a person can be personally confident they are a Christian, but they are really not. **READ Matt 7:21-23.** Here we have people who say that Jesus is their Lord. They are very active in their faith - prophesying in Jesus’s name, engaging in spiritual warfare in Jesus’s name and seeking healing for people in Jesus’s name. They are totally confident that they are in relationship with Jesus and representing Him well because of their outward profession and activities. Yet, Jesus says that He never knew them – that is, they had never come to the point of true repentance, faith and surrender to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They made up their own religion using Jesus’s name, but they were disobedient to God’s commands in scripture. Our inner feelings of confidence can be misleading and totally inaccurate. It is also inaccurate to be confident someone we love is a genuine Christian because they are active in church when they are living opposite of God’s will in the Bible. It is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved; it is our **progression in the faith** that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God but whose character and conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is deceiving themselves and heading for judgment.

B. A person can look like a Christian and throw it away

**READ Hebrews 6:4-8**

**Turn to Hebrews 6:4-8 (repeat).** Here we have the opposite situation. A person looked like they were a genuine Christian and then left the faith & the church. Look closely at the descriptions here –

- they were once enlightened, that is their spiritual eyes were opened
- they tasted the heavenly gift, that is a sense of forgiveness and heaven
- they have shared the Holy Spirit, that is they experienced God’s Spirit
- they tasted the goodness of God’s word, that is the promises and truth of Jesus’s teaching & the Bible
- they’ve experienced the powers of the coming age, that is they have genuinely experience God

But they have since “fallen away”, that is they have walked away from the church and obedience to Jesus.

There is a great dread or fear God wants us to have in these situations, not ‘well at least they will be in heaven.’ There is a point at which a person will not EVER return to the faith – we don’t know when that is, only God does. The person crucifies the Son
of God again, they subject Jesus to public ridicule and they are like land that is worthless and will be burnt. In other words, there is no positive here – there can be no confidence here that this person will be in heaven. It is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved; it is our progression in the faith that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God but whose character and conduct give no evidence of spiritual growth is deceiving themselves and heading for judgment.

Now I have consciously avoided certain terms used in the past so that we will genuinely see what God is telling us about confidence – rather than argue about theology – and I love theology, we all need it. It doesn’t matter whether you say the wayward, disobedient or hypocritical one lost their salvation or were never genuine Christians to begin with, any confidence that we have that someone is going to heaven who is currently disobedient, wayward or hypocritical is very much misplaced. We are not the judges, God alone is. We can not have assurance in these cases, because we don’t know the person’s heart. Don’t miss what God is clearly saying to all because you mind goes into an internal discussion on Arminianism vs Calvinism.

C. Some Christians don’t have confidence in God’s forgiveness when they should

I John 1:5-10

Turn to I John 1:5-10, which is a few pages later. As we read through I John 1:5-10, notice how it will go back and forth between false confidence and confidence Christians should have. READ.

- v 5-6 – false confidence – if we are living an ungodly life then we lie to ourselves and others. There can be no confidence we are Christians, forgiven by God and going to heaven. That is why growth in godly virtues is the sign we should look at, not just peoples’ claims.
- v 7 – true confidence. If we are humbly seeking to live as Jesus wants us to, even though we fall short and sin at times, we can have confidence Jesus’ blood purifies us from all sin. There are genuine believers who do not have the confidence in God’s forgiveness that they should. Afterall …
- v 8 – We all sin – to claim otherwise is arrogance – it is false confidence. We deceive ourselves and the truth isn’t in us. BUT …
- v 9 – true confidence – that confidence is not because we see ourselves as better than others or because we do more spiritual things than others but it comes from God’s grace which comes through confession and repentance. If someone is truly repenting and confessing their sins to Jesus, which will be evidenced by some action, then we are freed to to build up their spiritual confidence even though they personally are struggling with that inside.
- v 10 – then back to the warning. We constantly need both the encouragement confidence brings and the warning that our confidence can be misplaced.

It is not our profession of faith that guarantees that we are saved; it is our progression in the faith that gives us that assurance. The person who claims to be a child of God
but whose character and conduct gives no evidence of spiritual growth is deceiving themselves and heading for judgment.

D. Every true Christian will persevere

Matthew 24:12-13

Finally we read Jesus’ words in Matthew 24, “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” Every true Christian will persevere – they will come back to faith even if they veer off. Please don’t have or encourage confidence where God hasn’t given us the clear instruction to do so. No one can have confidence someone is going to heaven if they leave the faith or don’t show spiritual fruit. That works against God’s plan, makes us a judge over what we can’t know and limits the power of God’s clear warnings!

On the other hand, grab ahold of the confidence that is ours. It is based in God’s character and work, not ours. It does not come by seeing ourselves as better than others or by how many religious things we do or how we feel inside. The path to confidence God wants us to take is to put effort into these 8 virtues as a response to God’s freely given grace. If they are simply increasing over time in our life – something others may be better at seeing in us than ourselves – then we are on the right path to confidence. We can not only have confidence that we will go to heaven, but that a rich welcome will be given us – not because God owes us. We can have confidence God will bring us through this life in a way that will make a difference for eternity. Over the last couple months, I have had a number of opportunities to encourage men in this church who were probably struggling inside. I simply pointed out what they may be struggling with spiritually, but then also pointed out something that showed their faith or growth. The vast majority got visibly choked up. When you see growth, encourage people, because many times they don’t see it because they are focused on their own failings. We need this confidence to continue to step out in faith, but we only want to get it through God’s path – and that is a key reason we have memorized these verses! So our confidence will grow the right way!

E. No one can have confidence someone is going to heaven if they leave the faith or don’t show fruit (verses above) – already done above