

Fruit of Salvation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 September 2020

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good. They don't need God's grace, and no one's so bad that they can't have it. And that's why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing our study on the book of 2 Peter, and you'll remember that the book of 2 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter in the 60s A.D. to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire. And Peter writes this letter because he has one goal, one desire. He wants these people to grow. We find out in the first few verses of the book that he wants grace and peace to be multiplied to them in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[1 : 01] And then we find out in the very last verse, chapter 3, verse 18, that he commands them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And this growth has those two components to it.

He wants them to grow in grace, and he also wants them to grow in knowledge. We looked before in verses 1 through 7.

We saw that God uses his word as an instrument of his power to play a song of obedience in our lives. And last week, we looked at what that song of obedience was, and we saw that it was things like this, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, brotherly affection, love.

We saw at the very end that our obedience is a standing ovation. It's our response to God's grace in Jesus Christ, that his grace comes first, followed by our obedience.

We're going to continue that discussion of obedience this morning, and we're going to ask, as I mentioned before, the question of what role our obedience plays in our salvation. What role does our obedience play in our salvation?

[2 : 03] We're told different things in Scripture. In Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, one of our most precious verses as Christians, we know that our salvation is by grace through faith alone. So there's nothing that we do that can add to it.

It's through what Jesus did, not what we do. And yet we're also told in the book of James, chapter 2, that faith without works is dead. And so there is some sort of relationship between faith and works. What do we do? Is it enough to become a Christian too just? As some people say, say a prayer. Does that make us a Christian? And how do we increase and grow in confidence in our faith? How do we know that we belong to Jesus Christ, what some people refer to as assurance? What is the relationship between our obedience and our salvation?

It's with that question that we turn now to 2 Peter, chapter 1. We're going to start in verse 8. And I invite you to turn there with me now, either near the end of your worship guide or in your Bible or on your phone.

[3 : 02] No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that his Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and that it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 8. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

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.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you again for your Word that you've provided to us.

[4 : 11] We know that you use knowledge to grow us up in grace and in our faith. We ask that you would do that this morning, that you would use these words by the power of your Spirit, and you would honor your promise that your Word does not return to you void, but instead it accomplishes everything you mean for it to.

And so we ask that you would do that this morning, that you would accomplish in our lives great encouragement from your provision in Jesus Christ, and great challenge that our response to it would be one of obedience.

We ask these things grateful that we don't have to earn them or deserve them, but we can ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I have mentioned to you before that I was born in Texas, and shortly after that my family moved to Southern Maryland right outside Washington, D.C., and it was right after we moved and my parents bought a house that my grandfather also was moving and he needed to downsize.

And so he passed off many of his things that he'd accumulated over his life to his sons. And so my father, as one of his sons, was able to receive some of these things, and one of the things he received was a Troy-built tiller, which, of course, is what you use if you're going to till up the ground to plant a garden.

Now, my dad aspired to be something of a green thumb, loved the earth, and so in our backyard of the house that he'd just bought, he began to create this garden. He tilled up the soil and set out a portion.

[5 : 39] Now, at the same time, I was very young at this point. I was probably three, four, five years old. It was around the time my parents decided it was time to give us an allowance, and so I think it was something like a dollar a week.

Now, they also required certain things of us. We had probably peanut butter jars with holes cut in the top, and of this dollar, we had to give certain things 10% to tithe, so we took our dimes to church, and we also had to save 10%, so we had to put a dime in the savings.

But we had some money to spend on very exciting things like flashlights and Toy Army soldiers from Walmart, and we also had money potentially to spend on the garden, and we would receive the Burpee Seed Catalog.

Now, some of you are too young to know this, understand this, but it used to be a time when you didn't order things on the Internet. You would send in these cards, right, from magazines with money or a check, of course, things from ancient times.

And so we would go through the catalog, and I, as a young child, was very excited because I found something in this Burpee Seed Catalog that appealed to me. Now, there are all sorts of things that adults would find interesting.

[6 : 46] However, they featured a special deal. You could buy a mystery pack of seeds. And these, I assume, were the seeds that were swept off the floor, right, and they just put them in a bag.

You had no idea what was in the pack. What was most exciting, however, was that the mystery pack of seeds was a grand total of one cent. And so I did not have a lot of money, but this was in the budget.

And so I gave my one penny to my dad. It was a great investment. And he taped it with Scotch tape to the order form that he was sending in.

And then I waited excitedly, right, as a young child for my mystery pack of seeds to come in the mail. And as a young child, right, I did not know. I didn't know how to recognize different seeds. I didn't know what seed was going to be what sort of plant. And so my dad gave me a little portion of the garden where I got to spread my mystery seeds out. And I had to wait, right, to find out what I had.

[7 : 47] I had to wait until there was some sort of growth to know what sort of plants I had because it was a mystery. And so the point is this.

It is not until there's growth that you know what you're dealing with. It is not until there's growth that you know what you're dealing with.

The fruit shows you what kind of plant you have. It's the fruit that shows you what kind of plant you have.

That's what we see here in verse 10. We're told, Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. Now this sounds like a contradiction, right? Calling and election.

That's talking about the fact that God is the one who chooses. So how can we confirm someone else's choice? Well, what he's telling us is that the fruit is what reveals what kind of plant we are.

[8 : 48] Peter is encouraging these people to pursue obedience and holiness. Remember, we saw that last week in verse 5. We were told to make every effort to supplement our faith with all of these things.

Virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness. Fruit does not make us Christians. Fruit reveals that we are Christians.

Fruit does not make us Christians. It reveals that we are Christians. Faith has fruit. Faith always leads to fruit.

And so we saw last week pursue obedience as a response to God's grace, right? I pointed out to you in verse 5, for this reason, for everything that God has done for you in Jesus Christ, pursue obedience.

We now see a second reason. Pursue obedience to grow in confidence in your faith. faith. You're going to grow in joy and in confidence as you see the fruit of God's work in your life.

[9 : 55] And so it looks something like this, right? Maybe you're someone who struggles with anger and you remember that time several years ago you were so angry that you punched a hole in the wall and then you had to go and get the drywall replaced.

And you've looked over time and you see how you've grown since then. You've had to seek help from other Christians. You've repented of that sin. You've asked for accountability. You've looked at the ways in which God provides in His word that He will bring justice so you don't have to.

God will be with you. And so now you still struggle with your anger, right? And you don't punch holes in the wall anymore. And so you can say this, wow, God is really at work in my life.

He is doing something. New things are starting to spring up. Maybe you're someone who struggles with self-righteousness. Your tendency is to see the speck in someone else's eye and ignore the log in your own eye.

And you love talking about other people's failures. And then you realize that's the way that you cope with covering over your own shame.

[11 : 13] And as you grow in understanding the gospel, you realize that Jesus is the one who covers your shame. And so you don't have to do it by repeating others' shame. You have new humility.

You talk to others about your shame rather than about others and their shame. And so you look back and you say, wow, God really is at work in my life.

God really is doing something. New things are springing up. You have joy that comes from that, right? Maybe you're struggling with an addiction. You finally worked up the courage and the humility to ask for help.

You've not made it all the way, but you've made it to 30 days sober. Wow, God really is at work. God really is doing something in my life.

New things really are springing up. Maybe you're someone who loves money and you resent ever having to give it away.

[12 : 17] You resent the idea that God would make a claim on it or other people who are in need would need it. but then slowly, little by little, you begin to realize that God is the one who cares for you and protects you.

And you haven't let your grip off all the way, but it's loosening. You find yourself one day giving something and not resenting it. And you're able to say, wow, God really is at work in my life.

He is doing something. New things are springing up. That's the incentive Peter is giving these people here that they, as they confirm their calling and election, they are going to have the joy and confidence that comes from seeing God at work in their lives.

They know God's power in a way they did not know it before. They know the truth of 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17, that if we are in Christ, we are a new creation.

The old has passed away, the new has come. That's what it means to make their calling and election sure to confirm it.

[13 : 34] They are increasing in their confidence and their joy seeing the reality of their faith, seeing that it's a genuine faith because it leads to something.

God hasn't just saved them, brothers and sisters. He has not just saved us from sin, but He is at work in our lives, removing, sanctifying, creating holiness in us.

And so we don't reach perfection now, but we grow. Plants grow slowly, right? They don't just spring from seeds.

If you want to see a plant grow immediately, you'll have to watch a time-lapse video. And yet, there's growth. And so Peter continues to tell us the same thing he told us last week.

In verse five, last week he told us make every effort. We talked about the Olympic athletes, right? It's because of their love for the sport that they work so hard.

[14 : 40] Verse ten, here we see the same thing. Be all the more diligent. Be zealous for these things, right? I've given you some examples of the weapons of war that we use as God's at work in our lives.

We have confession and repentance. We have the help of other believers as they walk with us. We have the power of God's word as he's at work in our lives. We have this community that's before us. Some of you in this congregation have experienced that. You've experienced that in life groups and Bible studies. You've gone to the Band of Brothers study at 7 a.m. on Saturdays. You've taken the risk of sharing things with other men and you have seen the way that God is at work.

He has used that in powerful ways. I mention that by the way because God is at work in a powerful way right now in our men's Bible study on Saturdays.

I've been hearing stories about the way that God is changing lives and bringing people to new places in their walk with him as they are more and more diligent right?

[15 : 45] Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. God has given us the tools. He is the one at work and so we pursue what he's presented to us.

There is a joy as I mentioned before that comes when you see that God's at work. work. I mentioned a couple weeks ago that I was preparing for a hike. James and I, James Dunlap and I went on that hike on Friday and we had to be very diligent and in fact we had to make every effort because we decided we were going to hike up Lodgett Peak which is just west of the Air Force Academy and we did this after we had already hiked many miles and I will tell you it was very painful.

And when we got to the top we did not regret what had come before. There was a joy that came from having reached that point.

And we didn't come to the top at the beginning, right? We're slowly working step by step by step each step just as painful as the one before. And we were able to get to the top and see the view. Peter is exhorting these people to work to get to the top and see the view of everything that God has provided for his people in his word through their obedience.

[17 : 12] And so they should be all the more diligent. They are making every effort. There's an encouragement here then but there is also a warning.

We're told in verse 10 to be all the more diligent to confirm our calling and election and we're told if we do these things you will never fall. Now when we come to the word fall in the Bible there's two different meanings that it has.

Sometimes when writers of the Bible talk about falling they're talking simply about a Christian sinning. Sometimes when they talk about falling they're talking about what we would call apostasy. They're talking about someone abandoning Christianity leaving the faith. Here Peter is talking about the second one. He is talking about someone abandoning the faith.

Leaving Christianity behind. Deciding God is not for them. Now that is not immediately clear in verse 10 but one of our principles of biblical interpretation is that we use clear passages to interpret unclear passages.

[18 : 15] And so we're going to see in chapter 2 when we talk about the false teachers that we are talking about people who claim to be Christians but are not. We're going to see that especially in verses 20 and 21.

And in verse 11 in this passage it is also clarified for us. We're told confirming their election there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ.

By implication logically what's the opposite of that? Not receiving an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so Peter is telling us there are people who seem to be Christians on the outside but actually do not have faith in Jesus Christ.

These are the same people we're told about in verses 8 and 9. We want to be verse 8. We want to stay far away from being ineffective or unfruitful. Why? Because verse 9 whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

Again Peter is talking about people who claim to be Christians but actually are not. Now he says that they were cleansed. This is probably a reference here to baptism. In other words Peter is saying there are people who have the sign of cleansing.

[19 : 31] They have been baptized. They do not live a life of cleansing. The box and the contents don't match. The most basic things about the gospel they don't understand.

You could think about it this way. I could go to an army surplus store over on B Street and I could buy all the uniforms I want. I could dress up in those uniforms and I could walk around town.

That does not make me a service member. I might appear to be in the military. I might fool some people. I have the appearance I have no substance.

I have the appearance I have no substance. This is what Peter is saying about these people. They do not have lives that reflect the salvation of Jesus Christ.

And so he's reminding us that obedience is a sign. Obedience contributes nothing to our salvation and it earns us nothing from God.

[20 : 38] And those who God saves will grow in obedience. Our obedience earns us nothing from God. it contributes in no way to our salvation.

And those who are saved will grow in obedience. And so we have an encouragement here to confirm our belonging to Jesus Christ through our obedience.

We also have a serious warning. It is a call to self examination. Are you a Christian? Do you see signs of God being at work in your life?

Am I growing? Is there fruit? Right? Remember, it is the fruit that shows you what kind of plant you have. It is not until there's growth that you know what you're dealing with.

And so I'll put it this way. If you do not desire and seek to grow in holiness, you should not expect verse 11 to have an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[21 : 57] It is possible to call yourself a Christian and yet it is clear by your behavior that you have no reason to believe you are.

God will be to God to look at our lives and ask is there fruit?

Not that there's perfection, not that we've arrived, but we see God at work doing what he has promised to do for those who have faith in him.

It is not because salvation is by works, it isn't, but because those God saves, God sanctifies. Those God saves, he sanctifies.

Hebrews chapter 12 tells us this, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

[22 : 59] Holiness is necessary. those God saves, he also sanctifies. If we do not see fruit in our lives, it may be a sign to us that we are just going through the motions.

It may be a sign to us that we have had all the words of faith, and it's time for us to actually embrace faith, actually time for us to repent of our sins, to recognize that there are many reasons people are at the church, community, fellowship, access to all sorts of things, but there is only one reason that matters, that we acknowledge that we are sinners in the sight of God with no hope outside of his mercy, and that it is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we have any hope.

There is great encouragement in this passage, and there is great challenge. Are you a Christian?

Chapter 2, especially in verses again 20 and 21, we're going to meet those who claim to be Christians but are not, and Peter is going to detail for us the judgment that they are going to face.

when I was ordained back in 2018, my parents gave me this calligraphy print that now hangs in my office in the back, and at the bottom it has my full name and then it has the date, I think it's May 20, 2018, and it has the name of our church.

And above it there's a drawing, and it's of a tree, and within the branches of the tree are written the words of John chapter 15, verse 5.

[25 : 01] I am the vine, you are the branches, whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

And it's a reminder to me, right, every time I'm in my office, that God is the one who's at work. If we have any hope of growing in obedience, it's because of Jesus. He is the vine, we are the branches.

So we don't whip up obedience, we don't pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Instead, we recognize God is the one at work in our lives. Remember, that's the logic of all of this.

We don't look to our works to see if we've earned salvation, we look to our works because those God saves, he sanctifies. And so we turn back again and again to that, that we remember our growth is a product of God as our source and our life.

[26 : 04] Jesus is the vine, we are only branches. And so if we are in him, we can have tremendous confidence and hope. Knowing that he is giving us everything that we need to grow.

It's the vine that shoots the water to the branches. It's the vine that provides them with the nutrients, right? If you cut the vine, the branch off from the vine, what's going to happen? It's going to die. Leave it outside in Colorado, it won't be green very long. It is God who gives us everything we need for obedience. He is the one who is at work.

And so we know we cannot do anything apart from Christ. If this church, right, if we were to experience a major revival and God were to pour his spirit out in a special way and people were pouring in and we were to have three services, four services, because that's the only way we could fit everyone in.

And someone asked us, how did it happen? What would we say? It would be wrong for us to say, wow, we had an amazing strategy and we are just so smart.

[27 : 17] No, God was at work. Praise his name. We're not sure how it happened, but he in his power has done a mighty work in here. He is the vine. We are the branches.

When you're walking in the neighborhoods, when I go in the neighborhoods and I see a beautiful flower garden, what do I think? Wow, those flowers are so hardworking and smart. No, I think that person who lives there is such a great gardener and loves and cares for that box of plants.

God is the one at work, not us. He is the vine. We are the branches. We are doing everything for his honor and his glory. Remember when we studied 1 Peter, I told you this quote from Corrie Ten Boom, who was an amazingly successful Christian speaker and had many people say many wonderful things to her.

And so she said this, when people come up and give me a compliment, Corrie, that was a good talk, or Corrie, you were so brave. I take each remark as if it were a flower. At the end of each day, I lift up the bouquet of flowers I have gathered throughout the day and say, here you are, Lord.

Lord, it is all yours. Here you are, Lord. It is all yours because she knows that all the fruit in her life, any fruit in her life, is the product of what God has done, not what she has done.

[28 : 43] And so there is no place in the Christian life for patting ourselves on the back. There is no place for self-congratulation. There is no place for beating our chests. We do not praise ourselves, but we praise God.

And so that's why we come here week after week. We are reminding ourselves that God is the one who receives the glory. That's why we start our service singing two hymns of praise to God.

That's why we end it singing hymns of praise to God. We remind ourselves every week that we praise not ourselves, but our great God. Worship protects us from narcissism.

God is the one at work, and he tells us in John 15 to abide in him. We abide in him first for salvation, recognizing that we have no hope outside of him.

And we abide in him for the rest of our lives. Ongoing abiding. Everything we've already talked about. Abiding in him through prayer. Abiding in him in his word.

[29 : 45] Abiding in him as we gather together with other Christians. Abiding in him as we have confession and repentance in relationship. Trusting that he's the one who is at work.

That is the source of our growth. And of course, abiding, right, is only for those who have faith in Jesus Christ. There is only one way to be attached to the vine, and that is through Jesus.

It is through our faith and trust and confidence in him. And so as we ask this question, are we actually Christians? If the answer we come up with is we're not sure, if the answer is no, there is only one choice, one option, and that is to run to the only vine.

Jesus is our hope and our only hope in this world for any real and true growth and change. And so for those who have faith in him and those who do not, the call is always to Jesus Christ.

He is the vine. We are the branches. Several years after my dad started the garden plot, he also decided he wanted to plant some apple trees and some peach trees in our backyard.

[31 : 06] Now if you plant apple trees, you don't look for good fruit right away. You need to wait several years. And so during this waiting time, of course my dad was not idle.

He was at work. He planted two by two stakes in the ground to hold the plants firm so that the wind would not be able to shake them when they didn't have any roots. He put wraps around the base of the tree to protect them from squirrels.

He made sure, those are a thing in the East Coast. He made sure there was a hole in the ground that was the right size. He made sure there was the right kind of fertilizer for this tree, right?

He is tending for it in all sorts of ways. He's pruning it. He's spraying it for insects. He wants to make sure there's the right amount of nutrients there, right? That tree was always an apple tree before it gave any fruit, tended to and cared for by my father.

And when the fruit came, then we knew for sure. This is an apple tree. The fruit wasn't perfect, but it was good.

[32 : 25] Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. Our heavenly father is tending to us and gardening us.

He is protecting us so that the winds come, we won't be blown over when our roots haven't grown. He is giving us the nutrients and the rich food that we need through fellowship with one another and through the power of his word.

He is protecting us from those things that might attack us and tear us down. And he is doing all those things, not because we have fruit, but so that we would produce it.

Did that tree produce fruit? Absolutely. Because of the nutrients and protection and care of my father. Do we as Christians produce fruit?

Absolutely. Because of the nutrients and care and protection of our heavenly father. God is tending to us and caring for us so that we would produce fruit.

[33 : 40] What is the relationship between our obedience and our salvation? The fruit of obedience is what confirms and verifies that God is the one gardening our lives.

He has cultivated a rich harvest, and so we work hard to see that in our lives. We work to see it in part now, and we work to see it fully in the future when, verse 11, we will have an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me. Dear Father in Heaven, we thank you that you are a good gardener. You are at work in our lives, bringing fruit to bear.

We ask that you would continue to do that, that you would bring us the joy that comes from seeing the growth that you provide for the gospel. We ask that you would give opportunities for serious self-examination, that if there are those who call themselves Christians that have no fruit or sign of faith, that you would convict them of sin and their need for repentance even now, and that you would bring them to a true and saving faith in Jesus Christ, the kind of faith that leads to a rich harvest.

We thank you that we are not the gardeners, but you are, and so we ask for these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.