

# "Our Rescue, God's Guarantee"

Text: 2 Peter 1:2-11

**May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

Dear Fellow Servants of Jesus Christ, first a question: *What did you get from the introduction you just read or heard? Did you even hear it? Did you give it any conscious thought, or has it become so familiar that it is now just comfortable words that we routinely ignore?*

This morning's greeting is the first verse of our sermon text, and there is enough in this one short verse to serve as a sermon text all on its own. The word translated "**knowledge**," for example, really has no single-word equivalent in English. It would best be translated as "*certain or irrefutable knowledge*." What God is therefore here telling us is that true grace and peace can only be ours in connection with the certain knowledge God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. There is more to find here, but regard this as evidence of a problem that we all share. No matter how important the information, no matter how great the promises, and no matter how eternal the consequences, we are all fully capable of yawning through some of the most important and critical revelations given to us by God in his Word. We can be particularly adept at ignoring that which requires a bit of thought and concentration on our part – again, even when the gifts offered are beyond compare and the stakes are eternal (heaven or hell.)

The answer, the solution or remedy, is to truly *study* God's Word – to dissect it and to examine it in intricate detail until we grasp what it is that our God is communicating to us. That is our goal this morning, and that part of God's Word that we will dissect and study is the inspired Word of God recorded in 2 Peter, the First Chapter, beginning with the introduction we just failed to hear:

**<sup>ESV</sup> 2 Peter 1:2-11** *May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. <sup>3</sup> ¶ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. <sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and*

*steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. <sup>11</sup> For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

These are the inspired words of our God. That we might not simply hear these words and forget them, but rather be strengthened, comforted, and grow through their study, so we begin with this simple prayer: "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

One of the greatest obstacles that prevents a greater appreciation for the gospel of Jesus Christ is our dismal lack of appreciation for the predicament in which we found ourselves, and the escape or rescue that was necessary if we were to avoid an eternity of unspeakable torment in hell. This, therefore, has to be our starting point this morning. My prayer for each of us is a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, both the horror of our former captivity and the absolutely incredible escape or rescue that is ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

It's difficult to come up with an earthly parallel to our utter helplessness before God the Holy Spirit rescued us. Maybe the best example I've ever heard was the plight of that young lady in 1968 who was kidnapped and buried alive in a plywood box, her only connection to the outside world a small air tube that led to the surface. This woman understood what few in this life have ever truly experienced: *utter helplessness*. If she was to live, she had to *be* rescued – which, thankfully, she was after more than three days. We can draw certain comparisons and contrasts between that poor woman buried in a plywood box and our own terrifying predicament. While she was held by human captors, we were held by Satan himself. Where she was powerless to overpower her captors; we had no will or strength even to resist, let alone to escape on our own. In fact where most prisoners can find something to do to work toward their own escape, we could do absolutely nothing to work toward our own release – there was simply nothing available for us even to try.

Stop for a moment and contemplate the true horror of your own dilemma, your own incarceration or imprisonment. You absolutely had to escape if you were to escape an eternity in hell, and you were absolutely powerless to take even the simplest steps to secure your freedom. This is the reality of the helplessness and sheer terror of our captivity in unbelief. And it gets even worse. Not only were we buried and utterly helpless in our own box of unbelief, we had absolutely no sense or idea of the danger we were in. None whatsoever. Satan is a master at that – at convincing his captives that what they really have is freedom, at imagining that all is well. That's unbelief. That was each one of us. Those who live in true freedom through faith in Jesus Christ could recognize the terror of our situation; we could not.

Understand that it is absolutely necessary that you and I come to terms with our former situation, because it is really not until we come to terms with such horror, helplessness, apathy and impending calamity that we can begin to appreciate the impact of the words of our text that describe our release, our escape: ***"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire."***

Savor these words. Study them. Wrap yourself in them. Meditate on them until the full force of their message envelops your very soul. Who or what rescued us? Peter tells us that it was through ***"his precious and very great promises"*** that we have been released from the prison of our own unbelief. This is purest, sweetest gospel. While our God certainly delights in obedience, we were powerless to supply the sort of obedience that was demanded for our release - our escape from the prison of our own sinfulness. The Law demanded *perfect* obedience in every way and at all times. Since we could never supply such perfection, we needed someone else to supply what we could not - to rescue us. But by what means? Our text teaches us that it was by ***"precious and very great promises."*** The ***promises*** mentioned here stand in stark contrast to the "do it yourself" mentality of work righteousness, which is why we first need to understand true helplessness. All but the Christian religion are based on an "earn your own way into eternity" mindset. All but true Christianity teach that *you* must provide your own escape through your own efforts. Christianity alone teaches that our only means of escape is to be rescued by a Savior who would do for us what we could not and would not do for ourselves. By keeping the law perfectly in our place, Jesus carried us to freedom by

earning the forgiveness for our sins through his death on the cross. Our escape has been accomplished by Jesus Christ. His perfect life and innocent death dug us out of our tomb of unbelief and set us free. Jesus Christ was our only hope, and he did for us what no one else could ever do.

While this is certainly reason enough to thrill to the message of our text, don't miss the other incredible proclamations found here. Here we also learn that not only has Jesus made a way of escape for every single prisoner, by ***"his own glory and excellence"*** he has also made us ***"partakers of the divine nature."***

There is nothing on earth that can even begin to compare to what God here reveals to us. Through faith in the promise of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, we not only escape eternal damnation, we are made ***"partakers of the divine nature."*** We have been made brothers and co-heirs together with the One who rescued us. God now lives *in us*. But to be a ***"partaker of the divine nature"*** refers not only to the new man that has been created in us, but also to the fact that we will one day share in the glory of heaven. Not only have we been lifted above the filth and perversion of this world, we will also reign with Christ Jesus in all eternity. Having been rescued from the box of our own unbelief, we are now different people than when we were in that box, but the best is yet to come. What powerful, comforting, invigorating, and uplifting facts are here revealed to us. Thanks be to God, who gives us such a victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is where we are now, but what guarantee does God give us concerning the future? Could you imagine anyone, having been rescued from the unspeakable horror of being buried alive, ever wanting to be returned to that dreadful place and condition? I could – on Judgment Day. Compared to hell, being buried alive would look pretty good. That's exactly what Jesus was talking about when he said that on Judgment Day the godless would be begging the mountains to fall on them, and for the hills to cover them. No one would ask for such a thing unless the only other option was unspeakably worse.

Peter is well aware that, as ridiculous as it may sound, Christians are nonetheless very capable of foolishness on an even greater scale. Having been freed from the devil's dungeons, Christians down through history have inexplicably returned to the very pit of despair from which they had been rescued. How could such a thing happen?

In most cases, the faith that was created in their hearts – the very thing that brought about their escape – that same faith was abused and starved, literally to death. Such things don't tend to happen all at once; they occur gradually, almost imperceptibly. It usually begins with a sense of apathy and complacency in the heart of a child of God. Sin is tolerated and allowed to eat away at our souls. Church attendance becomes sporadic, and then ends altogether. The tender plant that is a new Christian faith is never watered with the Word of God. The Christian does not grow in his knowledge and understanding of God's Word, and he begins to wither and fade. Before he knows it, he finds himself right back in the box – *and is inexplicably fine with that.*

There is no doubt that we are saved by faith; yet the amazing truth that the Holy Spirit communicates to us in the second half of our text is God's guarantee regarding the future. How can we ever know that we won't be so foolish as to throw away what has been given to us? Hear God's promise in our text: ***"Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. <sup>8</sup> 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."*** And then here's that guarantee from God himself: ***"Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall."*** God himself is here telling us: *"You want to keep from ever becoming entombed again? Here's how you access the power that guarantees that you will never lose the freedom you now have."*

Make no mistake. It is certainly no secret to anyone here that we are not saved by what we do, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So also our text assures us: ***"For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"** Our salvation is by God's grace – an undeserved, unearned gift from our God, yet how foolish to reject the wisdom and encouragement of our God regarding the care and maintenance of the saving faith that he has created in us. How foolish to risk eternal torment in hell by abusing the means of grace – his Word and sacrament – or the practice of the Christian virtues he has here listed. Having been brought to faith, we can now cooperate, however weakly, in the work of preservation. Because you are no longer dead, you can not only *want to* do the good and right thing, you can take steps to safeguard your freedom. Jesus himself once promised, ***"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."***<sup>ESV</sup>(John 8:31-32) So also here

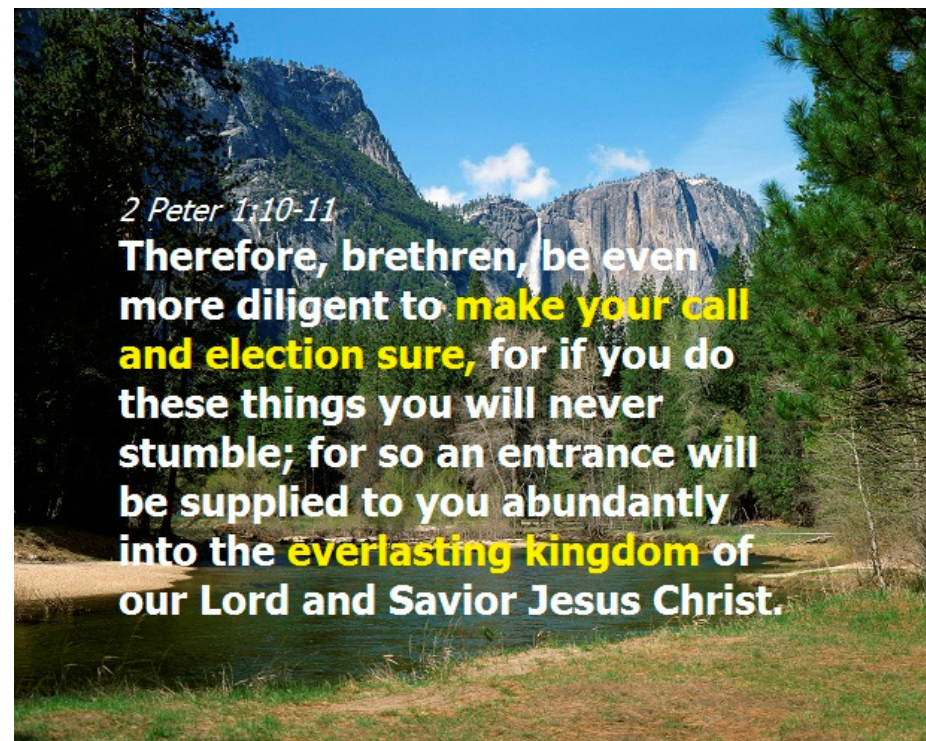
God gives us perfect direction at what we can do, here and now, to access his power and preservation. We have his divine promise: ***"if you practice these qualities you will never fall."*** Doesn't this tell us that this list of virtues is worthy of our attention, understanding, and implementation?

God grant to each of us this morning a full and complete understanding of the horror of the captivity that was once ours, the grace to thrill to the escape that has been provided for every single one of us by God's undeserved love through faith in Jesus Christ alone, astonishment at the change that has been worked in us, pure excitement at what lies ahead, and the humble wisdom to makes use of the power he has placed at our disposal to preserve us in the freedom and future we have been given. Amen.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-9** "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. <sup>2</sup> You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you... <sup>6</sup> Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' <sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? <sup>8</sup> And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? <sup>9</sup> ¶ "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 6:10-20** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

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## ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

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**The 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – August 29, 2021**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 19 (Stanzas 1-2, 5-6) (Red Hymnal)

"All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**First Lesson:** (Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9) We are here reminded that obedience to God's Commandments is always pleasing to our God. Why would we need to be reminded of such things? Because those who know and believe that they are saved by grace through faith can expect to be targeted by Satan. The devil would love for us to come to believe that disobedience is now acceptable to God, since we are saved by faith in Jesus and not by our own works. Yet the new man in us longs to walk in harmony with God's will, despite the persuasive urgings of our sinful flesh.

## Psalm 118 (Supplement page 29) (Brown Hymnal)

**Second Lesson:** (Ephesians 6:10-20) Although keeping the commandments is certainly pleasing to our God, our second lesson reminds us that it is not our actions that save or protect us. Such gifts come always and only from our God, through His power and by His mercy. In this reading we are reminded of the unique, spiritual armor that our God has prepared to preserve us in this one true saving faith. How foolish to fail to make use of these gifts, or to ignore this protection in the face of such danger.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15 (Brown Hymnal)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 746 (Brown Hymnal)

"Father Most Holy, Merciful and Tender"

## The Sermon – Text: 2 Peter 1:2-11 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Our Rescue, God's Guarantee"

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Post-Sermon Hymn – 353 (Stanzas 1-3) (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest"

## The Prayers

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn – 353 (Stanzas 4, 6-7) (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Jesus Christ, My Savior Blest"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

## Attendance – Sunday (31) Average (30)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – Living Savior of Eden Prairie has called seminary graduate Nick Naumann. Pastor Aaron Ude has returned the call to Faith Lutheran of Manchester, MO. That congregation has now called Pastor Caleb Schaller. Michael Sprengeler, who previously served in the public ministry of the CLC, is considering the calls to Redeemer of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich. Pastor Ben Libby is considering the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne. Tony Bolen, a former pastor in the LCMS, has applied for colloquy in the CLC.

**Church Projects** – We are chipping away at this summer's Church Project list. Thanks to those who have given of their time and talents. Please see Trustee Coordinator Brian Fettig if you have questions.

**September Preview** – We return to our normal (non-summer) schedule in September. The following is a list of start-dates for the various classes and events coming next month:

September 6	Labor Day
September 7-9	West Central Pastoral Conference in Sioux Falls, SD
September 12	Sunday School and Bible Class resume
September 12	Church Council meeting.
September 15	First Confirmation Class
September 20-23	CLC Board Meetings in Eau Claire
September 29	Mid-Week Bible Study resumes