

Have you ever wondered if your faith is truly authentic or merely superficial ? You don't want – or have – to wait until you stand at heaven's gate to know whether or not you are saved !

The first letter of St. Peter provides a practical manual for the Christian life – and his testimony about faith can help clarify yours.

Most people can identify with faith that waxes and wanes, seems strong one moment and weak another.

Peter's faith was so strong he walked on water, but so weak in the next moment he nearly drowned. His mighty faith declared Jesus the promised Savior, but was soon so weak he swore he never knew Him.

In 1 Peter 1:3 the apostle Peter writes this about faith: *“According to His great mercy, God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

Peter says it is according to God's great mercy, so it is not something we can attain ourselves. Most people have a vague idea that salvation is a result of personal attainment – living a life good enough to earn a place in heaven.

But if you are born again, that's something God does, not you. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 *“Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again from above he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* He explains it in John 1:12: *“But to all who did receive Jesus, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of the will of the flesh, but of God.”*

We can never earn salvation – it is a gift of God's grace, a result of the atonement of Jesus Christ, when He paid for sins on the cross. When you receive that gift, and believe that He paid for your sins, you are putting your faith in Christ and nothing else.

The Bible says salvation is by atonement, not attainment. Salvation is not something you can do, but something only God can do. Faith must have an object, and Christ is the only secure object of saving faith.

Ephesians 2:8 puts it this way: *“for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works.”*

The new birth points to a living hope, because Jesus Himself clinches the guarantee of faith. He not only lived a perfect life and paid the penalty for sins on the cross, He offers forgiveness and new life. And you can trust Him because He proved His works and His words by rising from the dead.

Peter says, Jesus is alive, and I am alive in Him! My hope is not in something I can do, but in what only God can do. My trust is in Christ alone – not in some vivid religious experience or some misty notion of my own mind or abilities. Being born again brings authentic faith – and living hope!

Coming up: we'll explore how new birth and living hope - authentic faith - relate to the trials of life.

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