

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

134. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 3

WAOY Tuesday 01/15/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to look at what the Apostle John taught about, "The Assurance of Salvation". So, let's read **1John 3: 19-24** again together:

19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Now as I was saying on the last broadcast- literally millions of people seem to struggle today with doubting their Salvation- while others seem to go through life greatly assured. John is teaching here that many who are very assured of their Salvation should not be so confident- while some who struggle with their Salvation, shouldn't. So what exactly is Biblical Assurance and how can a person know for sure if he has been truly born again? Those are the issues that we will deal with during our examination of these six verses in **1John**.

Now on the last broadcast- we were talking about how that our assurance and our ability to have assurance is tied to a correct and biblical understanding about what Salvation is all about- so on today's broadcast- I want to continue in that vein.

Assurance in being saved is a direct result of knowing Jesus Christ in Truth. It is about having a personal and real and vibrant and alive and ongoing and everlasting experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. But if your understanding of Salvation is skewed; if your comprehension about how and why a man is saved is not true- if it is not biblical- then either one of two things will be true about your assurance.

Either your assurance will be like the Pharisees or it will be non-existent- but rest assured that no one can have genuine assurance unless and until they understand what the Bible teaches about Salvation. So in order for us to properly understand the truth about assurance – we need to first examine the false teachings about this important issue.

So let's begin by examining how the Pharisees developed their assurance about their Salvation by reading what Jesus taught about this in **Luke 18:9-14:**

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now I want to look at this very closely. Let's read again why Jesus gave us this parable by looking at verse 9:

... He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

Now this verse gives us the entire key as to what the religion of the Pharisees was all about. The Bible says that these people- who were the single most religious people on earth- did not trust in God for their Salvation- they trusted that they themselves were righteous. This verse gives us insight into several key elements.

First of all- this verse correctly tells us that being saved and going to Heaven is about much more than simply being forgiven. Now when I say that- please don't think that I am *minimizing* forgiveness. Not at all. Without forgiveness – nothing else matters. We are all doomed except that the Blood of Jesus Christ forgives us. But in order for anyone to go to Heaven- they must not only be forgiven- they must also be righteous.

So the key is not whether we need to be righteous or not- clearly we do. But the key is in just *how* we obtain righteousness. And there are only two choices. Either we develop or *own* righteousness by doing good deeds- or else we must have *another* righteousness- that is not ours and which does not belong to us- credited to us by faith alone.

Now although there are literally over 9,000 different religions in the world today- as far as righteousness is concerned- there are really only two. Every false religion and every man-made philosophy on earth teaches the very same thing about righteousness- that we are made righteous by what *we* do- that by obeying certain rituals or by doing certain acts or by performing certain deeds- we develop our *own* righteousness to the point that we literally earn Heaven.

For example- in the Islamic faith- the Koran teaches that by praying five times each day and by doing certain moral things- that the follower can earn his place in heaven. Of course, in Islam- Muhammad said that no one really knows for sure- so the only sure way that anyone can go to Heaven under Islam- is to die in a legally declared Jihad- which is why intelligent men who have PHD's are willing to strap bombs to their waist and blow themselves up.

In Mormonism- being "moral" is the same thing as being saved- so the goal in Mormonism is not to be born again- it is to become moral.

The Roman Church teaches that faith is infused in the child at baptism and that by attending the Mass; praying the rosary; and by partaking of Communion- that Salvation is linked to us by us keeping those rituals and ceremonies.

Secular Humanism teaches that by developing our mind and by exercising our own free will and human will power- we can choose to do certain noble and good things and as we do those things- we become “good”.

So I hope you can see that all of these false religions and human philosophies all teach the same thing about righteousness- and the goal of these teachings is to show man how he can improve his *own* condition.

So the logic that we get from not properly understanding how we are made righteous- leads us to believe that what is *right* with man is what lies *inside* him- already at birth- and that all we need to do is learn how to *release* that “goodness” which is already inside us. This is where we get concepts like “looking inward” or “releasing the power from within” or “tapping into the inner strength” and other pagan concepts that have nothing to do with Divine Truth.

But Biblical Christianity teaches that what is *wrong* with Man is what is on the *inside* of him at birth- his corrupt heart; his fallen nature; his love of sin; and his depraved mind. And the Bible teaches that what is right is all *external* to Man- things which are not inherent inside him- like an external Truth- the Bible; and an external Savior- Jesus Christ; and an external Power- God.

Christianity teaches that these things do not exist *inside* Man at birth at all- but that they are all “foreign” or “external” to lost and fallen Man and therefore- lost Man is not only *incapable* of doing what he needs to do to be saved- but because the level of his depravity is so great- lost Man is also *unwilling* to do what he needs to do to be saved.

So what do you do with someone who is both unable and unwilling to be saved? God- in His great Mercy has to sovereignly override Man’s natural inclination to run from God and to hide from God so as to give to fallen Man what he does not already possess- the desire to love and the power to serve God. And God does this by giving lost, sinful, depraved Man a new nature. And this new nature has to come to man *first- before he is saved-* or else Man will never- of his own accord- ever repent and trust in Jesus Christ for Salvation.

But when you believe that you have to make *yourself* righteous because the false religion and false man-made philosophy that has deceived you has taught you this- then you don’t know that God will do for you what you *cannot* do for yourself. And the result is that you

begin to obey what the false religion has taught you and you go about to try to make yourself righteous by and through your own power.

And as we struggle and put forth human effort try to make ourselves righteous by following the teachings of those false religions and man-made philosophies- we will eventually migrate into either one position or the other.

Some of those who struggle real hard to develop their own righteousness will begin to take great pride in the effort that they are putting forth to try to cause themselves to be righteous and will say to themselves, *“Look what I have done. If those other people would only pray as long as I pray or if those other people would only put forth as much effort as I am putting forth- then they could be as righteous as I am”*. So these self- righteous Pharisees will begin to thank God- that they are not as “bad” or as sinful as those “other” people- just like it says the self-righteous man did in **Luke 18**. But we need to remember, beloved, that even though these people are very sincere and are really and truly trying so hard to earn their own righteousness- that Jesus Christ said that these people were not saved at all.

Now that is bad- but the flip side is even worse. Others who are trying real hard to be good enough to earn heaven go in the opposite direction. And while these people don’t become self- righteous like the others so- they just lose all hope. And these people put forth great amounts of effort too- but they see that they are still sinful- in spite of their best effort. And so because they do not correctly understand how God alone makes sinners fit for Heaven- these deceived people sink into complete despair and they throw their hands up and they walk away.

And sadly, countless millions of people are in one of these two groups right now. And both groups are lost and both are deceived. So untold agony and great suffering goes on every day because people have been deceived into thinking that Salvation originates with themselves and that they have to do something to earn a place in Heaven. Sincere, earnest people are living in either absolute terror that their next sin is going to rob them of eternal life or else they sit back fat dumb and happy over their own self- righteous goodness. And I personally struggled with this myself for decades and went in and out of both groups for years. I loved Jesus with all my heart- but because I was taught wrong and because I believed wrongly about Salvation- my assurance was not real nor was it lasting.

Now recently- the diary of Mother Teresa was found and in that diary we can see clearly that this woman- who did enormous amounts of good toward the poor people of India- did not have a Biblical understanding of Salvation. And as a result- this dear soul was trying her hardest to earn her own Salvation by her good deeds. And the result was according to her own writings- was that she lived her entire life without any assurance at all.

So in these six verses- John is giving us a correct understanding of Salvation- so that we may have strong assurance that we are truly born again.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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