

# So That You May Know

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

### Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

#### 136. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 5

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WAOY Thursday 01/17/08

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 on the last broadcast- we were looking at what John taught about our Assurance- and I want to continue that on today's broadcast. John taught that our Assurance was as good as our Salvation was good. If we are truly saved- then we are to trust that Christ has done for us what we *cannot* do for ourselves and our assurance will be strong and vibrant and alive and eternal. But if our Salvation is not clear; if we have only gone through the motions and have not truly been born from above- then we have no right to eternal life and therefore- we have no link to any assurance at all.

Now I'm going to get in trouble for saying this- but there is no way around this- so I must say what I am about to say.

I used to believe that Salvation was conditional. I used to believe that Salvation was only as good as I made it out to be- that I got *out of* God what I put *into* God. And I believed that because I was taught that and I might say that it did make some sense to me.

I was glorious born again in the early 1970's and have endeavored to love and serve God since that time- but several years ago- God led me into something in my Church that radically changed my life and my views about both Salvation and Assurance. In October of 2002, I began a verse by verse study of the Book of **Romans**. And I spent nine years and nine months examining every single verse of that glorious Masterpiece. So you can see that it was *not* a shallow study.

Now I had heard all my Christian life that about 65% of all Christian Doctrine was in **Romans**- especially those Doctrines that dealt with Salvation. I also heard that every major revival since the Resurrection began after someone had done a very deep study on the **Epistle of Romans**.

For example- when a Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther studied **Romans** 500 years ago- God opened his eyes and his heart was so set on fire about the truth of Justification that God used this man to ignite the Protestant Reformation back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And the result of that Reformation was that the Church was called back to a Biblical understanding of the things of God.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Jonathan Edwards was used by God to begin what we call today "The First Great Awakening"- where over a million souls converted to Christ- it was right after Edwards had taught for thirteen years on the Book of **Romans**. George Whitfield said that **Romans** changed his life as he preached an average of 2 sermons every single day- seven days a week- for over 40 years- and saw God move among the poor and uneducated people of England.

In every case with Spurgeon and Wesley and all of those men who today we regard as being the giants of our Faith- their testimony was the same- the key to it all was a correct understanding of **Romans**.

So it was with great anticipation that I began to study the greatest letter ever written in the Fall of 2002. Little did I know what would happen.

I began the study and was teaching fairly well, when I began to run into trouble. At first it was not a big problem- but soon the trouble began to grow. You see, the power of a Bible Study is in *how* you

conduct it. If you just skip around and hit the high points and move on- you will very rarely, if ever, get the full impact of what God's Word actually says.

But when you slow things down- when your goal is to understand what God has said- not to simply finish- when you go verse by verse; line upon line; precept upon precept; when you break down each word- back into the original languages; when you study the terms and the definitions of those words; the tense of the verbs; the subject of the prepositions; the proper historical context of the setting in which Paul or Peter or John or Moses actually lived in and spoke to and wrote- then that which God inspired begins to affect you on a deep and a profound level.

By going slowly over each divinely inspired Word and taking the time to carefully examine what each Word said and what each Word meant- and by discussing it and allowing each Word to settle into your heart and mind- God begins to deal with you and things that you never understood before; concepts that seemed so strange; aspects of God's Word that appeared to be contradictory- begin to make sense.

And that is exactly what happened to me. At first it was exhilarating- it set my heart on fire. But soon it began to trouble me. Again- that is the way that it is with the Bible. At first glance- the Words of Scripture are exciting and they are exciting primarily because they are new and fresh- so there is a type of emotional ecstasy about Bible Study at first.

But when you go deeper- below the surface- and you dig past just what the Bible *says* and you get into what the Bible *means* by what it says- then the inspired Words of Scripture begin to affect you on a very profound level.

This is when the Power of God the Spirit takes control of the Word- and soon you get past simply being excited by what God says- but now you enter into a place where the Word of God begins to make demands on you and begins to require of you and begins to alter and change you. And this is where the rubber meets the road.

Then you begin to see that if what God said over here is true- then that means that what I thought about this over there must *not* be true. So, you begin to connect the dots. And then all those verses that you have read all your life – that you really didn't pay much attention to-

suddenly begin to jump off the page and you begin to see things and understand things that you never saw before.

You see, even though the Bible had 40 human writers who wrote over a 1500 year time frame- there is only one “Author” of Scripture. God the Holy Spirit authored every Word of every Book of the Bible and so even though different men *physically* wrote down the Words; and even though they used different styles of writing and different terminology and even different languages- the Bible is really one single congruent Book that fits perfectly together.

So if in your heart and mind- God begins to makes sense of one verse or one Passage or one Book- then the other verses and the other Passages and the other Books also begin to make sense- and suddenly- the whole Bible comes alive.

Now before my Bible Study on Romans- I did what a lot of people do, and I cherry picked certain verses that thrilled my heart and I would quote those verses and build my sermons around them and put my faith in them and claim them and so on. But when I began to systematically study the Bible- even those verses that I formally thought of as being boring or a waste of time- began to rise in importance and I quit conducting Bible Studies in that shallow way and I began to look at the entirety of Scripture in its correct context.

So, at first, the troubling was slight. But the deeper I got into **Romans**- the more I became troubled at certain issues- especially about Salvation and Assurance. And the reason that I was troubled is that what **Romans** was clearly saying about these issues was *not* what I had been taught. **The Epistle Romans** was teaching things that I had never understood before- truths that were different from what I had believed for decades and different from what I myself had taught.

Now some of these differences were slight- but some were massive. And some were even the exact *opposite* of what I had been taught and had believed for many years.

So very soon- my study in **Romans** became my torment. And each Sunday evening after everyone had left- and I was alone- I would fall on my face and cry out to God because that which **Romans** clearly taught was shaking me down to the core of my being. Many of the aspects of my own personal theology and beliefs that I had held for over thirty years were being systematically dismantled piece by piece by the

relentless onslaught of the inescapable Truth of what God had said in Scripture. And so needless to say, I was *not* a happy camper.

And on one particular Sunday Evening- this agony reached critical mass. And after everyone had left- I reached a place of no return. Either I had to stop my expositional study of **Romans** and begin to teach some other Book- or else I had to get up and publicly repent to my Church for believing and teaching *wrongly* about what God said about Salvation. Thank God I chose the latter.

And I can only tell you that it was God's Grace that showed me where I was wrong and it was God's Grace that gave me the strength to stand before the people of my Church that next Sunday Morning and confess my sin and pledge to them that from that day on- I would teach only what God has said in His Word. And even though not everybody was pleased with my decision- it was the right thing to do.

So I don't teach what I teach today because it is always easy to teach or easy to learn. It is true that *some* of what God says is simple and plain and wonderfully glorious and exhilarating. But it is *also* true that *some* of what God has said is difficult to grasp and it is deeply and profoundly *disturbing*. But regardless of whether it is easy or hard; whether it is encouraging or disturbing- if it is in Scripture- then it is true and it is right and as believers and the sheep of His Hand- we have a duty to study and learn what God has said. And once we get it right- we have the responsibility to teach it and love it and obey it and defend it from all detractors and not be ashamed of it- regardless of the consequences.

So through my study in **Romans**- God changed my entire ministry and God altered my focus and God was good to me to bless me even when I was wrong. And God was merciful to show me the Truth and so I proclaim that Truth today with boldness- not because I think I am right and I think that everyone who disagrees with me is wrong- not at all. I am bold to teach what God says because God is right and all of us- me included- have a great need to be constantly confronted with Divine Truth so that we may check our hearts and see if what we believe is what God has actually said- so that we may be faithful to Him Who called us.

And when we are confronted with the Truth of God's Word- it is inevitable that some of our closely held beliefs will suffer great damage. But that is good- because *some* of what we believe is not true- God didn't

say it. So it is only by being confronted with Divine Truth that we can see where we are off base. And at that point- we must choose our course of action.

When God's Word clearly shows us that what we believe is wrong- then we may reject God's Word and keep what we have – and I think that is fairly common. It isn't easy to change and it isn't easy to admit you are wrong. But the truth of the matter is, beloved, that we are wrong about some aspects of God and the things of God and that is the purpose of Bible Study – so that God's immutable Word will reveal to us *where* we are wrong- so that we may repent and believe the Truth.

But what we should do when Gods' Word reveals to us that we are wrong is to quickly repent and then accept that what God says is true and to humble ourselves to the Authority of Scripture and believe the Truth.

And I was wrong about Assurance because I didn't understand Salvation completely in a Biblical way. And it is a testimony to God's marvelous Sovereign Grace that I could be so wrong about how this all works out and still be saved.

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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