

So That You May Know

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

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

147. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 16

WAOY Wednesday 02/06/08

Welcome again, my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing to go over our verse by verse study of the Epistle of **1 John**, and today I want to continue to look at what John taught about the Assurance of our Salvation by reading **1John 3: 19-24-** so let's read those verses 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 our last broadcast- we were examining the role that our own hearts play in our Assurance and we were discussing the great difference between following our hearts and being led by God's Spirit.

John tells us in verse 24 that one of the best way that we know that we are saved is because God's Spirit dwells in us. And because God's Spirit dwells in us- certain things happen- which also encourages our Assurance.

For example- there is a truth about human beings that we need to know. It is human nature, dear friends, for us to want to run and hide from God. The first thing that Adam did in **Genesis 3** when he fell was to hide himself from God's Presence. Running from God and hiding

from God; avoiding God; staying in the darkness; trying our hardest to stay out of the Light has become the national sport.

God's Truth runs counterintuitive to our human nature. Now counter intuitive is a three dollar word that means that something is not normal; it is not natural. It doesn't follow the path of human reasoning or human thought.

Let me explain. Because we are fallen- we rebel. We do not have to be *taught* to rebel- we rebel *naturally* and *normally*- because it is *intuitive* for us to rebel. It is in our nature to rebel. And so our children rebel against us *-not* because someone influenced them to do so- but simply because in their nature to do so. *All* humans born after the Fall are rebels by nature. And that nature is a fallen, depraved, and sinful nature.

Every single human being born of woman has that rebellious, sinful depraved fallen nature. And *that* is what makes us lost. What we "do" does not make us lost- but who we "are" is what makes us lost. So, our "doing" is merely a *response* to who we "are". So our "lostness" is inherent in our DNA- it is imputed to us at the very moment of conception- which is why the Bible teaches that everybody born after the Fall has been radically and negatively *ruined* by the Fall.

Now this does not mean that everyone is as bad as they could be. So some people have a tendency to manifest their lostness *openly* and *blatantly* and *violently* and *publicly*- while others are more subtle and manifest their lost condition under the radar. But whether blatant or subtle- all people manifest the unarguable fact that they are lost and fallen and depraved and radically ruined by what Adam did over 6,000 years ago.

And in that lost, fallen, depraved, ruined condition- we do not naturally love God; we do not naturally seek after God; we do not naturally love to obey God; and we do not naturally crave God's Presence.

Submitting or yielding to God is not normal for lost and unsaved people; it is not natural; it doesn't come easily or naturally- so it must be taught and it must be learned and it requires that we exercise self-control.

Now what complicates this- and where many people get off base is that submitting to God is *not* simply matter of human will power. That is patently false and even sinful to think that. One of the most horrible

affects that the Fall had on us- is that it not only separated us from God- but it also destroyed any desire or ability that we had to love and serve God. So not only are fallen people sinful; not only are fallen people separated from God; not only are fallen people *unable* to fix their problem- by and through their own power- but fallen people are also *unwilling* to do so.

And this is the part of the Gospel that is so offensive and the part over which so much persecution and so much turmoil and so much controversy has gone on through the 2,000 years of Christianity.

But the Bible is crystal clear about this issue. Will power; human effort; making your mind up; putting forth more effort; trying harder; making promises; making New Year's Resolutions- all of those things combined will not wash one single sin away and does not have the ability to change the human nature. We must agree that we cannot save ourselves.

Science cannot forgive sins. Technology cannot change the human nature. Medicine cannot save your soul. Government cannot fix your sin problem. And more money will not redeem your fallen heart.

God and God alone saves souls. And God saves every single human being by Grace- unmerited favor; unearned love; undeserved mercy that we cannot possibly be worthy of- no matter what we do or what we don't do.

So no matter how you slice it or dice it- ultimately human will in unsaved and fallen man is *not* "free"- our will is in bondage to our corrupt and fallen nature. So all our desires and all our choices and all our loves and all our ambitions as lost people- are all corrupt and self-serving as a result of our nature being corrupt and depraved.

And the result of this fact is that people *cannot* and they *do not* become godly simply because they choose to exercise self- control. That's not Christianity- that is Humanism. The Bible teaches that it takes a miracle from God to save a human soul. It is the greatest supernatural event in all of history every time God takes a depraved fallen human being and washes him and puts His Spirit inside him and causes him to love and serve God.

So God and the things of God run *counterintuitive* to our own human reasoning. That is why we must be taught about God and we must be taught the things of God and that is why it is so easy for us to stray.

And never is this Truth more evident than when we are discussing the human heart. Many today teach a doctrine which says that if only we could tap into some “inner power” – then we could improve our condition. Others teach that lying somewhere deep inside of us is some “giant” that yearns to be free and that we need to learn how to free that inner “self” and that inner “power” and that inner “truth” so that we can be better people can be more satisfied and so that we can fulfill all that is in our hearts.

Let me say as best as I can- that you can't get more off base than that. The Bible teaches that it is precisely what is inside us that is what is wrong with us. Our hearts are wicked; our desires are corrupt and the only “power” that lies in us is the power to sin. Look at what Jesus said about this in **Matthew 15:17-20**:

17 "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?"

18 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.

19 "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

20 "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

Jesus said that out of the human heart proceed evil thoughts; murders; adulteries; fornications; thefts; false witness; and blasphemies. Now Jesus as not just listing several unrelated atrocities here- but was illustrating the point that in the natural function of the human heart- without nay supernatural intervention by God- that we will always transgress against God's Law and that we will never do what is pleasing in God's sight.

Everything *internal* in the life of fallen people is corrupt; it is wrong; it is sinful and depraved. And so it takes an *external* influence to redeem man- an *external* Savior; and an *external* Spirit and an *external* Gospel that is not inherent in the lost person. And Salvation is this *external* Spirit coming inside of us to transform us and to write on our hearts the Law of God- so that we will have both the will and the power to love and serve God.

The problem of course is discerning between our hearts- which may or may not be right and the Spirit which is *always* right. So without heavenly influence; without supernatural intervention; without God actively and purposefully and sovereignly working *in* us and *through* us- constantly dealing with our hearts; constantly convicting us of sin; constantly encouraging and empowering us- every single human being on earth would automatically revert right back to what we were before we were saved. And this is why Jesus is at the Right Hand of the Father right now interceding for us 24 hours every day and 7 days every week and that is why the Holy Spirit within us is crying out to God with groanings which cannot be uttered.

So how do we know for sure if we are being led by our hearts or by God's Spirit? One word- discernment. Discernment is the ability given by God to God's people to know right from wrong; to know good from evil; and to know the difference between that which is holy and that which is profane.

Now let's go over this slowly. Most people believe that since they are saved and since God dwells in them and since they are filled with God's Spirit therefore *any* internal urge is automatically from God. They believe that *any* internal impulse; *any* internal dealing is *always* and in all cases of and from God. And that is simply not true.

Discernment will divide between our hearts which may well crave after something evil and God's Spirit which will *always* lead us into all truth. And discernment comes from knowing and understanding and becoming acquainted with God and God's ways. And that knowing God and knowing God's Ways, dear friends is a process that comes over time and that is developed within you as a result of you spending time with God in prayer, Bible Study, and godly Fellowship.

And so, discernment does not come instantaneously. You don't trip and fall into discernment by accident. You don't go up front and have hands laid on you so that you can have spiritual discernment. Discernment comes about as you yield yourself to God and become more familiar with Scripture. And so your ability to exercise spiritual discernment *properly* is only as good as your correct knowledge of Scripture.

So, any teaching; and any effort; any action which promotes the development of spiritual discernment is good. But please understand, brothers and sisters- that as you yield yourself to those things that

strengthen spiritual discernment- you will always have a correlating and opposite effect on your flesh; your heart; and your own human desires. So either you build up your flesh by what you do and what you read and what you partake in or you build up your ability to discern- but you cannot do both at the same time. That which strengthens your ability to discern weakens your flesh and what weakens your ability to discern strengthens your flesh.

So every action that we take; every prayer that we pray; every activity that we are involved in; is either building up our ability to discern between the holy from the profane or it is tearing it down. And if we have the choice of building up or tearing down something that God said that we should have in us- I just don't understand why we would ever want to tear it down.

The bottom line is that the heart that is not disciplined and corrected and bridled by discernment will run rampant over us and lead us into error. And the heart that has been stung with the rod of correction will yield to God and will not interfere with us being led by God's Spirit.

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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