

So That You May Know

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

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

148. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 17

WAOY Thursday 02/07/08

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 on today's broadcast – I want to look at verses 22- 24- so let's read those three verses again:

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 here John says that those who are saved- receive what we ask of God. Now that is a very comforting statement but it is one that I think we need to examine because I would guess that the overwhelming amount of things that we ask for- we do *not* get.

So why is that? *Why* don't we get what we ask for? Well, the modern Church would say, "*Because we need to ask in faith*". But that is *not* what John teaches here. What is the reason that John teaches that is the guarantee of our prayers? Read the last part of verse 22:

... because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

John teaches here that the reason that we receive what we ask for is because we keep God's Commandments and because we do those things that are pleasing in God's sight. Now what exactly is John teaching here?

John is saying that because we are saved- we follow after Jesus. Those who are lost do *not* follow after Jesus. But those who are saved follow after Jesus. And so the reason that people do not follow after Jesus is because they are not saved.

Now we need to be reminded here that John is not teaching and I am not teaching sinless perfection. Saved people do not always walk perfectly before God. But having said that- we also have to say that saved people always *want* to walk perfectly before God; they are indeed *trying to never* sin; they are putting forth great effort to always be faithful and to endeavor to please the Lord in all that they do- even though they are not always successful.

But in that effort to obey- they fall short- and they sin. But those who don't want to please God at all; or who don't even care about whether they please God or not should not ever think that they are saved. So being saved is the same thing as saying that you have been filled with God's Spirit. And that means that God's Spirit that is now dwelling inside you is constantly dealing with you; constantly convicting you; constantly leading and guiding you and that alone proves that you belong to Jesus.

So John gives us great insight here into what he is saying. John says that the *reason* that we get what we ask for is because we keep God's Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His Sight.

But what does that mean? If we just settle here for a surface reading- we would come to the conclusion that only sinless people get what they ask for- and John was not teaching that.

So as we read this passage- we must remember a constant Truth about God. God is never in any way obligated to Man for anything. God is never in a position where He owes Man *anything*. We are *always* indebted to God but God is *never* indebted to us. Nothing that God does for us is on the basis that we earned it or that we deserve it or that we are entitled to it or that God is obligated to give it- but everything that God does for us is based upon one thing- Grace.

We do not get what we get from God because we performed correctly- that is not true. If that were true- then only perfect performers would ever get anything from God. Now you can rationalize this all you want to- but if you say that you are not sinless and if the basis upon which we get from God is obedience- then nobody would ever get anything from God- unless they obeyed perfectly. So that is *not* what John is teaching here.

Grace is the cornerstone of Christianity and yet I believe that fewer people understand Grace today than at any other time in Christian History. We say that Grace is unmerited favor- but that is just Church talk. So, we need to *elaborate* on that term. Grace is unearned love; Grace is undeserved special treatment and undeserved mercy. So, by default- Grace is *not* a “payment”. Grace is not a reward or something that we worked to achieve. Grace is not a wage. But in God’s economy there is a wage. Let’s read **Romans 6:23**:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now the word, “**wages**” comes from the Greek word that means: *a payment made to soldiers*. So this was not just *any* payment- but it was a *noble* payment an *important* payment upon which the safety and security of the Empire depended.

So when Paul used this term- it carried with it some nobility and honor. And Paul taught here that God indeed paid wages to people. What wage did God pay? God paid eternal death to those who had earned that payment by what they worked very hard to do.

And this payment of death was noble- it was proper; it was correct and a right “wage” for the “services” that the people had engaged in. What were those services? The Bible says- sin. So death- eternal death- everlasting death and torment in the flames of hell is a just and proper payment or wage for sin.

And those who receive that wage are *entitled* to it- they *earned* it- they worked hard to get it and it is proper and just and right and noble for God to pay them that wage. And so it is “fair” for God to give them what they worked so hard to get.

But there is another side to that equation. God says that along with the wage- there is also a free gift. And this gift is a gift in that it is *not* a wage. The gift was not earned; the gift cannot be earned; the gift was not deserved- it was “free”. And therefore it is *not* “fair” for God to give this free gift to those who get it because they didn’t do anything to earn it or deserve it.

And what is this free gift? The Bible says that the free gift is eternal life. And what is the basis upon which God gives that free gift? Grace. Unmerited favor; unearned special treatment; and undeserved love. And so, by definition- beloved- Grace is patently *unfair*.

You see, fairness is based upon our right to have earned something. For example- if I work for eight hours and my boss only pays me for six- then he is then unfair to me. But fairness also works the other way. If I don’t work at all- and my boss pays me for eight hours- then that too is unfair.

So by that definition- Salvation is of Grace and therefore Salvation is unearned; it is undeserved; and by definition- Salvation is not fair. And we will find out that everything that God gives to man is by Grace. Nothing is earned; nothing is deserved; and we are not entitled to anything that God does for us. So again, by definition, everything that we get from God is of Grace and is therefore unfair.

When God answers our prayers- he does so based upon His Own Mercy and His Own Will- *not* because we asked him for it. Because if what we ask for is *not* God’s Will- He will never give it no matter how much we want it and no matter how hard we pray.

So prayer is not about getting what we want. Prayer is all about you and I being molded and shaped and changed into God’s Image so that we only desire for that which we know to be God’s Will. And God always does what He pleases – and so our prayers are answered- only to

the degree that we have submitted our lives and our hearts and our requests to mirror that which God says is according to *His* Desires.

Therefore anything we get from God- is Grace. Anything we get from God is not based upon how much we are entitled to receive it or how obligated God is to give it- but is solely based upon God's Mercy. A sunset; a good meal; a child's laughter; a loving wife- none of those things are deserved- we are not entitled to get anything like that- those things are all blessings from a gracious and merciful Father to undeserving wicked sinners.

So when we ask God for anything- healing; blessings; prosperity; anything- we must come to God with this in mind- that the only thing that we *deserve* to get from God- the only "wage" that we have worked to earn- is eternal death. Our sins have been many and we deserve to get a "wage" or payment for those sins- everlasting damnation. But instead of that- God periodically blesses us and God periodically heals us and God periodically gives to us- not because He *owed* it to us- but simply because of His magnificent Grace and Mercy.

So when John is teaching here that we receive what we ask because we keep God's Commandments- we have to then look at the next verse to see what Commandments we have kept. So, let's read verse 23 again:

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.

The commandment that we are to keep is to believe on the Name of Jesus Christ. Now when John says here that we are to believe "on" the Name as opposed to "in" the Name- he is saying here that we are saved- not simply that we have a generic belief that someone named Jesus actually lived at some point in history.

So John is saying here that for no other reason other than we are saved- God does for us what we do not deserve Him to do. And if you think about this for a second- that is exactly what Grace is- unmerited or undeserved or unearned favor, love or special treatment- that is certainly not one bit fair.

Now when we say that Grace is unearned and undeserved- we also have to say that it is unearned and undeserved now and then we have

to say that Grace is unearned and undeserved later and then we have to say that Grace will *always* be unearned and undeserved.

When we've been there 10,000 years- Grace will still be unearned and undeserved. It will still be unmerited favor; undeserved special treatment and it will be love that we did not work for and are not entitled to receive and Grace will be at the moment- unfair.

Fair is you and me going to a devil's hell. Fair is eternal damnation. Fair is judgment. Fair is punishment. But Heaven- God's blessings- God's Mercy- Salvation- those things are all free gifts that we didn't work for and things that are unfair that we have.

So John was not teaching here that receiving answers to prayers is based upon something that we did- no, John was teaching that for no other reason than we are saved- God delights in blessing His children and of showing just how Gracious and Merciful He is.

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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