

Blessed Assurance
Selected Scriptures
Reading: John 12:12-26

Bethany Baptist Church
August 29, 2021
March 20, 2016 (Palm Sunday, a.m.)
January 30, 2011

...pray...

I've spent the past 3 weeks *pleading w/ you (esp you young people) to turn to Christ*. Today I want to *conclude* by considering what the NT teaches on "*assurance*" – how to *be confident* you are really a *Christian*.

Jesus wants you to *know for sure* your *sins are forgiven & Heaven is yours!* (That *assurance* is supposed to be a part of the *basic Christian package...*) Here's how the NT puts it...

- A. **2 Tim 2:12** *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*
- B. **Heb 10:19-22** – *Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*
- C. **1 Peter 1:3,4** *Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.*
- D. **1 John 5:13** *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*
- E. *John & Paul & Peter & the write of Hebrews all taught that you can/should know in this life where you are going in the next life!*

Three criteria of Christian confidence (assurance of your salvation):

1. **You embrace the right message. (1 Cor 15:1-5)**
2. **You live the new life. (2 Cor 5:17)**
3. **You follow the Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:14-17)**

I want to say it again: you should know for sure that you belong to Christ, you can know it right now!

Have you embraced the right message? Is it still your life's *most imp't. message!*?!

1. The *Apostle John* wrote an important *purpose-statement* near the end of his beloved story of *Jesus of Nazareth* (20:31): ***These*** [accounts] *have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

There are **two big truths** here related to your *salvation & your assurance.*

- a. #1 *Eternal life* comes thru *believing* the truth about *Jesus Christ.*
 - b. #2 The *truth* about Jesus is revealed in the *Bible: these things have been written so that you may believe...and that believing you may have life...* You can't trust any other *msg* or *source*; you can't just *make up* your own version of Jesus & His story!
 - c. The apostle's point is that *assurance begins* when you know you've *placed your whole-hearted trust* in the ***right message*** about the ***right Man!*** The ***Jesus*** of the *Bible.*
2. We've been *drilling down into* that Gospel message for the last **3** weeks. Do you remember the *talking points*? 1.) God *owns* you. 2.) You *disowned* God. 3.) God *judges* sinners. 4.) **But** Jesus *died* for sinners (*for our sins, in our place*)! 5.) And Jesus is *alive!* → 6.) *You must choose!*
 3. *Young friends*, the *message of our times* is that it **doesn't** really *matter* what you *believe* as long as you're *sincere*, and as long as you *harm no one.* That's a *soul-damning lie* (→ *your soul*)! This message *matters.* Believing it *matters.* **Truth matters!**

4. Turn w/me to 1 Cor 15:1-5 (read).

- a. Paul was *worried* about the *Corinthians.* Talk on the *street* was that they were *losing confidence* in the Gospel. Sophisticated Greeks **scoffed** at the idea of Christ's *crucifixion* and *bodily resurrection.* Some of the *Corinthians* seemed to be *wobbling.*
- b. So Paul *reminded them* of their own *encounter w/the Good News* about Jesus' *death & burial & resurrection.*

- c. **Vv.1-2**, the apostle outlines the *right response* to the Gospel w/ a series of **4 Greek verbs** – four saving *Gospel actions*:
- d. *Preached (proclaimed; v.1)*. Jesus' story has to correctly *communicated & understood*.
- i. You weren't just *born* a Christian – nor did you just kind of accidentally *morph* into one!
 - ii. You can't be *saved* if you don't *understand* what Jesus did to *save* you. The truth must be *communicated* to you.
- e. *Received (embraced)*. Paul reminded them, “*you embraced the gospel as true.*”
- f. **Stand** (→ *stand firm*); Now Paul is emphasizing that *hearing & embracing must result in standing firm* in that message.
- i. Do you want *assurance* that your faith is *real*? It helps if your *stand* in the Gospel *continues* right up to *this day*.
- g. *Saved (v.2; delivered, rescued)*. Paul's *verb* is *present tense* → the Gospel's work in you life is *current & continuous*. The Gospel of Jesus saved you when you *received* it & it's *still* saving you *right now*!
- h. **It all sound great, but Paul is worried**. Not everyone who *thinks* they're a Christian really *is*. Jesus (**Lk 6:46**), “*And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?*”
- i. So here's Paul's sobering *disclaimer* (**read v. 2 - if you hold fast...**): **empty** faith (**vain** faith) *drifts away* from the truth; **saving** faith *holds fast* to the Gospel. Are **you** *holding firm* to those *first truths*?

Let's bring this home! Do you want to be *certain* that you are *saved*?

Believe in Christ, stand firm, hold fast; ...and rejoice in your salvation!☺

But there is *more* to consider: if you *have* a new life then you'll *live* a new life.

1. Do you want *assurance* that *your* faith is *saving* faith...? **Q:** How has your Christianity *changed* your life? → **2 Cor 5:17** (turn w/ me).
 - a. “...*in Christ*...” Paul *loves* this idea (*everywhere* in his letters)! For Paul, being “*in Christ*” = being a *Christian*.
 - b. And **if** you're *in Christ*, **then** you're a *new creation*. (See it?)
 - i. Gr. “*new*” → not “*new in time*,” but “*new in essence*,” *fundamentally new*.
 - ii. Beloved – if you're “*in Christ*,” you are **not** just the same old *jalopy* with a \$199, same-day *paint-job* & a shade-tree *tune-up*. You are **new** from the *inside* – *out*.
 - c. If that isn't *plain* enough, Paul gives a little **more** detail (*emphatic*): **old** passes away & **new** has come.
 - i. **old** – Whatever you were before God *re-created* you thru faith in Christ is now **gone** (here: not so much *dead*, but simply *no longer remaining* – *gone away!*).
 - ii. **new** – Cool Gr. grammar! → God made you *new* sometime in the *past* (i.e. when you *turned to Christ*), but the *results* of your re-creation (new birth) *carry on*, until *this very moment*....
 1. We just said that **new** means *fundamentally new*, but often in the *context* of the Bible it's really *even stronger* than that...
 2. ... **new** → implies “*excellence*”: Bible - new *name*, new *song*, new *heaven*, new *earth*, New *Jerusalem*, new *man*, ... Beloved, a **new you!** 😊

- d. If you are *in Christ*; you are *fundamentally & wonderfully new!*
- i. Which is our second “*assurance truth*”: *Being new produces change you can see* – change you can *take comfort in*.
 - ii. *Not* because **you** decided to *clean up your act*...but...
 - iii. Because you have a *new nature*, created *in* you by God.
2. The *changes* that Christ *produces* through your *new nature*, throughout your *life*, are more *numerous* than the *pages of your Bible!*
...**e.g.** ...
- a. A Christian shows the **traits** of genuine *love* (**Jn 13; 1 Cor 13**).
 - b. A Christian grows the **fruit** of the *Holy Spirit* (**Gal 5**).
 - c. A believer lives in **submission** in all God-ordained *relationships* (**Eph, Col, Tim, Heb, 1 Pt**).
 - d. A Christian has the **strength** to face *difficulties* God’s way (**James, 1 Pet**).
 - e. When you are born again, you live the *life of joy* (**Psa & Acts & Gal & Phil & everywhere**)!
 - f. When you’ve believed in God, you are eager to *engage in good deeds* (**Titus 3**).
 - g. When you are God’s child you **hunger** for “*spirit & truth*” *worship & fellowship w/ your Heavenly Father* (**John 4**).
 - h. A Christian *understands & loves* the *Good News* of the *Gospel & all* of *God’s truth*.
 - i. The **NT stresses** that by *these things* the *children of God...are obvious!*

3. You might be asking: “*But I’m a little confused (& afraid); w/ all this emphasis on a changed life, what if I still fall into sin from time to time?*”
- a. The **NT** idea is *pattern & progress*, **not** *perfection*. I.e., a child of God has a *lifestyle* that keeps *moving in the right direction*, even though he sometimes stumbles (“*faithfulness*”).
 - b. When you come to Christ, the reality of sin *doesn’t go away*, but your *attitude & your slavery towards sin changes*.
 - i. Your sin **used to** make you *strut & swagger*; **now** your sin brings you *shame...*
 - ii. You used to *run* to sin, now you *wrestle* to be *free* of it! Think of Paul’s cry: *Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death?* (**Rm 7:25**)

Do you want *assurance* that *your* faith is *genuine, biblical, saving* faith?

Then doesn’t it just make sense?: [being saved means God made you completely new & being completely new is something you should be able to see!] 2X

Third evidence of new life: you *follow* the Holy Spirit.

1. Gods' *Spirit* provides *two proofs* that you're *God's child!*
Leadership & relationship.
2. In **Rm 8:14** we read *for all those who led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* Paul says that God's children are *led* by God's Spirit.
 - a. Let me suggest *two* ways Christians experience the Holy Spirit's **leadership**: in *sanctification & illumination.*
 - i. (**1st**) **Sanctification** is the *lifelong* process of becoming more *holy* (i.e. more *like Jesus*). *How does that happen?*
 1. **You** do it! And...the *Holy Spirit* does it *in* you.
Turn w/ me to Philippians 2:12-13.
 - a. **One** sentence – **two** *inter-connected* truths.
 - b. v. **12** – **You** work hard to live in obedience!
 - c. v. **13** – **God** works *in* you (by His *Spirit*)
(*motivates & directs & strengthens* you)!
 2. **Pt:** A Christian is supernaturally *led & empowered* to live a more *holy life* because the Spirit is in you.
 - ii. (**2nd**) **Illumination** happens when the Holy Spirit shines the *light of understanding* in your soul, & you *comprehend & accept & remember & obey* God's truth.
 1. That's what Jesus *promised* in **John 14:25-26** –
“*These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*”
 2. When you are a *believer*, the Spirit *lights up* your understanding, as He *teaches* you the truth, and then *brings* the truth *back to mind* & helps you to *apply it* to your life.

3. Paul continues to write about *Holy Spirit & the Christian* as we **move to Rm 8:15-17 (read)**. The focus shifts from *leadership* to *relationship*.
- a. In v. **15** Paul implies that before God made you *new*, thru *faith* in Christ, the *old* you was a *slave* (→ lived in *fear*).
 - a. You lived in *fear* of ...*People. Loneliness. Failure. Suffering. Death. Judgment. Hell. Unknown. ...God!*
 - b. Beloved, the *new you* never need *fear* again, because when God made you *new*, He made you His *own child*. 😊
 - a. Paul hammers this *huge truth* into the hearts of his early readers by drawing on the Roman practice of *adoption*.
 - b. A *Roman father* was keen to have a son to whom he could pass on his *name & his estate*. A *worthy son*.
 - c. If he had *no such son of his own*, Roman law allowed him to *adopt* one. He could even adopt a *slave!*
 - d. The boy would come from *outside* the father's family, but *being adopted* would be every bit the same as *being born* of the man's own blood. **DNA didn't matter!**
 - e. Any *legal ties* to the boy's *old way of life* were completely & legally *severed*. Any *debts* were completely *paid* (by the *adopting father*).
 - f. Adoption was *irrevocable* – you couldn't *reverse it* (there was no *unadopting!*).
 - g. The adopted young man was now a *son & an heir* – **100%!**
 - h. When God adopted you, you were a *debt-ridden, nameless slave* – your Heavenly Father *set His love on you*, and because it *pleased Him*, He *freed* you from slavery, *paid* you debts (cross) & *made you* His child!

- c. *Roman adoption* required the *testimony* of *seven witnesses!* Christian, the **NT** says *your adoption* has *two* witnesses: *your spirit & God's Spirit (reread vv. 15&16).*
- a. *Your spirit* (the *new you*) knows who your *Father* is & knows you are *His child!*
 - b. But *one witness* isn't enough; God gave you *His Spirit* to bear witness *in* you & *to* you & *with* you – an *unimpeachable testimony* that you God's *son/daughter!*
 - c. That's why Paul calls the *Holy Spirit* the "*Spirit of Adoption*" here in v. **15** (in **Gal 4** the apostle writes: *Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*)!
- d. Beloved, here is the content of **your testimony**, & here is the **Spirit's testimony in** you; here's what *your spirit* knows every time you *cry out in need* or **prayer** or **joy**: "**Abba! Father!**" *Abba* = "Daddy," "Papa" – *what every toddler cries out when Daddy comes thru the door at nigh!*
- a. If you are a Christian, your *new heart* **knows** that God is your *Father!*
 - b. The *Spirit of Adoption* verifies your wonderful new identity *in* you, and *to* you, and *with* you.
 - c. **I.e.** one of the Holy Spirit's many *ministries* in the Christian's life is to give him *assurance* of his new identity & therefore *assurance* of his salvation.
- e. **OBTW** - *What does a son/daughter inherit?* (You see there in v.17?) → **Whatever his Father has!** ☺

If you a Christian, God's Spirit leads you & assures you that you are God's child.

What makes people *question* their relationship to God?

- a. **Sin.** *Public enemy number 1!* Sin in the life of a professing believer *kills* comfort. Maybe you need to *clean house*.
- b. **Little fruit.** New life means new fruit. Do the *right things* so you can *bear biblical fruit!*
- c. **Faint spirit.** Some people, by **disposition**, are *introspective & fearful*. But Spurgeon – “A *trembling hand can still receive a golden goblet.*” You don’t have to have **Type-A** personality to be a confident Christian! A fearful soul can still have assurance. *Pray. Trust. Read God’s Word* (builds faith; Rm10).
- d. **Faint faith.** When a sinner first *understands* the Gospel, and *turns to Christ*, he may be *uncertain* that his *faith* is the kind of faith God requires. He needs to hear Jesus’ promise (Jn 6:37) to never *turn back* **any** who really *repent & come*.
- e. **Lost!** Maybe you doubt because you’re **not** yet *genuinely born again*. I **have** to point this out! Maybe you doubt because you need to *turn to Jesus & believe in Him only & be born again!*

(PAUSE)

- a. Christian, God wants you to *know for sure* that you are **in Christ**:
These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. Here are **three essentials** for knowing for sure:
 - a. **1st Essential:** **Understand & embrace** what Jesus did for sinners on the Cross (*death, burial, resurrection*). You must be personally *put your trust* in the *Gospel* to be God’s child.
 - b. **2nd:** **Live** like a *new man*. Pretty simple : “*by their fruit you will know them.*”
 - c. **3rd:** **Follow the Holy Spirit** as He bears *witness* to you & *leads* you. God’s *Spirit* tells God’s *children* who they are and *leads* them where God wants them to go.
- d. Beloved - **know** for sure! **Live in confident joy!** ...**PRAY...**