

Essentials for Spiritual Growth

Lesson # 2 -- Growing in Personal Assurance of Salvation

Introduction

A. It is God's express will that every believer enjoy the assurance of salvation.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit **that we are God's children.**

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God **so that you may know that you have eternal life.**

Comment: Because it is God's express will for us to enjoy the assurance of salvation, and He has made provision so we may do so, it is not a very spiritual act to deny that we can have such assurance, or to live without the enjoyment of that assurance.

B. While the redemptive basis for the assurance of salvation is found in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, the experiential (experience) reality of assurance is a part of the Christian's belief system. Therefore, every believer may, at some time, "feel" a lack of assurance.

C. This lesson has been designed to point out the basis of the assurance of salvation and make some suggestions as to how to overcome the thoughts and feelings of doubt.

I. Growing in Understanding the Work of the Lord Jesus For Us.

Rom 5:6-11 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

A. The Biblical description of **our condition before salvation.**

1. V 6 -- "Powerless" -- Meaning: we could not atone for our sins or resist sin. While the non-Christian can resist some types of sin, the "family sin" (1 Peter 1:18) will usually be present, as well as the basic characteristics of sin: self-centeredness, rebellion against God and suppression of truth (Is 53:6; Rom 3:10-18).

2. V 6 -- "Ungodly" -- Meaning: we chose to live independent of God and not be subject to His will for our life. The word describes a person who has no desire for God, in whom there is nothing God-like, or that God could approve of.

Psa 10:4 In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Rom 3:18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

3. V 8 -- "Sinners" -- Meaning: the word describes one who has and is transgressing the will and law of God. The result of such sin is an accumulation of judgment and deepening of bondage in one's life.

Rom 2:5,6 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

John 8:34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

2 Pet 2:19 For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

4. V10 -- "Enemies" -- Meaning: a description of one who is characterized by hostility and rebellion toward God. This situation may exist even in well-meaning, religious people.

John 8:37 I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.

Comment: This four-fold description of our condition before salvation, and the condition of every non-Christian, even though religious, gives ample testimony to the truth that we cannot make an atonement for our own sins -- nor can we perform deeds that would make us meritorious to receive the salvation Jesus Christ died to provide. The non-Christian, apart from the grace of God, is in a hopeless and helpless condition.

B. The Biblical Description of **the Redeeming Work of the Lord Jesus.**

1. The emphasis upon the person of the Redeemer.

- a. Note Vs 6,8,10,11 -- "Christ," "Christ," "Son," "Lord Jesus Christ."

- b. Since we have considered our sinful condition, the reason for this emphasis becomes clear -- **only God Himself could rescue us.**

c. The names given to the Redeemer point out the necessary qualifications that had to be met.

- 1) "Son" -- emphasis upon the deity of the Lord Jesus. (Only One with infinite resources could endure the judgment we deserve.)
- 2) "Lord" -- emphasis upon His sovereign position of "Lord of all Creation" (Col 1:16) (Everything would have to be under His control.)
- 3) "Jesus" -- emphasis upon His humanity -- a member of His created race. (It was the human race that had sinned -- only a full member of that race could make atonement.)
- 4) "Christ" -- emphasis upon His promised Messiahship. (He was the anointed representative of God and of God's Kingdom -- the promised "I AM".)

2. The basis of His Redeeming work: **The Lord Jesus is God's Gift of Love** (V 8).

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- a. The word "demonstrates" can be translated "revealed," "manifested," and "proved." The thought is "True love is revealed in this act of the Messiah dying for the redemption of sinners."
- b. It is helpful to see that love is here described as an activity of a person, involving Himself in the life of others -- at great sacrifice -- for their good, freely providing gracious benefits for the undeserving, and doing so while being scorned and rejected by them.

3. The explanation of His redeeming work: **Christ died for us** (V8).

- a. The emphasis upon the historical character of Christ's work -- "**Christ died.**"

The recognition that the work of the Lord Jesus was historical -- that it really happened -- and did so in our kind of history -- is necessary for a true understanding of Christianity. The fourfold work of the Savior, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and the Day of Pentecost are more than religious truths of great importance -- they describe historical events of a covenantal and representative nature. If these events did not happen in history -- Christianity is nothing more than a religious myth -- totally without redemptive value or true power.

- b. The emphasis upon the substitutionary character of Christ's work -- "**for us.**"

The word "for" can be paraphrased "In the place of another." The word is used to point out the substitutionary name of the Savior's work. The teaching here is one of the foundation stones that supports the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus. Consider the significance of the following verses (sample only).

Isa 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

c. **Warning: we must avoid making these truths impersonal.**

- 1). **We are the ones once totally and hopelessly lost.**
- 2). **We are the ones to whom has God displayed His love.**
- 3) **We are the ones whose sin caused the Savior to suffer Hell on the cross.**
- 4). **We are the ones for whom the Lord Jesus made atonement.**
- 5). **We are the ones to whom the Savior has given salvation.**

Summary: Let's stop and consider the importance of the Lord Jesus -- our Redeemer.

- A. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:3).
- B. He is the sovereign Ruler of all the nations, (Psalm 22:28).
- C. He is the Lamb of God, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star, (Rev 17:14; 20:16)
- D. He is the Lord of the harvest, the Head over the Church, and the Great I Am, (Matt 9:38; Eph 1:22; John 8:24).

What should be our response to His greatness and terrible sacrifice for us?

- 1). We must grow more deeply in our worship of the Lord Jesus.
- 2). We must grow more deeply in our surrender to the Lord Jesus.
- 3). We must grow more deeply in an understanding of the Word of the Lord Jesus.
- 4). We must grow more deeply in our love for, and our trust/hope in the Lord Jesus.
- 5). We must grow more deeply in our prayer life and service for the Lord Jesus.

II. Growing in an Understanding of the Work of the Lord Jesus in Us.

A. A description of the salvation benefits of redemption.

1. V 9 "**Justified by his blood.**" The word "justified" refers to the imputation of the righteousness the Lord Jesus obtained for us in His work of redemption. The emphasis is on how He met all the just demands of the law of God -- for us. The benefits of that provision, when imputed to the sinner, brings the sinner into a state of grace, a state of righteousness, forgiveness, and acceptance before God.
2. V 9 "**Saved from God's wrath through him.**" The word "wrath" refers to the judgment of God that sinners will experience in Hell. When the Lord Jesus was speaking of the plan of salvation provided by His Father, He concluded the message with these words: "**Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him**" (John 3:36). The subject of eternal punishment is a terrible reality that all non-Christians should seriously consider. Because the Lord Jesus suffered the judgment of sin on the cross, those who have chosen to receive that benefit by believing in the Savior, will never experience God's judgment. The debt has been paid.
3. V 10 "**Reconciled to him (God) through the death of his Son.**" The word "reconcile" means to "restore a relationship," "to change from enmity to friendship." The thought is again on the benefit that comes to the believer through the work of the Lord Jesus. Since the Savior suffered the believer's judgment and gained perfect righteousness for him -- every barrier to reconciliation has been removed. Instead of being rejected, the Christian is now accepted.
4. V 10 "**Be saved through his life.**" While the life of the Lord Jesus is vitally important in providing salvation, that does not seem to be the thought here. The emphasis is on the benefits that come to every believer through the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus in

The Heaven. Perhaps the verse could be paraphrased "Be [kept] saved through his life." following verses bring out that truth clearly.

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

5. V 11 **"We also rejoice in God."** The Apostle concludes this section of his letter with a reference to the joy of the Lord. He reminds us that the salvation he has just described, with its many benefits, is a cause for rejoicing. However, he goes beyond that to show how the believer can now rejoice "In God," i.e., enjoying God and fellowship with God. When we consider what the truths of this passage **should** mean to us -- then the word "rejoicing" is very appropriate.

There is no greater relationship than being reconciled to God. No greater rescue than to be saved from Hell. No greater gift than that of justification. No greater security than that of knowing we are kept saved by the prayers of the Lord Jesus! If an individual is a Christian -- and does not possess this rejoicing -- there must be something tragically wrong.

- B. A description of the "grand exchange" brought about by the grace of God in the new birth.

We were once "powerless" but are now "[kept] saved by his life."

We were once "ungodly" but are now "justified by his blood."

We were once "sinners" but are now "saved from wrath."

We were once "enemies" but are now "reconciled to God."

We were once (without joy) but now have cause for great "rejoicing."

Conclusion

- A. Question: If redemption and salvation are as clear as this passage of Scripture appears to describe them, and if such great benefits are given to me -- **then why do I often feel as though I am not even a believer?**
- B. Answer: Because of the Fall and the result of sin in our own life, we have given too much authority to our emotions. In fact, without knowing it, we have surrendered the control of much of our thinking, and even much of the control of our will and body, to our emotions. Therefore, when we are emotionally upset or "down" -- we have a tendency to explain it (our thinking) to ourselves as something like a failure, or sin, or that God has forsaken us.

And, our emotions also tend to make us passive (our will) and can even cause physical (our body) ill health.

In order to control this condition we must give heed to the Bible to "take charge" of our emotions, as well as the rest of our functions (I Cor 9:27; II Cor 10:4,5) and choose to think on (believe) the truth (Phil 4:8) -- and correct our emotions. One of the best books on this subject is **Telling Yourself the Truth** by William Backus.

It may help, in times of emotional stress, to repeat aloud "The Bible is my final authority -- not my emotions." And, then to follow through with a correction of the error that you will find in your emotions/mind. It would be good to say, "I refuse that error." Then quote a verse or two to correct the error being forced upon you by your feelings. You will be surprised how well this will work. In doing this you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17) and He will give you wisdom and strength.

In spite of what happens in our thinking, and how we feel, the person who has chosen to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died for us and rose again, and has received Him as Savior and Lord -- that person has been given all the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus and is being represented in Heaven by the Savior Himself -- our great High Priest.

Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2 Pet 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Heb 7:25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Let us give the Lord Jesus the thanksgiving, praise and trust He deserves.

And, let us choose, "cold turkey", to trust Him in spite of how we think and feel.