

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 19, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



The Wonderful Assurance of Love
“What’s Love Got to Do With It?”

*Romans 8:28-29, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 John 5:13, 1 John 2:1-11,
1 John 3:11-24, 1 John 4:7-21, 1 John 5:1-5, Various*

CASE STUDY: “I have been having this battle with doubting my salvation for four years now. Most of the time when I talk to someone about it their first conclusion is that I am not really saved. So I find myself going through the sinners prayer over and over. I know I am a sinner and want to be saved more than anything in the world. I have repented of my sin and asked Jesus to be my Savior. The thought that keeps making me doubt is how do I know if I really trusted Him? Did I really accept him and if I didn’t how can I ever? Every time I hear a preacher say do you know you are saved beyond a shadow of a doubt I feel somewhat angry because I fear I will never know. Some nights I can’t sleep because I fear those words “depart from me ye who work iniquity I never knew you”. I just keep thinking what if God says that to me because I really never accepted. It’s like I am afraid to believe I am saved because what if I really am not. Then I am afraid to believe I am not because I have done everything I can to be saved and fear if I am not I never will be. I know Jesus died for my sins and want him to be my Savior. Just this past week I confessed to a preacher I have doubts sometimes and it’s like he attacked me. Made me feel like If I can’t believe I am saved, then I wasn’t.”

That case study reflects an age-old problem that plagues most every Christian who has every professed faith. As a matter of fact listen to what D.L. Moody had to say to one such woman who said she never had doubts about her salvation,

A woman told the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody, "I've been saved twenty-five years, and I've never had one single doubt." He responded, "Madam, I doubt you've been saved." That would be like a couple saying they've been married 50 years and never had an argument. I'd say, "I doubt you've been married."

We all have doubts. You see, doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. It is a signal that something is wrong. And just as you seek to find a remedy for your pain, you should seek to find a remedy for your doubts. Jesus is your remedy. Get into His Word and know the assurance of your salvation. It's not you, it's Jesus that makes it (salvation) possible. Are you doubting your salvation? Then run to Jesus. Soak yourself in these truths from God's Word:

3 Passages of Scripture to Meditate On If You Doubt Your Salvation:

1. **Romans 10:13** - *"For, whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*
2. **Ephesians 2:1-10** - *"¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*
3. **Titus 3:5** - *"⁵Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,"*

"Assurance is the believer's ark where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, commotions and confusions.... [However] most Christians live between fears and hopes, and hang, as it were, between heaven and hell. Sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them for ever; [then] they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation They are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there" -Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote, "Heaven on Earth" (1654)

Why do so many Christian's lack assurance? What about the thousands stuck in spiritual limbo or a spiritual state of flux because they can't grow past their spiritual beginning? Dr. John MacArthur give eight basic reasons people may lack assurance:

8 Reasons People Lack Assurance: (Dr. John MacArthur)

1. **Strong Preaching** – Some lack assurance because they are under strong preaching on God's holy standard. Such preaching forces people to see their sinfulness and acknowledge that the holiness of God calls them to a lofty standard of living. Now, that kind of preaching is both biblical and necessary. I want to emphasize that before going on to develop this point, but it

is also woefully rare. Unfortunately a consistent call to righteousness may also unsettle some Christians – particularly those who are frequently succumbing to temptation.

2. **Guilt** – Some Christians lack assurance because they have difficulty accepting the concept of forgiveness. They are often tyrannized by their emotions and feel they are too bad or what they have done is too bad to really be forgiven. There may be several reasons for that; for one thing sometimes our conscience speaks against forgiveness. The only thing your conscience know about is guilt and conviction. It (*the conscience*) knows nothing of grace and mercy. Second, holiness and justice speak against forgiveness in a sense. They (*holiness and justice*) focus on sin and know nothing of excusing it. Be warned, Satan is the accuser of those who belong to Christ. He will do all he can to obscure the love and graciousness of God and keep you doubting.
3. **Ignorance** – Many people lack assurance because they do not understand that salvation is an utterly divine, totally sovereign operation. Assurance is built on the historical reality of what Jesus Christ accomplished... in other word, the finished work of Christ. Let me say it like this is a person is not biblically grounded and doctrinally sound they may struggle with assurance because they don't understand what the Bible says and teaches.
4. **Uncertainty** – Some Christians lack assurance because they don't know the exact time of their salvation. They can't remember when they started believing. Some can't remember ever not believing. Because they can't pinpoint the exact moment, they doubt whether the moment actually occurred. But if you didn't know the date of your birth, you wouldn't wonder whether you were alive! Far too much has been made of isolating the moment by some formula, whether it be praying a prayer, signing a card, raising a hand, or walking an aisle. Many Christians, especially those raised in a Christian environment, can't identify the exact moment or procedure they followed when they were saved. K They don't know when it happened but their heart and life confirm that it did. It is important to remember that we are not saved by a procedure we followed, a formula that we heard, or a date we write on a piece of paper, but rather we are saved by a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ.
5. **Temptation** – Another reason many Christians lack assurance is they feel the pull of the flesh (the carnal nature which still exists) from time to time and they wonder whether they really have a new nature. As Christians who dwell in this fallen world, we are new creations incarcerated in still very human flesh and blood. In fact scripture says, we **“groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for... the redemption of our body”** at our Lord's return, when it **“will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:23, 21).** Just because we are tempted and sometimes trip up into sin by temptation doesn't mean you are not a Christian.
6. **Trials** – Some Christians become spiritually unstable, lacking assurance because they can't see the hand of God in their trials. They say things like “How could God love me and let me go through this? How could He take my loved one from me like this? How could He not hear my prayer and heal me or my loved on or deliver me from this? Where is God when I need Him?” People who think like that not only sentence themselves to doubt but also miss what is actually the strongest source of assurance... proven faith. Never think that just because you are a Christian you will not face trials, and many of them quite severe.
7. **Fleshly Living** – One of the most important ways the Holy Spirit ministers to believers is by assuring them of their salvation. A believer who is not living by the Spirit's power gives up that important ministry. If you grieve or quench the Spirit by walking in the flesh, you short

circuit His ministries to you, and you will lack assurance as a result. You also open the door for the enemy, who is the accuser, to question the reality of your faith in Christ.

- 8. Disobedience** - Perhaps the most obvious reason for lacking assurance is disobedience, because assurance is the reward for obedience. The writer of Hebrews made that strong connection in Hebrews 10:22 when he said, *"Let us draw near with a sincere (genuine) faith in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."* It's been well said that those who persist in low levels of obedience cannot enjoy high degrees of assurance. Dr. John MacArthur says, *"To live in sin is to live in doubt."* And the great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who many said was plagued often with doubt said, *"Whenever I feel that I have sinned, and desire to overcome that sin for the future, the devil at the same time comes to me and whispers, 'How can you be a pardoned person and accepted with God while you sin in this way?' If I listen to this I drop into despondency, and if I continue in that state I should fall into despair..."*

An important passage to the subject of assurance (of our salvation), which many people lack, is 1 John 5:13, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."* John is convinced that the people he is writing to have believed. However, he is still writing so that they may know that they have eternal life. They must have had trouble with doubts. You see our key passage reminds us that God desires that we have assurance, but yet acknowledges that you may struggle with questions of assurance sometimes. One of the reason the apostle John wrote his first letter was to help people who may lack assurance of their salvation and help them do something about it.

Years ago the R&B singer, Tina Turner, sang out the question, "What's Love Got to Do With it?" The song was about what "love" really confirms in a relationship. In this world we throw the word "love" around pretty loosely, and at times it can be pretty shallow. In that sense for someone to say "I love you!" or "If you love me you will..." it may not confirm the stability of a relationship at all. But the truth is genuine love, real love should confirm a genuine relationship... one that is characterized by deep commitment and an unconditional love that says, "No matter what you do, I'm going to keep loving you!" and "I'll never let you go!" When we speak of "love" for a Christian, we are speaking of the kind of love that the apostle Paul describes in "The Great Love Chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, where the word translated there as "love" (or "charity") is the Greek word "agape"... the highest form of love in the Greek language. It literally refers to "divine love" or "God love"... the kind of love that God has for us. It is a love that loves unconditionally... asking for nothing in return... a love that says, "No matter what you do, I'm going to keep loving you. It is the kind of love that God demonstrated to us through Jesus Christ and His willingness to die on cross and give up His life for us. Paul said it this way in Romans 5:8, *"⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* God's demonstration of His love for us is a picture of the kind of love that we, as believers are to possess for Him but also for one another... unconditional, agape love. So in answer to the question, "What's love got to do with it?," for a Christian it has everything to do with it. Love is a sure sign that one is a Christian, and therefore may become a great help in experiencing assurance of one's salvation.

WHAT KIND OF LOVE SUPPORTS ASSURANCE?

The world's view of love can be very skewed. As a matter of fact, the world's idea of love, or at least the one we see most often displayed and conveyed by the world does have an impact, but not the one we would desire. The way the world looks at love and sets about expressing it often leads to pain, heartache and often abuse... and is often today not seen as very secure or assuring.

The world's view of love – List some words that you would say describe the way the world views love:

<u>lust</u>	<u>infatuation</u>	<u>a fleeting feeling</u>
<u>strong like</u>	<u>love at first sight</u>	<u>passion</u>
<u>emotional bond</u>	<u>sex</u>	<u>fluctuating feeling</u>

**The world says things like, "If you really loved me you would...", or "I just don't feel in love with you anymore...", or will express this feeling for things like, "I love hot dogs, baseball and apple pie!" The world's love often is a very fluctuating and fleeting thing... very fickle, on again off again kind of emotion. Perhaps that is why, in this world love, seems to so often fail... marriages fall apart, and relationships fail. This kind of love seems less than "authentic" because it so often fails and falls short.*

The New Testament world's view of love: (review)

4 Kind of Love in Greek:

1. **Eros = Marital/Sexual Love** – Love between a husband and wife. We get our English word "erotic" love from this word because it refers to sex and the sexual relationship that exist between husband and wife.
2. **Storge = Family Love** - Refers to love in the family relationship... love between a parent and child, or between brothers and sister, family kin, etc.
3. **Philia = Friend/Brotherly Love** - Love that exists between friends. This Greek word literally means "brotherly love" and is the word for which the U.S. city of Philadelphia gets its name. The city of Philadelphia is also called "The City of Brotherly Love."
4. **Agape = Unconditional love**

NOTE: While each of these are legitimate expressions of love in marriage, within a family, and among friends if they are not motivated out of authentic agape love they will fall short of really having the kind of life changing impact we are talking about.

WHAT DOES LOVE THAT CAN GIVE ASSURANCE LOOK LIKE?

Unfortunately "love" as it is defined in this world can be a very uncertain and shaky thing. I may be very fragile. Family that seem deeply committed to one other and dissolve, disintegrate and fall apart. Relationship, even deeply intimate ones at one time, and fail. Deep lasting friendships can suddenly find themselves on the outs. In this world the idea of love often doesn't seem very secure. So if "love" can somehow become a support to our assurance what does that look like?

KEY STATEMENT: Authentic love that is secure and assured looks like God's agape love!

3 Characteristics of God's Love: God's love has many facets or characteristics, but listen as the following three familiar verses are read (or quoted) and see if you can't name 3 of those characteristics based on these three verses or passages.

1. **God's love is giving (John 3:16)** - *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*
2. **God's love is sacrificial (Roman 5:8)** - *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
3. **God's love is unending (Romans 8:37-39)** - *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

If authentic love and an accurate picture of it can most clearly be seen in Jesus, we must ask ourselves what does that look like so that we may imitate it. Paul essentially addresses this in **Ephesians 5:1-2**. Listen to his words, *"¹Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."* Do you see it? We are to be imitators of God's divine love exhibited in Jesus Christ. We need look no further than Jesus to see what an "authentic" love that can make a difference looks like:

Characteristics of the Love Jesus Exhibited:

1. **A love for enemies – Matthew 5:43-48,** *"⁴³ 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*
2. **A love for the disenfranchised – Matthew 9:35-38,** *"³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. ³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary^[b] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*
3. **A love for those in need – Matthew 20:29-34,** *"²⁹ Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. ³⁰ And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" ³¹ Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" ³² So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³³ They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." ³⁴ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him."*

4. **A love that was willing to be empty of self – Philippians 2:1-8,** *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
5. **A love that was willing to die for others - John 15:13,** *“¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”*
6. **A love that transcends words - 1 John 3:16-18,** *“¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him. ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*
7. **A love that never lets go – Romans 8:35-39,** *“³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” ³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
8. **A love that never fails – 1 Corinthians 13:8 & 13,** *“⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away... ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”* **And Ephesians 3:17-19,** *“¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

“If I do not relate to other in love, I do not relate to others at all!” –Dr. Charles Swindoll

A BIBLICAL ON LOVE THAT ASSURES (1 John 4:7-20)

Toward the end of the New Testament we have some timely words from the Disciple whom Jesus loved, John, on love and it’s truest expressions... what it looks like and what it does in our life. John’s talking about authentic love and its ability to change us, but not only change us but change our world. Authentic love is like a multi-faceted diamond. If you hold that diamond up and begin to turn it and closely examine it you will soon discovery many exquisite qualities and nuances to the gem. Love likewise has many perspectives, nuances and views to add to our lives and those around us. It really can make a difference. Let’s look at these closing thoughts and consider 9 Biblical perspectives on authentic love that assures of in our relationship with Christ.

9 Biblical Perspectives on Authentic Love that Assures:

1. **Love for the believer is not an option, but is commanded – (v.7)** *“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”*
2. **Love is the truest expression of God in our lives – (vv.7-8)** *“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love”.*
3. **Love was shown to us through Jesus Christ – (vv.9-10)** *“⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*
4. **Love shown to us should also be extended through us – (v.11)** *“¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*
5. **Love shown through us gives a clear picture to the world and others of who God is - (vv. 12-14)** *“¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.”*
6. **Love ties us closely to God in relationship and gives us hope – (vv.15-17)** *“¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.”*
7. **Love frees us and gives us courage to live in victory – (v.18)** *“¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”*
8. **Love, to be authentic, must be God love – (v.19)** *“¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.”*
9. **Love spoken is not enough, it must be shown to others – (vv.20-21)** *“²⁰ If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”*

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON THE WONDERFUL ASSURANCE OF LOVE (1 John 3:14, 18-19)

John has much to say on the subject of love and assurance in this little letter tucked at the end of our New Testament. It may be small by it has some huge guiding principles that help us to understand the place and importance of love in the life of a believer. Here is what John said in 1 John 3:14, 18-19, *“¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death... ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”* (NJKV)

3 Guiding Principles on the Wonderful Assurance of Love:

1. **Something to be aware of ... Love authenticates the genuineness of one’s faith (1 Jn. 3:14)** – John uses the word “know” 40 times in this short little letter. It is one of his favorites. There is not much in this life that we can really be certain of and know for sure,

but John tells us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that we can “know” for sure that we are saved and have assurance (1 John 5:13) of such and one of the ways is “love” in our lives... really love. Verse 14 tells us, *“We know... because we love the brethren...”*

2. **Something to beware of... Love ought to be the natural overflow in the life of a believer and not the primary motivation to find assurance (1 Jn. 3:18)** – Our spirit ought not to say “If I really try hard to love others and do loving things for other that will produce in me the necessary duty and good work to secure God’s favor and salvation and therefore I will be assured of a place in His heaven.” Wrong! That is not how it works, and that is not the assurance we are speaking of here. We are speaking of a confirming assurance and security in our own spirit that we are His, and that only comes as we live in Him producing the fruit of a life that is His. As a matter of fact, John tells us in verse 18 that it is not a love produced in word or tongue... not one we have mustered up and convinced ourselves of, but one that overflows from a life that is His in truth... for real... producing deeds that give evidence of it.
3. **Something to be assured of... Love assures us we are His (1 Jn. 3:19)** – John just couldn’t say it any more clearly than verse 19, *“¹⁹ And by this (by what?... love) we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”* It’s not a love that we have manufactured in our own being. It is a love that is beside us, an unconditional love that keeps loving even when it is wronged. It is a love that is described as “divine” in Scripture, a love that keeps no record of wrong, that pours out itself for others without thought of cost. It is a love that is beside us, outside of us, but very much flowing through us because of Who is in us, and when it is there, it assures us we are His because “I could never love this way on my own!”