

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 21, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A SURE THING... ASSURANCE
“A Blueprint for Assurance... Your Faith in Christ”
1 John 5:13, 1 John 1:1-4, 5-6

Is it possible to know that your sins are forgiven? Can you be sure that you are on your way to heaven? What about the fear of judgment and the frightening possibility of going to hell? Can you know without any doubt that God has saved you from the eternal consequences of sin? And is it presumptuous (arrogant, insolent, rash) for us to even think that we can know these things? In this study we are taking a look at what the Bible has to say about such question. The specific focus of attention for this study has been on the word of the apostle John from his first letter, which addresses this issue of the assurance of salvation.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

On questions of assurance and opinions about whether or not a person can be sure of going to heaven fall into one of three categories:

- YES
- NO
- UNDECIDED (“I’m not sure” or “I hope so”)

In answer to these questions of assurance some people will say “yes” I am certain I am saved and on my way to heaven, without a doubt; others will say “no” I don’t have that assurance; and still others will say they are unsure and some may even say that they don’t think it is possible to know. *What are you feelings about this? Can you know for sure? Is it presumptuous to think that we can? Or it is true that we can never really know for sure or with any certainty?*

The ideas listed below represent variations of these three possible answers when people were asked about their hope for eternal life. *See if you can identify with any of their responses. Place a check [✓] mark beside the one(s) you identify most with. Then see if you can identify which response indicates a “yes,” a “no” or an “undecided.”*

9 Various Responses to the Question of Assurance:

- 1. Not worrying** – *“I think it’s a waste of time to worry about whether or not I’m going to heaven. There’s no way to know for sure. I won’t know until I die.”*
- 2. Fearing the worst** – *“It seems like I’m always failing God. And when I do, I’m afraid I’m going to end up in hell after all.”*

3. **Trusting God's promises** – *"I'm sure I'm on my way to heaven because of verses like John 5: 24 which says, 'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.' I put my confidence in the promises of God's Word."*
4. **Remembering a day** – *"I know I'm going to heaven because I remember the day I prayed to receive Christ into my life."*
5. **Leaving it up to God** – *"I would never dare to say I am going to heaven. That's up to God to decide."*
6. **Feeling unworthy** – *"Sometimes I feel that God loves me and is going to take me to heaven. But when I am depressed, I feel unworthy and hopeless."*
7. **Depending on God's love** – *"If God is as loving as people say He is, He won't send anyone to hell."*
8. **Replacing feeling with facts** – *"Knowing I'm saved isn't based on feelings or how I may feel at the moment but on facts... the facts of what Jesus Christ has done for me. I believe the Bible has those facts, and I cling to those for my assurance."*
9. **Trying to be a good person** – *"I'm trying hard to be a decent person. I treat others as I want them to treat me. Isn't that the kind of person God wants me to be? If I follow Christ's example of love, I'm sure I'll be okay on judgment day."*

ANXIETY OVER SALVATION

What is it that causes all the confusion and anxiety over salvation anyway? As previously discussed it could be any number of things. We discussed many of these at length, but just for the purposes of review, let's restate some of the reasons that may be behind the lack of assurance many experience.

Common Causes of Insecurity of Salvation: Reasons We May Lack Assurance

1. **Questioning a childhood decision**
2. **Failing to forgive an offender**
3. **Continuing in unrepentance of sin**
4. **Lacking the willingness to change sinful patterns**
5. **Depending on church membership**
6. **Relying on personal effort and work**
7. **Expecting feelings or emotions to confirm salvation**
8. **Intellectualizing spiritual truth**
9. **Confusing backsliding with loss of salvation**
10. **Poor doctrinal and Biblical grounding**

BLUEPRINT FOR ASSURANCE

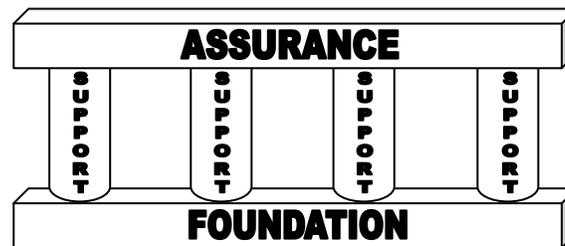
How can you know anything for sure? For example, if you lived in a region prone to earthquakes, how could you be sure that the place called home wouldn't collapse today or tomorrow? It would be reassuring to examine the blueprint of the house or apartment building where you lived and find that the foundation, the walls, the roof were designed to be strong and trustworthy – even able to withstand a severe earthquake.

In a similar way, how do you know your salvation will hold up to your fault and failing... how do you know your hope of heaven will hold up when God's earth-shattering judgment comes? It

would be reassuring to have some evidence that your hope is not merely “wishful thinking.” Such evidence is available to us and that is what this study is focused on. We have been looking at several passage from the apostle John that offer just such evidence. A key passage for us has been 1 John 5:13:

Key Assurance Passage: 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 (have confident assurance, full faith) on the name of the Son of God.*”

As a matter of fact the New Testament letter of 1 John describes the evidences that can give us strong assurance. If we picture those evidences as elements of a blueprint, we can see how each part adds strength to complete the structure. The structure we have been examining based on 1 John looks something like this:



1. **A strong foundation** = the foundation upon which we build our assurance is **the Word of God**, or what we called the Authority of God’s Word
2. **Supporting columns** = those things that support assurance... the diagram above show the four support columns for our assurance they are **1) the finished work of Christ**... in other words, we are not saved by what we do, but rather by what Christ has already done on our behalf on the cross, **2) our faith Christ**... trusting Him and fully relying on what He has done for us, **3) our obedience to Christ**... in other words, living out our faith (many people who aren’t living like a Christian ought to live will have doubts, **4) our love for other Christians**, other believers... this give strong structural support to our faith
3. **Supported structure** = having a sense of assurance, our **assurance, the Holy Spirit confirms** this in our and gives us a sense of assurance.

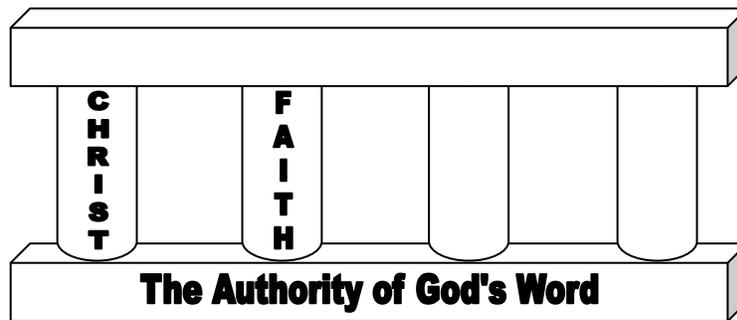
Again this study, based on the Apostle John’s letter of 1 John, will study these six elements that make up this blue print for assurance. In previous weeks we started with the strong foundation, which is the Word of God. Then we moved on to look at the first supporting column that we identified as the finished work of Christ. Remember that we are not saved by what we do, but by the what Christ did for us on the cross. Our salvation is not dependent upon our works or our ability to keep ourselves saved, but our salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ and His free gift of salvation offered to us.

In this study we are going to move on to the second supporting column in our blueprint. You see the finished work of Christ truly is a part of what gives us assurance, because we know that our salvation is not based on our ability to keep ourselves saved, but His ability to keep us saved and complete His work of salvation in us. Here are three very assuring passages that may help at this point:

Assuring Words:

1. **John 6:40** – *“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”*
2. **John 10:28** – *“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”*
3. **2 Timothy 1:12** – *“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”*

Along with that finished work of Christ we must place our faith... our full trust and reliance in Christ and what He has done for us. That is the second column in our blueprint:

**WHAT IS FAITH?**

Faith involves a response to the truth we know about Jesus Christ. When we speak of faith in Christ, we mean a personal expression of trust and dependency on Him.

What faith is and is not:

1. **Faith is not intellectual assent (approval)** – Head knowledge! It is not enough to acknowledge intellectually that Jesus is the only One who can take us to heaven. It is not enough to know about God and Jesus. And it is enough to know that what He did was sufficient to pay the penalty of our sin. Interestingly, James writes in **James 2:19**, *“¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”* In other words it is not enough to know intellectually about God, even the enemy of God (the devil) has that kind of faith.
2. **Faith is not emotional connection (embracement)** - Heart knowledge! Faith is not just going to church and participating in religious activities because of the emotional experience it creates that make one feel better about themselves. There is so much more than that. Many people do many good and noble things... even religious things because of how it make them feel inside and they express this as their faith. But this is not saving faith. The Rich Young Ruler in Scripture is a good example of one who was emotionally charged because he kept his religious connection to God.
3. **Faith is not religious expression (demonstration)** – Some people define their faith by what they “practice.” “I am a practicing Catholic!” or “I practice my faith at First Baptist Church of Buda!” Certainly our faith in Christ is expressed through our works, service, and fruit, but many have the mistaken definition of faith as their religious preference, denomination, or practice. This is always dangerous and it will provide no assurance for obvious reasons, but mainly because no church, religion or denomination can save you.

4. **Faith is not moral relevance (bearing, weight)** – Faith and spirituality are often closely tied to moral action and behavior. We will often hear it said of someone, “He or she is a very godly person with much faith!” and it is usually based on their moral excellence in some area or their high standards. Again the Rich Young Ruler in Scripture is a good example of a morally excellent and relevant person who was very faithful in his life, but he lack saving faith.
5. **Faith is trusting in God (Jesus) – It is leaning with the full weight of our being on Him. Placing our lives fully in His hands.** We must put our trust in Him, accept his offer, and place ourselves in His hands. In **1 John 5:1** we read, **“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”** Your faith in Jesus Christ – your belief that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of God – is what God requires of you to become a member of His family. John also told us, in **1 John 4:15**, **“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”** People may view Jesus as the greatest man who ever lived, as the supreme example for us to follow, or as the most impressive revealer of God’s love. But if they do not confess Him to be the Son of God, they have not expressed and placed their full trust in Him...that is faith. That He is who He claimed to be and that He can do what He claims to be able to do. Once we have this kind of faith we find genuine salvation and assurance!

Perspective: *It’s not enough to know about Christ and His finished work (column 1), you must place your faith and full trust in Him as Savior (column 1), believing that is who He claims to be and that He can do for you what He said He would do and that is give you eternal and everlasting life... life that cannot be lost.*

WHAT DOES FAITH PROVE?

Your belief in Jesus Christ is positive evidence that the Holy Spirit has given you new life. A person who is hostile or unreceptive to Christ shows no evidence of the Spirit’s life-giving activity. John wrote in **1 John 3:24**, **“By this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”** And in **1 John 4:2**, **“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is on God.”**

The apostle Paul stated in **1 Corinthians 12:3**, **“No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”** Now, we all know that anyone can say the words, “Jesus is Lord.” But Paul is referring to more than just producing the words. He means that no one can call Jesus “Lord” as the expression of deep inner conviction “except by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Important Truths that Help with Assurance:

1. **Genuine faith proves that the Holy Spirit lives in you** – If you don’t have the Holy Spirit you are not saved. If you have the Holy Spirit you are saved and never have to doubt it!
2. **The Holy Spirit in you confirms genuine faith** – The fact that you struggle and wrestle with spiritual matters, even matters of assurance sometimes because of sin or other struggles may in fact confirm that you are saved beyond a doubt, because it is the Holy Spirit in your (who only resides in a believer) that convicts, and stirs, and causes the inner searching that we sometimes mistake as lack of assurance or instability.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE YOU?

Question: *What happens to someone who is genuinely born again, experiences a changed life, but later disbelieves... at least for a period of time? If a person stops believing, doesn't that person also stop being saved?"*

Answer: No the Bible says once you are truly born again... once you receive the new birth... you receive an *"inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade –kept in heaven for you."* Every honest believer experiences periods of doubt. Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is the flip side of the same coin. Sincere doubts signifies a search... a search that God honors. He is not threatened by our questions and doubts.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-4 - *"³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."*

Question: *"I accept the Bible's assurance that no one can snatch a true believer out of Jesus' hand. However, because of my own sin, can't I snatch myself out of His hand of protection, as well as out of His very presence?"*

Answer: No, Jesus specifically said *"no one"*... not "no one except yourself"... *"can snatch you out of His hand..."* and that includes you! In addition, notice just before those words, He said, *"They shall never perish."*

Scripture: John 10:28-29 – *"²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*

GOD'S GUARANTEE FOR YOU

Listen to John's marvelous passage that reflect the words of Jesus to you and I in *John 10:27-29*, *"²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* By faith, trusting your life to Christ results in three glorious gifts of grace that further give us the assurance and confidence to live victoriously in this life.

3 Glorious Gifts of Grace for your Assurance:

- 1. You are saved by the Savior**
- 2. You are sealed by the Spirit**
- 3. You are secure by the Father**

... all for your safekeeping until the day you inherit your home in heaven and see your Savior face to face! This is God guarantee for you!