

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 28, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A SURE THING... ASSURANCE

“A Blueprint for Assurance... Your Obedience to Christ”

1 John 5:13, 1 John 2:1-6, Various

CASE STUDY: *Listen as the following case study is read. How would you respond to this person? What words of help and encouragement from Scripture might you share with him or her? What do you think is their biggest problem in experiencing assurance of their salvation?*

“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 sinner’s 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. One of the thoughts 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. I know that I’m not perfect, I still struggle sometimes with certain sin in my life and when I do I have this tiny little voice in me that says, ‘If you really were a Christian and saved you wouldn’t still be struggling with these things or a Christian shouldn’t have those thoughts or real Christian’s don’t do those things.’ 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 probably wasn’t.’ I just don’t know what to do anymore, what do you think?”

Perhaps you have often heard of people dealing with these issues of assurance... maybe you yourself have struggled with these things or are struggling with them now. Let me set you’re your mind at ease about a couple of things here:

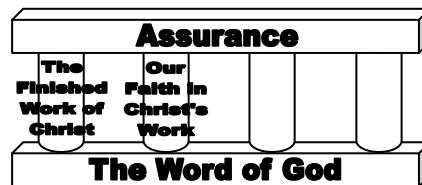
3 Things To Keep In Mind That May Ease Your Mind:

- 1. The majority of Christians have or will struggle with questions of assurance about their salvation at some time in their Christian experience** – It is not uncommon at all for a Christian to doubt their salvation at some point.

2. **Many more Christians struggle with this issue of assurance than ever verbalize it** – In other words a lot of believer suffer on in silence rather than reveal their doubt to anyone. This may cause someone who is legitimately struggling to feel like something is wrong with them, because most Christians don't struggle with assurance or doubt about their salvation.
3. **Lacking assurance of one's salvation or having doubts about your salvation doesn't necessarily mean you are spiritually immature nor does it mean you are not a Christian** – Questions of assurance can strike the life of a believer at every level of their Christian experience and for a whole host of different reasons. A spiritually mature Christian, who has never struggled with doubt many at some point find themselves blindsided by a life circumstance that leaves him or her wondering, "Where is God in all of this?" "Maybe I's not as strong as I thought." " Am I sure that I am even saved?" And it is always wrong to assume that if a person doubts they must not be saved! Remember Thomas doubted, yet he was one of Christ's loyal disciples/followers. Sometimes our feelings get in the way of our faith. But this does not mean that we are lost. Even saved people struggle with doubts, and some struggle more than others.

Our key passage for this study has been **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.

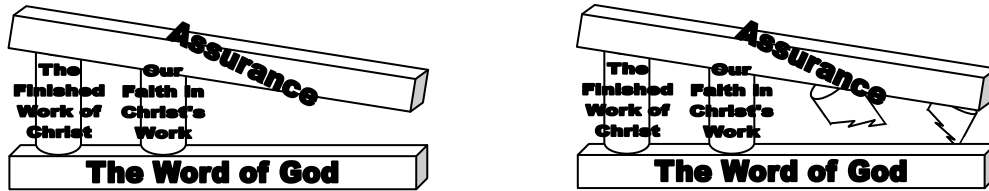
Consider this. The only way a person can absolutely know that they are saved is to absolutely know that their salvation does not at all depend on them. It is not what we do but what Christ has done. Technically speaking, it is not the prayer or any external action of ours that saves us. It is the completed work of Christ on the cross and our faith in God on the basis of that work. And that is the first two support columns that we have discussed in our "Blueprint for Assurance."



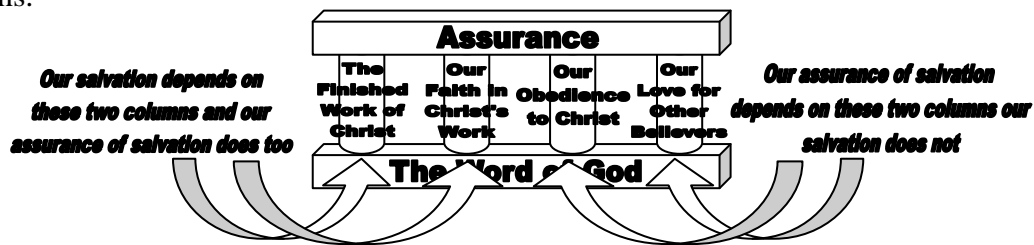
As to feelings, I know that these can be terrifying. However, you must understand that feelings do not save us and feelings cannot make us lost. Any honest saved person will tell you that there are days that he or she does not feel saved. They only accept that they are because of the promises of God in His word.

So the next question is; "How then can I begin to build into my life this quality of assurance so that I can live the Christian in victory and not in defeat... always wondering?" There are not easy or pat answers to that question, but there may be some helps that John gives us in the book of 1 John.

Take a look at the diagram of our “Blueprint for Assurance” again and notice the first two support columns for our assurance: (1) The Finished Work of Christ, and (2) Our Faith in Christ’s Finished work. What if we stopped there and that was a far as went with our diagram, or if the next two columns were missing, faulty or crumbling... something like this?:



If we stop there it really does not change the fact of our salvation based on the finished work of Christ and our faith in Christ... we are saved, but what happens to our “assurance”? It becomes shakey, it falls apart and we struggle, and that is where many believers find themselves. That means that the next two columns are vitally important for our experience of assurance in our lives. Though, as we shall see, our salvation itself does not depend on these next two columns like it does on the first two... our “*assurance of that salvation*” does depend on the next two columns.



Why do you think this is true? Why does our salvation not depend on these last two columns (obedience and love), but our assurance does? What do you think?

REASONS WHY PEOPLE LACK ASSURANCE

Just for review let’s look at some of the reason people may lack assurance of their salvation or may doubt their salvation. 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.

Reasons Why People Lack Assurance

(1) People often lack assurance because they cannot remember or point to a specific time when they received Christ - Some doubt or wonder if they were ever really saved because for one reason or another they can’t remember the day and time. There is a specific point in time when salvation occurs—the point when regeneration takes place. The issue for people is to know when that was, if they can’t remember it they struggle.

(2) People often lack assurance because they question the procedure they went through when they accepted Christ - Many evangelists and preachers emphasize the need for some form of public confession of faith like going forward at the end of a service or raising your hand. If people receive Christ privately, they may wonder if they should have made a public confession or prayed a different prayer.

(3) People often lack assurance because of struggles they have with certain sins - They wonder if a true believer would have these kinds of problems. The real problem is ignorance of man's sinful nature, the spiritual warfare we are in, God's means of deliverance, and the need to grow and mature in Christ.

(4) The primary reason behind a lack of assurance is doctrinal misunderstanding and the consequent lack of faith in the finished work of Christ- This means a failure to understand the Word and its teaching regarding mankind, his sin and inability to work for or maintain his salvation, God's perfect holiness, and the finished nature and sufficiency of the work of Christ.

(5) Finally, people often lack assurance because they have erroneously been taught that they should look to themselves and their works as the primary proof of their salvation -

WHAT DOES OBEDIENCE HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

The big question with this third support column in the "Blueprint for Assurance" is what does obedience have to do with our experiencing assurance. Take the five reasons that people may lack assurance and determine what difference an obedient Christian lifestyle might make to each.

Reasons Why People Lack Assurance and How Obedience Helps:

(1) People often lack assurance because they cannot remember or point to a specific time when they received Christ – Though they may not remember the time and day, having the fruit of a Christian life may verify that one has truly been saved. It's no guarantee, but it may help to authenticate a genuine Christian life. Jesus himself said in **Matthew 7:20-21**, *"²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them. ²¹ 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.'"*

(2) People often lack assurance because they question the procedure they went through when they accepted Christ – Again the fruit of our life or our obedience to Christ is a much stronger indicator of genuine salvation than a procedure we followed. A genuinely changed heart that affects the way a person lives is what authenticates true salvation, not a procedure you followed when it happened.

(3) People often lack assurance because of struggles they have with certain sins - Certainly, sin in a person's life indicates a lack of obedience in some area. When sin is allowed to remain in the life of a believe the enemy, Satan, will certainly come along and question our faith and try to convince that we are not God's and that He no longer loves us. Beginning to live obediently to Christ in those area will drive those doubt from the enemy away and confirm that we are God's.

(4) The primary reason behind a lack of assurance is doctrinal misunderstanding and the consequent lack of faith in the finished work of Christ – A part of being obedient to Christ would certainly have to do with our spiritual growth through the disciplines that should be a part of a believers life. If a Christian is practicing an obedient lifestyle with Christ and spending time in His word, and in prayer, he or she will be growing deeper and becoming more grounded in God's Word and therefore less likely to struggle with assurance.

(5) Finally, people often lack assurance because they have erroneously been taught that they should look to themselves and their works as the primary proof of their salvation - This is a key point in a discussion on "obedience." One should understand that our obedience or living a good, clean Christian life, and doing good Christian things, does not necessarily make us a Christian. We are not saved by our works or what we do, however, our works and what we can

certainly affirm that our salvation is real once we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work.

5 Things Obedience Can't Do For You:

1. Obedience can't earn you right standing with God -
2. Obedience can't make God love you anymore than He already does -
3. Obedience can't guarantee that you will never have heartaches or trials –
4. Obedience can't necessarily fix what may already be broken –
5. Obedience can't produce salvation -

What Obedience Can Do For You: “Obedience in the life of a believer can become a sure source of assurance and authentication of genuine salvation.”

WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

What do we mean by “obedience”? What are we talking about and how can it be a source of assurance for the life of a believer? How does it help?

Obedience Defined

What is the Biblical Definition of Obedience? - The general concept of obedience both in the Old and New Testament relates to hearing or hearkening (doing what we hear) to a higher authority. One of the Greek terms for obedience conveys the idea of positioning oneself under someone by submitting to their authority and command. Another Greek word for obey in the New Testament means "to trust."

Holman Bible Dictionary - According to *Holman's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* a succinct definition of biblical obedience is "to hear God's Word and act accordingly."

Eerdman's Bible Dictionary - *Eerdman's Bible Dictionary* says, "True 'hearing,' or obedience, involves the physical hearing that inspires the hearer, and a belief or trust that in turn motivates the hearer to act in accordance with the speaker's desires."

So, biblical obedience means, simply, to hear, trust, submit and surrender to God and obey his Word.

Here is a good definition of “obedience” that I heard a long time ago that has really helped me to understand obedience:

“Obedience is doing exactly what God tells you to do, when He tells you to do it, with the right heart attitude.”

8 Things You Need To Know About Obedience:

1. **Jesus Calls Us to Obedience** - In Jesus Christ we find the perfect model of obedience. As his disciples, we follow Christ's example as well as his commands. Our motivation for obedience is love. **John 14:15**, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*(ESV)
2. **Obedience is an Act of Worship** - While the Bible places strong emphasis on obedience, it's important to remember that believers are not justified (made righteous) by our obedience. Salvation is a free gift of God, and we can do nothing to merit it. True Christian obedience flows from a heart of gratitude for the grace we have received from the Lord. **Romans 12:1**, *"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him."* (NLT)
3. **God Rewards Obedience** - Over and over again we read in the Bible that God blesses and rewards obedience. **Genesis 22:18m** *"And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."* (NLT) **Exodus 19:5**, *"Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me."* (NLT) **Luke 11:28**, *Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice."* (NLT) **James 1:22–25** *But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.* (NLT)
4. **Obedience to God Proves Our Love** - **1 John 5:2–3**, *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* (ESV) **2 John 6**, *And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.* (ESV)
5. **Obedience to God Demonstrates Our Faith** - **1 John 2:3–6**, *And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.* (NLT)
6. **Obedience is Better Than Sacrifice** - **1 Samuel 15:22–23**, *But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."* (NLT)
7. **Disobedience Leads to Sin and Death** - The disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world. But Christ's perfect obedience restores our fellowship with God, for everyone who believes in him. **Romans 5:19** *For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous.* (ESV) **1 Corinthians 15:22** *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.* (ESV)
8. **Through Obedience We Experience the Blessings of Holy Living** - Only Jesus Christ is perfect, therefore, only he could walk in sinless obedience. But as we allow the Holy Spirit to

transform us from within, we grow in holiness. Psalm 119:1–8 *Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts. They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths. You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully. Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your decrees! Then I will not be ashamed when I compare my life with your commands. As I learn your righteous regulations, I will thank you by living as I should! I will obey your decrees. Please don't give up on me!* (NLT) Isaiah 48:17–19 *This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow. Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling over you like waves in the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sands along the seashore—too many to count! There would have been no need for your destruction, or for cutting off your family name."* (NLT) 2 Corinthians 7:1 *Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.* (NLT) The verse above says, "Let us work toward complete holiness." So, we don't learn obedience overnight; it's a lifelong process that we pursue by making it a daily goal.

WHAT OBEDIENCE HAS TO DO WITH ASSURANCE?

Listen to the apostle John's words in 1 John 2:1-6, *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. ³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."* This verse tells us that we who have accepted Jesus as our Savior can be sure that our salvation is genuine because of our obedience to Him. Maybe you have a solid grasp on the doctrinal truth about the finished work of Jesus Christ and you have accepted Him as your Savior, but you still have times when you doubt that your faith is anything more than mere head knowledge. Maybe you are encouraged that your concern about your spiritual state is evidence that your faith is real... but you would like a little more tangible evidence. Well, here it is... look at your conduct! Apply the test, "Do I keep God's commandments. It shouldn't be hard for you to determine whether or not your life is marked by obedience.

Salvation Check List: (from the book of 1 John)

- 1. Do I live by the truth, rejecting deeds done in darkness? (1 John 1:6)**
- 2. Do I enjoy fellowship with other believers? (1 John 1:7)**
- 3. Do I have a love for God's Word and seek to obey it? (1 John 2;3-5)**
- 4. Do I reject the values I see in the world system? (1 John 2:15-17)**
- 5. Do I look forward to the return of Christ? (1 John 3:2-3)**
- 6. Do I sin less than I did before I claimed to become a Christian? (1 John 3:6)**
- 7. Do I experience opposition because of my love for Christ? (1 John 3:13)**
- 8. Do I genuinely love other Christians? (1 John 3:14)**

- 9. Do I truly believe in Jesus by fully relying on Him for my salvation and my future?
(1 John 5:10-11)**
- 10. Do I have discernment of spiritual truth? (1 John 4:6)**