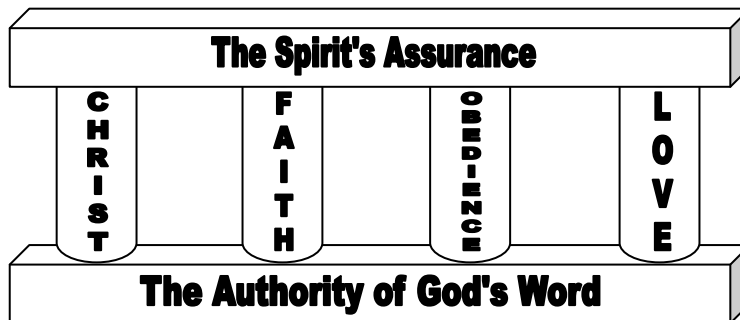


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 18, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A SURE THING... ASSURANCE
A Blueprint for Assurance... Finishing With Assurance
1 John 5:13, Various

Here is where we have been in building a case for assurance. The following has been our diagram based on 1 John and especially our key passage in 1 John 5:13, that helps us to see how assurance can be gained.



6 ELEMENTS IN THE BLUEPRINT FOR ASSURANCE:

1. The Foundation for Assurance = The Authority of God's Word
2. Supporting Column 1 = Christ's Finished Work
3. Support Column 2 = Your Faith in Christ
4. Support Column 3 = Your Obedience to Christ
5. Support Column 4 = Your Love for Other Christians
6. Supported Structure = The Spirit's Assurance

When a person doubts his or her salvation there can be several different reasons why that is happening in their life. The following provides a list of some of the primary reasons that people may lack assurance or have doubts in their life about their salvation. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other reason, but these are the primary reasons of a lack of assurance.

5 Primary Reasons Why People Lack Assurance:

1. **Doubting the reality of one's commitment to Christ** – Some doubt the reality of their commitment to Christ. Sometimes when a person cannot see visible or tangible evidence of their commitment to Christ and Christian ideals/practices/behavior it causes them to doubt

and lack assurance. They may question, “Did I really mean it when I prayed?” Maybe my heart wasn’t sincere enough?”

2. **Questioning the correctness of the salvation process** – Some question the correctness of the procedure they went through when they were saved... can’t pin-point a specific time and place, didn’t say those “exact” words in the sinners prayer, didn’t do it right the first time, wasn’t at a church, wasn’t with a minister, etc.
3. **Lack of Biblical teaching and grounding** – Often when one is struggling with doubts and a lack of assurance is may simply be a learning/grounding problem. A lack of Scriptural grounding and learning on the foundational and doctrinal understanding of “salvation” and particularly “the eternal security of the believer” Those who don’t believe in eternal security will naturally lack assurance... how can they ever know. Those who attach works to salvation will naturally doubt. Why? Because a lack of grounding on the basic Biblical teaching on such things as salvation, and doctrines such as “the eternal security of the believer” cause us to just not “know” for sure. We’ve never studies it and been convinced of it.
4. **Unconfessed or unrepentant sin** – Sin in a believer-s life will always lead to doubt if it remains unconfessed and unrepented of. You can be sure that Satan, the enemy, will jump on our failings to point the finger and cause us to question the validity of our salvation.
5. **Lack of salvation or lostness** – For that one who is having doubts or lack of assurance of their salvation they should always check it out and be sure that they are indeed saved. Some have reason to doubt because they are lost. Sometimes it is not a lack of assurance or doubting your salvation, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit that they were never saved, and are in fact lost.

So, even though the Bible does give us good reason to be confident and assured about our relationship with God and our hope of eternity, not everyone is convinced. The reasons may be varied as mentioned above. In this finishing study on assurance we will look first at three representative people who have struggled with assurance. Then we will discuss two difficult passages in dealing with questions of assurance. Finally, we will consider some personality factors that can cause doubts in the minds of some people.

CASE STUDIES

The follow are representative of the kind of problems Christians have with assurance.

Case Study 1: *An elderly lady who was on her deathbed said to her son, “I believe in Jesus Christ. I love Him and have tried to live for Him. But I have been far from perfect. Now I can only hope my faith is acceptable to God.” She died as she lived... with a sad uncertainty.*

Case Study 2: *The owner of a small business was a faithful in church attendance and was compassionate to the poor. But he never enjoyed the assurance that he would go to heaven. To the pastor he said, “Right now I feel good about my relationship with God. But I don’t always have this feeling. I often find myself worrying about the future. I’m afraid I might die right after I commit a serious sin.” He went on to cite Paul’s comment about working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and then he said he was afraid he might be cast away. He concluded, “I sure wish I could know if I’m going to heaven – but I’m afraid that’s impossible.”*

Case Study 3: *A young house wife who received the Lord a few years ago and underwent a remarkable change has been struggling lately with doubt and has begun to lack assurance of her own salvation. She believes that assurance is possible, and she longs for it. But she is plagued with feelings of doubt and fear about everything – including her relationship with the Lord. She doesn't even understand where these feeling are coming from, but she had said to her pastor, "I sometimes even have a hard time sleeping at night and will wake up with bad dreams that I am not saved." She desires assurance of her salvation, but it had become a struggle for her lately.*

The lack of assurance of salvation in these case histories comes basically from two sources:

2 Common Sources of a Lack of Assurance:

1. Faulty interpretation of key passages of Scripture
2. Personal emotional makeup

DIFFICULT ASSURANCE BIBLE PASSAGES

Some people want assurance, but they may be troubled by the interpretation of certain passages that they think may seem to challenge the issue. Let's examine a few of these and see if we might can make them models of how to interpret others that seem to contradict clear teaching on assurance.

The following are several of the very debated and controversial passages that are often used to support the idea that one can lose their salvation and therefore cannot really know assurance. Often these passage have been used to bolster and entire theological and doctrinal stance that teaches one can indeed "fall from grace."

Some Trouble Passages in Finding Assurance:

1. **Galatians 5:1-6 - Question Raised: Is it possible to fall from grace how could you ever have assurance and know for certain if you were saved or not?** Someone in this passage is falling from grace... it is a biblical term/phrase. The question is "who" is falling from grace?

How does this passage cause a problem with assurance?

*¹It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. ²Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. ³Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ⁴**You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.** ⁵For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." – Galatians 5:1-6 (NIV) *focus v.4*

2. **Hebrews 6:1-6 – Question Raised: If could lose your salvation, would it be possible to get it back (be resaved) and if not assurance would be an impossibility?** This passage clearly says that if you want to read this passage as dealing with "losing one's salvation" it is also teaching that once lost it could not be regained and therefore both salvation and assurance of it would be not only an impossibility but pointless

How does this passage cause a problem with assurance?

¹Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits. ⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ **if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.** – Hebrews 6:1-6 (NKJV) *focus v.6

3. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 - Question Raised: If after years of faithful service to the Lord I can be “disqualified” how can I ever really be certain and have assurance? This verse has troubled many Christians because it does seem to indicate the possibility of being “disqualified” after years of faithful service in Christ.

How does this passage cause a problem with assurance?

²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ **But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.** – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NKJV) *focus v.27

4. Philippians 2:12-16 – Question Raised: If salvation must be worked at, how can I ever know for certain that I have done enough and therefore know assurance? Paul’s instruction that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling has been unsettling to some because it seem to state that salvation is something that we must work at or work out and if so how can ever know for certain and be assured that we have “worked” enough to guarantee our salvation is secure.

How does this passage cause a problem with assurance?

¹² **Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” – Philippians 2:12-16 (NKJV) *focus v. 12

Some Things to Remember When Interpreting a Passage:

1. Always interpret a passage within its context – A verse or passage of Scripture must be interpreted in context... both immediate and broader context. (Ex. Galatians 5:4 seems to be saying that is possible to “fall from grace”, but what does it say when it is read in the context of verses 1-6 and in the broader context of the book of Galatians?)

2. Always interpret a passage with an understanding of its background – Historical background, literary understanding (type of literature... remember Scripture is filled with historical narratives, poetry, letters, prophetic and apocalyptic literature, etc.), grammatical background and understanding (remember Scripture was originally written in three languages;

Hebrews, Greek and Aramaic, also grammatical issues, sentence structure, etc. are important in getting at a correct interpretation). (*Ex. Galatians 5:4 seems to be saying that it is possible to “fall from grace,” but understanding the type of literature that the book of Galatians, the historical background about what was going on and what Paul was dealing with, and looking at grammatical issues in the passage may reveal something quite different*)

3. Always read the passage in light of what the rest of Scripture says – Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. No text of Scripture (properly interpreted in its context) will contradict another text of Scripture. When contradictions seem to exist, it is the task of the interpreter to explain the seeming contradiction. He must never seek to do so by ignoring or denying any part of the truth that is revealed in Scripture. (*Ex. Galatians 5:4 may indicate that it is possible to “fall from grace” but Jude 24 says He (Jesus) is about to “keep you from falling”... an apparent contradiction that can only be cleared up through careful interpretation of the whole of Scripture... remember Scripture does not contradict itself*)

4. Remember that there is really only one proper interpretation of Scripture, and that is God’s – The Apostle Paul told us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” (2 Timothy 3:16). The word translated in that verse as “*inspiration*” means “*God-breathed*.” So literally the Greek translates this way, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God...*” In other words it comes from Him, therefore, you cannot hope to arrive at a correct understanding of Scripture independent of God, through the person of the Holy Spirit. The illumination of Scripture can only come from the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “*We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. That is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*” Because the author of Scripture – God the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21, “*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*”) – resides within the child of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, “*Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you.*”), he or she is in a position to receive God’s illumination (1 Corinthians 2:10-11, “*... God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*”). And, indeed, the Spirit of truth not only provides insight that permeate the mind, but also provides illumination that can penetrate the heart. This is why when we go to trying to understand and correctly interpret Scripture we must ask for the Holy Spirit to teach us, show us, guide us, direct us, guard us, in understanding the truth. We are not the final say on His Word, God is!

5. Use available tools and resources – This may be the most simplistic yet practical help in interpreting a passage. Use good tools are resources that are readily available to a student of Scripture. Good and reliable Bible Concordances, Bible Dictionaries, Biblical Commentaries, Biblical language helps, varying reliable translations, etc. are extremely helpful in getting at a right interpretation of Scripture. A word of caution here... be sure that you are using a “good” and “reliable” source. There are many Bible helps out there that are not theologically and doctrinally sound. Also remember that, there are just man made tools and should not be

substituted for Scripture itself. They are helps! Scripture should still be interpreted using the above mentioned criteria.

NOTE: With these basic rules for interpretation and ideas (helps) for understanding Scripture, let's look at what these troubling and sometimes controversial passages are saying in order that they might not be a hindrance to our finding assurance.

A Closer Examination of the Trouble Passages in Finding Assurance:

1. The fall from grace passage (Galatians 5:1-6) – The focus seems to be on **verse 4** where Paul says, **“You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.”** The question is, “Who is falling from grace or fallen away from grace in this passage?” The Greek word of “alienated” means “to be separated,” or “to be severed.” The word for “fallen” means “to lose one’s grasp on something.” Paul’s clear meaning is that any attempt to be justified by the law (or works) is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel, who turn their backs on Christ (Hebrews 6:4-6) and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and lose all prospect of God’s gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine. This is a context issue. Galatians 5:4 seems to be saying that is possible to “fall from grace”, but what does it say when it is read in the context of verses 1-6 and in the broader context of the book of Galatians? Is the issue “falling from grace” or is the issue how a person is “justified” or “saved.” The context of the passage and the book give us a better understanding of what is being addressed in verse 4. The book Galatians is about being justified by faith through grace. Historically, Galatians was a circular letter written to churches in the region of Asia Minor known as Galatia. It would be in the area of present day Turkey. Paul had helped to establish these churches probably in his first missionary journey. After his departure, false prophets and teachers known as Judaizers had come into these areas and begun to spread their false teaching, mainly that a person was saved by particular words and not just by grace. The works they emphasized were Jewish works. In other words they taught that in order to become a Christian, you must first become a Jew and obey Jewish laws, rites and custom. You must be “circumcised” and begin to obey all Jewish laws. It was the Judaizers and Galatians who were following them that were falling further and further away from God grace and thus, salvation. So the passage is not even talking about believers, but rather unbelievers and how they are trying to get to God. Their methods were leading them further away from Him, rather than to Him. Grammatical issues in the passage help us to better understand who is being addressed. Notice the change of pronouns between verse 2-4 and verse 5-6. Paul includes himself, as a believer, in the later among those who are being saved, justified by faith. And he addresses the unbelieving Galatians who were buying into the Judaizers works-righteousness method of salvation... namely circumcision.

Some Important Keys to Understanding the Galatians 5:1-6 Passage:

- (1) This passage is dealing unbelievers.**
- (2) This passage is not dealing with the subject of eternal security.**
- (3) This passage is not teaching that a believer can lose his or her salvation.**
- (4) This passage is teaching that a lost person who is trying to be saved by works is moving farther and farther away from saving grace.**

**Therefore this passage neither cuts at a person losing their salvation nor at assurance once one is saved, because it is speaking to that one who isn't a Christian to start with*

2. The can't be renewed passage (Hebrews 6:1-6) – The focus seems to be on **verse 6** and the idea of **“falling away.”** This Greek term “fall way” occurs only here in the New Testament. It is the equivalent to the apostasy in Hebrews 3:12 (“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”) The seriousness of this unfaithfulness is seen in the severe description of rejection with in this verse: they re-crucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously. The **“impossible”** of **verse 4** goes with **“to renew them again to repentance.”** Those who sinned against Christ in such a way had no hope of restoration or forgiveness. The reason is that they had rejected Him with full knowledge and conscious experience (as described in the features of vv. 5-6). With full revelation they rejected the truth, concluding the opposite of the truth about Christ, and thus had no hope of being saved. They can never have more knowledge than they had when they rejected it. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with his enemies. There is no possibility of these verses referring to losing salvation. Many Scripture passages make unmistakably clear that salvation is eternal (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:35, 38,39; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:4-5). Those who want to make this verse mean that believers can lose salvation will have to admit that it would then also say that one could never get it back again.

Some Important Keys to Understanding the Hebrews 6:1-6 Passage:

(1) This passage is dealing unbelievers

(2) This passage is not teaching that a believer can lose his or her salvation.

(3) If this passage is embraced by those choosing to interpret it as teaching that one can lose salvation, then it also must be teaching that one could never get it back.

**Therefore the complexity of this passage actually supports assurance, since it is ultimately saying in a hypothetical way that it's impossible to lose it once you get it.*

3. The disqualified passage (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) – This passage has troubled some Christians because it speaks of being **“disqualified”** after years of faithful service to Christ. Paul wrote in **verse 27**, **“I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”** What did Paul mean when he spoke of being disqualified? To answer that question, we must examine other statements the apostle made on this subject. When we read his epistles, we discover a number of passages in which he expressed his certainty. He knew that he was a child of God, an heir with Jesus Christ. He knew that nothing could separate him from God. Read the conclusion of Romans 8 and sense the atmosphere of certainty and joy. Read Philippians 1 and notice that Paul spoke of death as gain. Then read 2 Timothy, written just before he was executed. What an air of confidence and assurance! When you turn to 1 Corinthians 9:27, therefore, you must remember that this verse was written by a man who knew he was on his way to heaven. With this in mind, let's look at the context and the meant of the Greek word translated “disqualified.” The root word means, “that which has not stood the test.” Because Paul was referring to the prizes give winners in the Olympic contests, he likely had in mind the rewards that will be given at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). He was thinking only of being disqualified from receiving the highest prize or award. He did not

want to lose his reward for service through failing to satisfy his Lord. He was not afraid of losing his salvation, but rather of letting his Lord down as he lived for him and served him... something that should be of a concern to every Christian.

Some Important Keys to Understanding the 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Passage:

(1) This passage is dealing with believers, but not their salvation... rather their rewards.

(2) This passage is not teaching that a believer can lose his or her salvation or be disqualified from salvation, but rather that they will be rewarded according to how they lived their Christian life. *NOTE: Most orthodox theologians teach that Christians are not judged for our sin... that is covered by what Christ did on the cross, but at the Judgment Seat of Christ we will be judged by our works and what we did and will be given "crowns or reward based on our works or what they did for Christ on this earth. In other words you might get a smaller mansion than some, but you won't be losing your salvation, you'll still be there.*

(3) This passage is not dealing with issues of salvation, therefore should not be used to question one's faith or no matter of assurance.

**Therefore, this passage should not be used to question assurance, but rather to encourage you to serve all the more diligently as you look forward to that day with Him in Heaven and the crown He will place on your head. (This passage actually is telling us to stop looking backward and start looking forward. Questioning one's salvation and struggling with assurance is a constant looking back and it trips you up on the race... rather look forward and focus on the prize)*

4. The work out salvation passage (Philippians 2:12-17) – Paul's instruction that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling has been unsettling to some. *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but how much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* Notice that Paul did not say we must work for our salvation. The Greek word translated **"work out"** refers to "working down to a point of completion." Paul was speaking of salvation as an ongoing process through which we grow and develop in the Christian faith. Philippians 2:12 says nothing about gaining salvation. It refers to the maturing process in cooperation with the Lord, who *"work in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."* (v.13). The **"fear and trembling"** indicates the reverential awe that should fill our hearts as we live day by day in humble dependence on the Lord and in anticipation of our future glory.

Some Important Keys to Understanding the Philippians 2:12-17 Passage:

(1) This passage is dealing with believers and their spiritual growth.

(2) This passage is not teaching that a believer must work in order to get himself or herself saved or to keep himself or herself saved.

(3) This passage is teaching that once saved a believer must work in order to grow and mature spiritually in their relationship with the Lord.

**Therefore this passage should not be a reason to lack assurance, but an encouragement at how to help deal with struggles and doubts... work at growing in your relationship with Him so that those doubts are answered by Him.*

PERSONALITY FACTORS

As mentioned earlier, some people acknowledge that the Bible teaches the possibility of assurance, but they can't seem to find it for themselves. This is a reality for many people. We saw an example in the young housewife we mentioned in Case 3. She confesses her sins, prays for others, seeks God's guidance, lives obediently, and shows a lot of love. Yet she often has times when she is dreadfully afraid that she is not a child of God. Many believers are plagued with doubts. If you are among them, don't condemn yourself. Your problem could relate more to your psychological makeup than your spiritual state. Don't despair. Consider this illustration from Martin R. De Haan II and the Radio Bible Class: "A man was fishing on a quiet lake after dark. The air was still, and the moon was reflected perfectly in the water. After looking at it for a while, he whimsically cast his lure into the reflection. The image shattered into a thousand pieces. Now, had the moon actually been broken? Of course not! The reflection had. He had only to look heavenward to assure himself that the moon was still there, shining in all its beauty. Likewise, the joy of a Christian's salvation can be shattered by doubt, satanic attack, unfortunate circumstances, gnawing fears, or depression. But losing the joy of one's salvation does not mean that salvation itself has been lost. The believer must look upward... Heavenward if you will... in faith to God and to the assurances of His Word to have his confidence restored."

SOME FINAL HELPS IF YOU DOUBT OR LACK ASSURANCE

If you are plagued by times of doubt, consider the following guidelines for maintaining assurance:

1. **Read your Bible** – Read your Bible, especially the book of 1 John, to remind yourself of the solid foundation on which your salvation stands.
2. **Communicate with God through prayer** – Communicate with God through prayer, and confess every known sin. Keep sin confessed up and stay prayed up. This will help minimize the enemies ability to falsely accuse your of not being a child of God.
3. **Obey God's commands** – Obey God's commandments, and do what you know is right. This to will help to protect your heart from the attacks of the enemy, but will also confirm over and over again that you belong to God... that you are His.
4. **Spend time with other Christians** – Spend time with strong Christians, and let their love help you.
5. **Reach out to others in love** – Reach out in concern to others because you love them. Focusing on others is what we are called to and this will help to confirm your faith.
6. **Do some heart checking and soul searching** - Recognize your doubts and depression may be more emotional than spiritual. This will help you avoid unnecessary feelings of guilt because of your supposed lack of faith.