

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST  
Supplement 11

Assurance of Salvation

Transcribed from a series of six messages presented at  
Decker Lake Mennonite Church Canada  
By Fred Carpenter

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ  
Which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again  
Unto a lovely hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead  
To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away  
Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God  
Through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 2:3-5

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

## *1] THE FACT OF THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION*

I bring you greetings in the name of our lord Jesus Christ who is our Saviour and Redeemer.

I have chosen to begin a series of messages related to the thought we have in 1 John 5:13 the Scripture which says:

“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.

I've chosen to begin a series on Assurance of Salvation. And here he says that you may know that you have eternal life.

This morning I would like us to look together at what I am calling the fact of the Assurance of Salvation and in order to understand assurance of salvation I think it is apparent that the first thing that we need to look at is the last word, the word salvation, and so as we look at this message this morning we will be looking at quite a few different Scriptures, we will be turning to some but not all and I would like to approach it by asking a series of questions.

1] The first question in thinking of salvation and what is salvation. How would you define salvation?

It would be interesting this morning to have a number of answers from you; I am not going to ask that from you at this time but think of it in your own mind: How would you define salvation? If you would call it the price of redemption, certainly salvation is that, it is the price of our redemption or perhaps you would call it rescued from destruction, certainly it is that as well. Salvation as we think of it in the scriptural usage is being rescued from destruction.

It was interesting to me to note the first definition from the Webster's dictionary it is this: "Deliverance from the power and effects of sin." I thought that is really putting it well – deliverance from the power and effects of sin, now that is what salvation is.

We could call it liberation from the control of the devil or preservation from destruction or failure or being cleansed from sin and being restored to a right relationship with God, all of these things are ways we can define salvation, maybe you would add to that list.

2] The second question I would raise is: What would the Scripture say about salvation or being saved?

And again there are many, many Scriptures which use these words it would be interesting to note the first usage of the word saved is in Genesis 47:25, the Egyptians are speaking to Joseph whenever they were in the middle of those seven years of famine and their supplies had run out and they made this statement to Joseph: "Thou hast saved our lives." Hath saved our lives. Now we know that Joseph is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in many ways we know that according to the scriptural record, and at least as I understand it there is no indication of any sin on Joseph's part. We know that he was a man and he sinned as we also have sinned but in the record there is no mention of that, it only recalls his faithfulness, he is a type of Christ in a number of ways and this is one: Thou hast saved our lives.

Joseph was the saviour of the lives of the Egyptians and of the children of Israel, of the whole world really, because of his being a vessel that God could use in preserving food in those seven years of plenty and then portioning it out in the seven years of famine, he was a physical salvation there, he saved their lives and of course we make application in the spiritual sense to what Jesus has done, He has saved our lives in a spiritual sense as well as the physical.

We also have Exodus 14:13 where the children of Israel were in a strait between the Red Sea and the mountains and the Egyptians as they were fleeing from the Egyptians, the message of God to them in their fearful situation was through Moses: Standstill and see - see what? The salvation of the Lord. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. And how did the Lord save them in that situation? Well He provided the pass right through the Red Sea, a dry ground for them to walk on to be delivered from their enemies. And He also put behind a pillar of fire which kept a space between them and their enemies, it was the salvation of the Lord.

Isaiah 45:22

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

That's God's call even in the Old Testament times that is the message that He is still echoing today.

Matthew 1:21

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” For He shall do what? He shall save them from their sins.

Luke 1:69

“And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;”

Zacharias speaking of the Lord Jesus, baby Jesus, rejoiced in the goodness of God and said that he raised up a horn of salvation for us, a horn of salvation for us.

John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

How about verses 17 and 18, let's keep going

John 3:17-18

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Notice those words there saved, that the world through Him might be saved, and verse 18 note the progression there of the arrangement of those words believeth - not condemned, believeth not - condemned, that's what it says here in verse 18. All the difference is whether a person believes, believeth or believeth not, not condemned or condemned.

Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, was sent by God into this world that the world through Him might be saved, that was His purpose coming into this world.

We are as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:16:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Romans 10:9-10 maybe we could say that together as well:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Those are verses that we should have well fixed in our minds, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. This is the word of God, a promise that we stand on.

A little bit later in Romans 10:13 it says: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

We have also this in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

These are a few of the verses in the Scriptures which mention the word salvation or saved and point out to us the way of salvation and the need for salvation and the fact that there is hope for you and me in salvation.

3] The third question I would raise is: If someone asks you how can I be saved, what would you say?

Very interesting to hear your answers this morning, fathers, mothers you may very well be called on some day, sooner than you feel prepared to answer those questions in a very direct way, you might need to do that for your own children, you might need to do that for someone else.

What would you say? How can I be saved? This is the question, very similar question that the Philippian jailer, raised to the apostles: Sirs what must I do to be saved? And the answer that they gave him was: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. Acts 16:30-31

And of course that requires we understand by comparing Scriptures that faith needed to be on the part of his household as well as himself if his household was to be saved. He and all his were baptised that night. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And we quoted Romans 10: 9-10 - If thou shalt confess with thy mouth..... be saved. This is another answer from the Scriptures.

We could look at John 3:3 where Jesus said: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. The Bible uses a number of different expressions that really mean the same thing and for a person to be saved is to be born again. We cannot see the kingdom of God; we cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless we are born again, unless we are saved. What does it mean to be born again? Nicodemus didn't understand, he said: Well what do you mean a natural birth? Does a person have to be born over again in a natural way? And Jesus said: No that is not what I talking about but rather I am talking about a spiritual birth, you must be born of water and the spirit to enter into the kingdom of God.

We also have Scriptures like 1 John 1:9 where it says;

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This is a verse that is not difficult to understand because it speaks in such plain language what we need to do. We ourselves need to confess our sins in order for God to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God is always ready to forgive sins.

I would just like you to turn with me to second Samuel chapter 12. Here is a beautiful illustration of this very thing that has often impressed me, a great consolation to me as I think of the mercy of God in forgiving sins. In this chapter Nathan the Prophet came to David and gave him the story about the rich man and the poor man and the lambs and how the rich man took the poor man's lamb and didn't have pity and 2 Samuel 12:5 tells us:

“And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: “

Then in 2 Samuel 12:7 Nathan said to David: “Thou art the man.” And he went on and explained to him how he was the man because he had taken Uriah's wife when he had a number of wives already and he had slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Amnon and he had also despised God, note the language used here from the mouth of God in verse 10, I

don't think David thought about it that way, I don't think he really thought about it that he was despising God when he took Uriah's wife, I doubt that he thought that at all but this is what God said he had done:

2 Samuel 12:10b “.....because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.”

And 2 Samuel 12:13 is what I particularly wanted to notice: “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.....” Period. Such a straight forward and honest confession.

I am thankful that we have Psalm 51 written by David at this time, it helps us to understand the sincerity of these words. It is possible for a person to speak these words lightly; it is possible for a person to speak them sort of as Saul did when he said: Honour me now I have sinned, honour me now.

You know where there is that willingness to say a few words with the hope that somehow it will get us by and then God's favour will still rests up-on us, this isn't the attitude of David at all, Psalm 51 shows us that very plainly – I have sinned against the Lord. He speaks of how he was weighed down with the burden of the awareness of his sin, smitten down by the fact that he had despised God and that he had sinned against the Lord, and that's what he says here: I have sinned against the Lord, he didn't just say: I have sinned, I have done wrong but I have sinned against the Lord, and that is how all sin is, it is against the Lord. But what is the next thing that this verse says? And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. (2 Samuel 12:13b)

How much time do you think was between those two sentences? When David said I have sinned against the Lord and whenever Nathan spoke. How much time do you think was in there? Well personally I don't think there was much time at all, I think it is just like it reads here you know that the one followed the other and to me it is an illustration of the truth of 1 John 1:9 that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and that is exactly the way God operates whenever a person comes to Him in sincerity and confesses his sin God doesn't say: Well I will think about it and maybe I will forgive you. But rather we have the promise that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. He doesn't wait.

There is another Scripture that says that He upbraideth not. He does not mock us and hold us off if we are sincere, if we are not sincere then He may, but if we are sincere and we desire His cleansing, He forgives us. The formula of the Scripture is very simple if we confess our sins - He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4] Another question I would raise is: What have we been saved from? There are five answers I would give to this.

Matthew 1:21 “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

First of all we are saved from our sins and then we also have

John 3:36 where it says: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Another thing that we are saved from is what has stimulated our response of faith, at least it surely did mine, it is this fear of the wrath of God. As a young man when I was not right with the Lord several times I woke up in the night and looked to see if my younger brothers were still there, wondering if Jesus had come and why? Why because I felt guilt in my own heart in relation to my own life. And we are saved from, one of the things that God says is from is the wrath of God and so we don't have to look forward into the future with trepidation and guilt because Jesus Christ came to save us from the wrath of God. If we respond in faith to His word and His will then we are saved from the wrath of God. Whenever He washes away our sins then He also is not going to hold them against us any more, they aren't standing in the record against us anymore and when our record is clean then we can enter into the presence of God with exceeding great joy, we do not need to fear His wrath.

Hebrews 2:15 tells how Jesus came to deliver them who through fear of death all their lifetime were subject to bondage. Another thing that He here has saved us from is the bondage from the fear of death. Now this does not mean that there is something wrong if we are afraid if we see a sword coming toward our head, that doesn't mean that that is a wrong response that is a natural response, it's a little bit like I see children you know they quickly poke the finger at somebody else and can say: See I made you blink. Well what is so great about that? That is a natural response you see.

That is the way God made us and it is also a natural response to us to want to protect our bodies in other ways and to not really want to die. It is natural to desire to stay alive and so if we would have some fear in the face of sudden death that is not necessarily wrong, it is not necessarily of the devil, it may be a natural response on our part, it is just the way that God has made us, however, the person who is right with God and will listen to the voice of God knows that beyond death there is a heaven to be enjoyed in the presence of God forever and so when we seriously ponder that we know that we really do not need to fear death. And so that is one of the things that we are saved from, the bondage of the fear of death.

Another thing we are saved from is the control of the carnal nature. In Romans seven the apostle Paul describes the bondage of the carnal nature he says here in Romans 7:8: “But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.”

Why is it that people want to break a law just because it's a law? Why is that? Well that is exactly what the apostle Paul is talking about here. You say if they say don't do it, I wouldn't even feel like doing it, because it says it I now feel like doing it. Well that's carnal nature at work; sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, evil desire. And he goes on and describes how that he wanted to do good and couldn't do it because there was a law working in his members that he couldn't overpower and even consented to the law that it was good and he said: I delight in the law of God for the inward man. You know there are a lot of sinners who have some respect for Christians because they delight in the law of God for the inward man. In fact there are even people who would really like to have our sons or daughters for their husband or wife because they see the good qualities that a Christian has and they see that there is value in that even though they themselves aren't willing to live up to it, they would see some value in that, it is a way that God has made in us an awareness of what is right and what is wrong.

But what is the answer to this? Paul says here in Romans 7:22-23:

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

See what he is saying is: I really like what is good and right but I can't, I do what is wrong it comes to me naturally, it is a law that is in my members and it overpowers my mind, it overpowers what I know to be better and it brings into captivity into the law of sin which is in my members. It is called the carnal nature - the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from this body of death? What's the answer? Well I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord there is deliverance from the carnal nature. We don't believe that the Scriptures teach the eradication of the carnal nature, that it is totally removed from us and that we are no longer tempted after we become Christians we know by experience that it isn't that way and Scriptures bear it out. If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). But at the same time the Scriptures plainly teach that God does not want us to yield our members to be servants of sin but rather to yield to God.

Romans 7:25a "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord....."

That is the answer. We are saved from the control of the carnal nature, when we yield ourselves to God we choose a different master. It is not that we are now in control of our own lives, if we try to control our own lives we will fail but if we lean on God, depend on Him then we will be able to have victory over the carnal nature and this is what we have been saved from.

Jesus was speaking to the Jews when they said: We are Abraham's seed and they said that God is our father, He said: Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. John 8:41-42

Jesus continued his conversation with them there in John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

But the point that we wanted to especially notice is that by nature our father is the devil and until we have a change of control he is going to direct us, he is going to dictate to us what we do, and there are many people who

do not understand this principle and in fact it is something that Christians sometimes don't understand. We all don't understand it as clearly as we ought that if I listen to the devil here he is not going to stop there he is going to take me further and if I yield myself to him on one point, it doesn't matter what it is, it doesn't make any difference on which point I yield myself to the devil and let him control my life? Does it make any difference whether it is pride, whether it is hatred or whether its jealousy or whether it's no submission or does it make any difference what it is? Well really doesn't.

If I yield myself to the devil on one point then he is going to want more and more and more and there is not going to be end unless I ask for the power of God, as I choose God to be my master, unless I call on Him for help, for deliverance from my sin, I confess my sin to Him and ask for His help the devil is just going to control my life. That is true for every one of us and that is why it is so important that we are so careful of every detail in our lives. That is why the Scriptures call us to walk circumspectly; you know pay attention to all the different areas around, not just focus on one thing, there is more involved than that. It is important to focus on details in our life but we have to try to have a vision that includes all the different areas, and that is one of the real values of having brethren and sisters who can help us to see because we cannot always see as clearly as we ought to see what it is in our lives that could be a hindrance to us, that could lead us astray.

We are saved from the control of our father the devil, in fact we have now a different father, and God is our Father as we are saved.

5] Another question is: By what means does God cleanse defiled lives? Hebrews 9:22 says without shedding of blood that there is no remission. There just can't be sin taken care of, it can't be atoned for in the sight of God without blood, it just won't work otherwise, that is the reason as I understand it why God did not accept Cain's offering, he brought of the fruits of the ground and it was not acceptable to take care of his sin, God didn't accept his offering there wasn't any blood involved. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

So he says 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” A wonderful promise.

John 3:5

“... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

I think the basic answer to the question: By what means does God cleanse defiled lives? Is: by the blood, the blood of Jesus Christ. But the Scriptures also speak of something else as a cleansing agent and that is except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. So the spirit is involved in that cleansing, the washing of the blood, but also he speaks of being born of water. Now what is that water he is talking about being born of water and of the Spirit? Well we have some of the Scriptures that I think shed light on this.

Psalm 119:9

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed there-to according to thy word.”

And we also have Ephesians 5:25-26

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,”

So the blood of Jesus Christ is the cleansing agent that washes away sin and maybe the washing of water here in this context in Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify us includes by the washing of water by the Word. Perhaps the cleansing power of the Word is more of a sanctifying cleansing where God is busy in our lives with the Word to help us understand the need of our own hearts, the mirror of the Word is there to show us ourselves in the light of God's vision what it is that He sees in our lives that needs to be changed in order for us to be patterned after Himself. The washing of water by the Word is as far as I'm aware the only two things, unless you want to include the Holy Spirit which of course is the one who does the work, but the blood of Jesus Christ His Son and the washing of water by the Word are cleansing agents, it is basically the blood that cleanses away sin.

Now coming back to John 3:5 “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Do you think it is possible for a person to be saved if he doesn't know any Scripture, if he hasn't heard any Scripture? Well how is he going to know Jesus Christ? He is going to have to know at least the truth of the Scriptures to be saved isn't he? He is going to need to know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and that it takes blood to wash away his sin. He is going to need to know some of these simple things whether or not he reads, whether or not he understands it all, he is going to have to have at least a limited knowledge of these basic truths of the Scripture and I think when it says in John 3:5, except a man is born of water and the spirit, it is saying that he has to have some knowledge of the word of God for the Holy Spirit to be able to take it and apply to his life and then convict him of his sin and then bring him to repentance and cleansing.

6] Another question is: What is God's main purpose in giving us the Scripture?

I would just like us to turn together to John 20:31, this is the last verse of the second last chapter in the book of John.

Apostle John says: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Isn't this really the central purpose of the Scriptures that God wants men to be saved? God's want people to be saved and that is without reference to gender. God wants all people to be saved and that is what he is saying here that the Scriptures were given for us to come to faith in Jesus Christ and to be saved and notice here also, it is quite interesting to me that he says that believing you might have life through His name. Those that say maybe that once we have believed or once we are believing we continue to believe that believing you might have life through this name. These are written that you might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that believing that you might have life through His name.

We have also 1 John 5:13 which we looked at first:

“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.”

7] Another question is: What are some elements of salvation?

I'd like to turn to Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"

This Scripture is a precious one in helping us to understand God's involvement and our involvement. From the verses that we have noticed previously one of the elements of salvation is faith, and that is very accurate. The Scriptures emphasize faith. There cannot be salvation without faith. God didn't make us robots. Maybe I should qualify that a little bit - there can't be salvation without faith that is on the part of accountable people. According to the Scriptures we believe that innocent children are saved by the power of the blood of Christ apart from their faith, God has made provisions for them that is the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world, all innocent children are protected by the blood of Jesus Christ and are not accountable before God for there it seems until God awakens their conscience and makes them aware of a personal responsibility toward Him. And so faith for accountable people is what we are speaking about. An element of salvation is faith.

Titus 3:4-8: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

Now let's explain that righteousness that we have done.

Isaiah 64:6 says: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

This is talking about the good things that we do in an effort to try and earn our salvation, a person may say: Well I want to be saved but I am too bad, I will have to live a better life first in order to be saved. Well that's not viable and so we sing: Just as I am without one plea. We sing that as an in-

vation song because it won't help to try and make ourselves better before God saves us, it won't help anything, all our righteousness are as filthy rags, we need to come to God. Here he says in verse five (Titus 3) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" Regeneration.

That word regeneration, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and continues in verse six "Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

The Scripture brings into focus some of the elements of salvation, there are others that are not necessarily named here but we could say that man is to be convicted of sin and man needs to be contrite, he needs to have that broken and contrite heart which David expressed in Psalm 51, he needs to come to repentance which is basically a change of mind. The way we think of what we have done where we despise it, it becomes distasteful to us, we don't want to continue in that way, and we regret that we have sinned against God, which is repentance, where there is a change of our minds about what we have done.

And here it speaks in verse five (Titus 3) of the renewing of the Holy Ghost and in:

Romans 12:2 says: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The renewed mind, that is repentance and there is surrender, the surrender of our wills to God where we get to the place like the apostle Paul where we say or Saul as he then was: Lord what would have thou have me to do? And we are just ready to take God's direction, we are mellow, we are soft, God has made our hearts soft, we have yielded to His wooing's in our lives and we surrender ourselves to Him and we are ready to say: Lord of all that really matters to me is what You want me to do and I am ready to do it, whether it is easy or whether it is hard. That is surrender, that is an element of salvation. And this is the point on which it is necessary for us to continue in this frame of mind. You know if we have a surrender of heart it

is not difficult for us to yield ourselves to the voice of our brethren, to submit ourselves to others who are also seeking to follow the Lord.

Confession of sin we have mentioned that in 1 John 1:9 and Romans 10:9-10.

There also needs to be a commitment on our part like the love servants in the Old Testament who said: I love my master, I'll serve him forever. He was ready to go up before others and had each ear held up before the post and with an awl poke a hole through it, bore a hole in it and he would have a hole bored in his ear to show that he had chosen to serve his master forever.

Now what kind of servant do you think that will make the old person or the young person who yields himself to God and someone asks him: How long do you want to be a Christian and he says: Well one year. One year? Is that all?

Do you think you God will save a person if that is his attitude, I'll be a Christian for one year and after that I will live my own life. Do you think God will save a person with that attitude? Well that is not full surrender is it? And I have heard that question asked, I can think right now of one who was of our number here, the evangelist asked that question of him: How long do you want to be a Christian? And the answer was like always, forever. But the sad fact is that individual is not, I don't know, I doubt if that individual is a Christian today. And it is important that we have that attitude that I want to serve the Lord forever and I want to be faithful to Him forever and that we maintain that attitude.

What are some elements of salvation?

This Scripture speaks of regeneration. You know in the beginning God created a generation and that generation was moving up with Him and because of sin there was degeneration and there was a going down away from the plan and will of God. Now Jesus Christ came to bring us back so that there can be regeneration that we can again move upward with God. Now this is the work of God. You cannot regenerate yourself, you cannot regenerate me. Regeneration is the work of God. By the washing of regeneration, washing by the blood of Christ that washes away sin and renewing of the Holy Ghost is the work of the Holy Spirit and it speaks also about being justified in verse seven. Justification is the work of God. I cannot justify myself, God is the one who has to clear my record if it is going to be

clear and I'm going to be justified in His sight and he also speaks about sanctification, maybe not directly here in these verses but these are the work of God, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and they are a part of salvation but they are the work of God and you and I cannot accomplish them but we can yield ourselves to God so that He can accomplish them.

How would you evaluate this statement?

All you need to do to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. How would you evaluate that statement?

Well literally that statement is true. Acts 16:30 says that the Philippian jailer said when he brought Paul and Silas out: “.....and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

This statement is literally true because true believe works itself out into holy living but many make the mistake of separating faith from the works that it produces and therefore the way that this statement is worded: All that you have to do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved could easily be misleading and in fact many times it is misleading because it implies separation of faith from works, the mistake of separating faith from the works that it produces. I like the Scriptural definition of saving faith in Galatians 5:6 where it says...

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

And so here in Titus 3 it says that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works, these things are good and profit-able unto men. We don't do good works to be saved but we do good works because we are saved because we want to please our Master. We don't want to dishonour Him, rather we want to please Him.

How do we define assurance?

What are some synonyms of assurance? I will give three words; persuasion, confidence and certainty. Assurance is persuasion, confidence of mind there are a number of points I'll share here in relation to confidence as we go on and ask several other questions. Confidence of mind, there is certainty of assurance of salvation that we are talking about; there is a certainty that produces rest in our hearts.

Another question is: What should we be sure of in relation to the past and the present and future?

In relation to the past: 1 John 2:12...“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.”

We should believe that God does what He says; when we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And so that should be settled in our minds that in relation to the past we have a confidence that God has forgiven those sins. In fact it wouldn't be fair to mention that verse without emphasizing the latter part of it where it says that if we confess our sins that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now does God forgive more sins than we confess? Or doesn't He? Does God forgive more sins than we confess?

So let's say we counted that I have committed 1000 sins and I confess to God 90 of them, what about the other 910? Does God forgive them too? What does this verse say? If we confess our sins He is faithful and just forgive us our sins and to do what? To cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Now that can be misapplied but we must also believe it and if we would all have to remember all the sins that we ever did to be forgiven of them I don't think that there would be any hope for us. This verse it says that God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness and now when we help people come to salvation we try to emphasize that you ought to confess the sins to God that you think of but you don't have to think of them all. And when you confess and when a person comes with a sincere heart to God and confesses his sin to God, God sees the sincerity of his heart.

Now if there is something that I know in my life that I am not willing to confess then this nullifies this doesn't it? You know if I am holding back, if there is something there that I will not confess how can God cleanse me from all unrighteousness if I knowingly withhold that? But if I do not do that knowingly, if I openly confess to God my sins and ask for His cleansing then God washes away the whole record. Now that doesn't mean that God might not bring something to our minds five years later that happened before that, He might, in fact I have heard this testified that He has and I also know it by experience, but I think as another brother said that God allows things like that just to test us, to see whether we are willing, whether we still have that penitence of heart whether we are still willing, maybe we

need to go and make some restitution about something we did back before that. Well is it worth it?

Well is it worth to go and make some restitution? Will surely it is worth it. Is it worth it to confess our sins to God to humble ourselves before God and confess what He has brought to our minds? Well surely it is worth it. Anything that we can gain in heaven is worth it so let's not hesitate to do that but at the same time let's claim that promise that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So in relation to the past we should have confidence that our sins are forgiven and in relation to the present we should have confidence that we are walking in the light, we walk in the light as He is in the light we have Fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:1.

In relation to future we should have confidence, 2 Peter 1:10-11: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"

If we continue in the path way of holiness we will make it. It is sort of like if you want to get to Prince George there is a road right out here that will take you there but if you take the wrong way on that road you will not get there and that is like the way of the road to heaven. You know if we go on this road and go one-mile at the time you keep going that right direction after a while you are going to get there aren't you? and that is the way it is going to heaven. You know if we stay on this pathway and we keep walking with God He will lead us on this pathway and after a while we will get there. It doesn't mean that we can't turn off here and there along the way. Like someone said for every mile of road there is two miles of ditch, there are plenty of places to turn off but if we stay on this road we will make it and that is our confidence in relation to the future. If you do these things you shall never fall. This road will take us to heaven, the road that the Lord indicates to us in His word.

What is the proper order of importance of feeling, faith and fact?

This is where we can get ourselves into trouble. 1 John 3:20 says: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

The truth is that we need to put fact first, we need to go by what the Bible says first of all and then our faith must line itself up with the fact of what God says, if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Have I confessed my sins to God? Well then do I believe that God did what He said? That when I confess my sins to God He is faithful and just forgive us our sins, do I believe that? First is the fact of what God has said and second is my faith that cooperates and accepts what God says and then along after that comes my feelings. You know that is the order of importance because we can have this thing in reverse, our feelings can play tricks on us and we cannot go by them, you know with me that we can't always go by our feelings, so the Scripture says if our hearts condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.

Now I believe that sometimes individuals' hearts do condemn them when really there is nothing wrong, sometimes that happens and it also happens the other way sometimes that people's hearts don't condemn them when really there is something wrong, but we must get these in proper order. The facts, our faith and then the feelings.

For assurance of salvation to benefit me who must I apply it to?

Well you know it is wonderful to be sure that my brother or sister is saved, that my husband or wife or my son or my daughter or someone else is saved, it is wonderful to know that surely they are living as a Christian should live. That is good, we ought to have confidence in each other like that but really what is that going to do for me if I do not have assurance myself? In order for confidence in assurance of salvation to benefit me there needs to be a personal assurance and God I believe desires that for every one of us and there needs to be a personal assurance.

Is assurance our salvation? Or is salvation our assurance?

Well maybe that sounds like a tricky question but you know in Matthew 25 there were those people, many people, who said Lord we prophesied in your name, we have cast out Devils, we have done many wonderful works. They were sure they were saved and Jesus said: Depart from me I never knew you, you workers of iniquity. So assurance is not our salvation.

No, it is happened to me already I was just positive that I was going north but the road sign said south and what am I going to do. The sign said South, the sign must be wrong, well it is possible for the sign to be wrong

but what do you do when the signs keeps saying the same thing, they keep saying you are going south and after a while you get to the wrong city and well that is what is going to happen to some people spiritually, sad to say. Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord and Jesus will have to say I never knew you. We don't want to be among that number.

Assurance is not our salvation but salvation is our assurance. We must come back to the word of God.

How sure should our assurance be?

When Jesus said to His disciples that one of you who eats with me here dips his hand in this sop, one of you today is going to betray me. What did they ask? Every one of them asked Lord is it I? And I think that there is a sense in which we constantly need to have that attitude. I like the way Brother David Martin put it; The boy who hits a home run and walks from third base to home, you know is that the kind of confidence we ought to have in the Christian life, now I can walk, I know I will make it so now I can walk.

Well that's not a realistic confidence, it is not, you can't do that in the Christian life that is too confident. We should be 100% convinced about our God and His saving power but we must not become proud in our own conceits in relation to ourselves. And so I believe it is proper to say that we have a sober confidence.

And so I invite you to turn to Proverbs 28:13-14:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.”

You understand the first part, we all do. Covering our sins brings us condemnation and brings us fear and brings us into bondage. Confessing and forsaking them brings us into mercy, God is here to deliver us from sin, Jesus Christ died for that reason and we rejoice in that wonderful and gracious assurance that whoso confesseth and forsaketh them (sin) shall have mercy. That is very positive language; whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

What about verse 14? Our friends who promote the idea that once you are saved you are always saved, some have said well that must be terrible to live in fear that you won't make it to heaven. What does this verse say:

“Happy is the man that feareth alway but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.” This verse is saying that assurance of salvation and fearing alway can peacefully coexist, they can and this is related to the thought of sober confidence where we don't get so bold that we jump up and down and say like one man I was told that he said it, He said: I'm standing on burnt off ground and the fires of God can't touch me.

Oh really? I don't think we ought to make statements like that, which is totally contrary to the Scriptures. You know we should not get to the place where we feel so confident of ourselves that we know that we will we for sure never end up in destruction. But the key to our success is that the only way that we can be sure is that we keep leaning on God, we keep depending on Him, we don't trust ourselves enough so that we forget about God but we keep looking to God and we trust in Him because we come back to His promise: Whoso confesses and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

We look to God and we maintain a certain, not a big one, but a small suspicion about ourselves, maybe my words aren't the best choice here but big or small but I think you know what I mean, where we have to maintain a bit of a suspicion about ourselves and keep looking with that question: Lord is it I?

But we can't let that question become too big where we don't see God and that it overwhelms us with a feeling in knowing that there is no hope for me. Well we come back to that promise of the Scripture: Whoso confesses and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

May God help us to that end.

## *2] THE FOUNDATION OF ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.*

We bring you greetings in the name of Jesus who certainly is all we need. The Scripture says that of God Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Now all these things are very important and needful for us and we find as we look into the Scriptures and as we learn to know the Lord personally the truth of those words.

Our focus this morning is largely in relation to the last one; "... and he is made unto us redemption." The previous message that I shared in relation to the assurance of salvation we first noticed in 1 John 5:13 that: "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 ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

The Scripture in many places makes it plain that God desires that we have a right relationship with Him and He desires that we have rest in our relationship with Him, that we do experience assurance of salvation. We have noticed first of all the fact of assurance of salvation and now we want to notice the Foundations of the Assurance of Salvation.

What is it that assurance of salvation is based upon?

In the approaching this message this morning there are a number of different Scriptures that we want to look at, we by no means will cover the scope in what the Scriptures have to say relation to this important matter because it is the very core of the gospel that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom the Apostle Paul said "of whom I am chief", and it is a message that God has preserved down through the years for all people including you and me.

We approach the message this morning by asking seven questions and our focus then will be on the answers that the Scriptures give in relation to those questions.

Turn first of all to John 17:17 maybe we could turn to each of these seven verses that we want to notice. One question that comes to mind in relation to assurance of salvation if we are going to have a solid foundation from which to work in relation to our salvation and our assurance of it is: How can I know what the Bible says about salvation and assurance is true?

Here we have in John 17:17 the answer of Jesus: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Thy word is truth, which is the part we want to emphasize, Thy Word is truth. I believe that this is a foundation on which the assurance of our salvation is built. If we don't have this foundation what else do we have? And

if we don't have the foundation that the Word of God is true well we really don't have anything at all whatsoever to build upon to believe that we can be saved or have any assurance in relation to our salvation because all that we base our understanding on in relation to our salvation comes from the Word of God and if the Word of God is not true we have no foundation but the Scriptures in numerous places testify of their own truth and here is one of them: Thy word is truth. Jesus said it here in His high priestly prayers: Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

Psalm 12:6 says: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

God uses that language I think to help us to understand and appreciate how pure and how true His Word is. It is not that God's words need to be purified, that is not what it is saying, it is not saying that God's words have been tried in furnace of earth and they have been purified in a furnace of earth seven times but rather it says that the words of the Lord are pure words, they are like silver that has been tried, that has been purified in a furnace of earth, and I have a little bit of familiarity with that process. We know that that is what is done whenever they want to separate the dross from the silver and various ores that are found in the earth, whenever they want to purify them they use fire and they make them hot and in the process of making them hot the impurities in some cases float to the top, it depends on what it is that they are trying to purify, they separate the pure substance from the impurities and here he says that God's word is like that which has already been purified, it has already been tried.

The words of the Lord are pure words 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And so we believe that the Bible is inerrant, there is no error in it in the original writings, we know that God didn't write the Bible in English because the English-language didn't exist that many millenniums ago, but we know that He has preserved the truth of His word and we use the King James because we understand it to be the most accurate of the English translations, but in the original writings the Scriptures were perfect because they were inspired by God, there was nothing wrong with them and God has preserved the truth of His Word.

It is interesting to me to notice in some of the English translations where the truth has been altered that even sometimes the next verse contradicts

the alteration, proves it wrong because man has tampered with the Word of God. God has still preserved His truth. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness and that the man of God maybe perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.....but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

As they were carried, as they were borne, as the Holy Ghost directed them they spake and they wrote at the direction of God and then Romans 10:17 "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

So there is no better anchor for faith and the Word of God is pure, inspired, absolutely pure truth upon which we can safely anchor our faith.

The second question we would raise:

If someone did repent of all his sins and ask God for mercy and cleansing would God really listen and answer his prayer? Will God really listen to him or answer his prayer?

Turn with me to Hebrews 11:6, for an answer from the Scriptures in relation to this, you probably know this verse by memory, it is a very valuable verse to have in mind.

Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

I would like to underscore the words "He is and he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

I believe that this is another foundation upon which salvation and the assurance of salvation is built. In fact these two things, the fact that God is, We could take those words from this verse God is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. These two truths could perhaps be called the pillars on which the whole house leans. I think of that Philistine building that Samson was standing in there where those two pillars that the whole house was leaning on and he asked the lad to let him feel those pillars, he pulled them together, and the whole house fell down.

Well that is what will happen to our faith if we do not have these two pillars. The fact that "God is" First of all He exists. And not only does He exist, He is always there, He won't discontinue to exist, He won't go out of existence, He is always there, He never sleeps.

Psalm 121:4 "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Will neither slumber nor sleep and that's what the Scriptures have to say in relation to our God, God is. He is always there and we think of how Elijah mocked the servants of Baal and said to them well maybe you will have to get your god's attention, maybe you should shout, maybe you should cry louder, maybe you should arouse him from his sleep or from his journey.

Well thank God that our God is not that way, we do not have to speak loudly to get His attention, we don't have to wake Him up first before He will listen to us but rather our God is and He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. This is a tremendous truth that has blessed our hearts many times; He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. There are other Scriptures which also bring out this same truth.

In Jeremiah 29:11-14 God says "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: ....."

This is a tremendous promise, I don't know what greater promise that you could think of then this that God promised if you shall seek Me and find Me when you shall search for Me with all your heart and I will be found of you, saith the Lord.

These are again I think two pillars on which the whole house leans, God is and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and it is a foundation upon which we must build if we would have salvation and assurance of it.

Turn to Revelation 22:17 for the answer to third one question: Who is salvation for?

Again I say there are many other Scriptures which bring out the same truth and perhaps you can think of another that in your opinion would answer it better, maybe it would but the question raised in the third place is: Who is salvation for?

Revelation 22:17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is a-thirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

I would underscore those words "whosoever will let him take the water of life freely" This is another foundation on which our assurance of salvation is built. This Scripture here does not separate between Jews and Gentiles, it does not separate between men and women, it does not separate between those of high degree and those of low degree, it does not separate between those with money and those without but rather it simply says "whosoever will"

It really puts the onus upon you and upon me whether or not we want this salvation, which is really where God places the onus. He makes it freely available to all men and there are various other Scriptures which point out this truth also.

Isaiah 45:22 God says Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

It is interesting to me how He uses this language: All the ends of the earth. There isn't anyone upon the face of the whole earth that God has excluded from the opportunity of salvation and He has made the gift of salvation freely available to all men and if you would like to turn to Romans 10 I just like the language of the Scripture here:

Romans 10:11-13 “For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

He is rich. I like that language “and all that will call upon Him - our God,” you think about it, the promise of the Scripture is that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us, to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now whenever a person does that, whenever he comes in penitence and calls upon the name of the Lord for cleansing he is not holding something back in, he comes in the sincerity of his heart and this is his desire and this is his confession to God that Lord I have sinned, whatsoever words he says it in, that God hears that prayer and God answers immediately, God response immediately, He cleanses away that sin. Like David said: I have sinned against the Lord, and the prophet Nathan in the message of the Lord said: The Lord has put away thy sin.

That is the way God operates, that's the way He always operates and this is even if He knows that a person will one year later turn around and rebel against Him, maybe become one of His bitterest rivals, one of His bitterest adversaries.

Do you think that God will then, a year before that knowing what will happen later, that God will at that point refuse to forgive him? Can you find any Scripture that would indicate that God would refuse to forgive a person in that situation? I can't.

I find only those Scriptures which say that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and so when a person comes in sincerity and in humility and faith and calls on the Lord for cleansing, God forgives him from the bottom of His heart, even if He knows that later, a month, a year, 10 years, 20 years later he will turn against Him, God still forgives, and that is a marvel, that is a great marvel of the mercy of God, He is rich unto all that call upon Him regardless of how faithful they will be or how faithful they will not be, God sees all of that. And that is a humbling thought for every one of us here this morning when we realise you know that God does that, those of us who have committed our lives to Lord we don't have a perfect record in sin, at least I don't, we don't have a perfect record, we can't say: Well I have never done anything against the Lord since. But we needed to come back to Him in humility and faith again asking for His cleansing and ask for His power to do His will.

That's what it says in 1 John 2: 1: If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, He is there to plead our case and to ask God to cleanse us, to forgive us again. The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.

In Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of whom? of us all."

Does that include you? Does it include me? Well yes it does, salvation is for all people.

John 3:16 - maybe you don't need to turn to it that is good -it is another Scripture that we are familiar with, need to be familiar with that because we cannot, we dare not do without it.

John 3:16 let's say it together as well: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The question I raise is; What motivated God to provide salvation? Why did God do it, why did He provide salvation?

And here we have the answer: God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son.

John 10:11 Jesus said "I am the good shepherd:" (the good shepherd does what?) "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

What else would have motivated God to provide salvation? Can you think of anything else that would have motivated God to provide salvation in love? Could there have somehow been an ulterior motive? Could there somehow have been a goal of God to trick man and bring him into trouble and bondage in sending His Son in the world to die in on the cross? I don't see how. How could it be?

The Scriptures says in 1 John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He says there in John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Romans 5:7 says: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."

There aren't many people who would die even for a righteous man and he goes on to say that God did more than that, God sent His Son to die for us when we were sinners, when we were His enemies and so I find no other answer then these; It is the love of God that motivated God to provide salvation and I would see here in John 3:16 "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" that this is a foundation of our salvation, this is a foundation of our assurance of salvation, the knowledge that God was motivated by love.

1 John 3:1 says "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

You won't find any other love to compare to the love that God has shown toward us, that is any other love except that love which God Himself produces, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost the

Scripture said in Romans 5:5. That is the natural outworking of God in our lives, if we love Him because He first loved us then that love flows out to others, yes, you will find it in the lives of His children but it is produced by God Himself. You won't find any human love that compares to the love which God has for us because your love stops with those who love us but God went much further He went to each of us when we were yet His enemies.

Philippians 2:13 is another Scripture which shows that it was love which motivated God to provide salvation not only initially but in its continual outworking, it says: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do what? (You finish it) of his good pleasure."

Think about that. God is working in your life as a child of His, that is who He is speaking to that verse. Work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

He is speaking to individuals who are saved and He is saying that God wants His good pleasure accomplished in your life and in mine and so He is working in you, He is working in me to accomplish that. Why? Well again it is His good pleasure, He wants us to do His will, it is His love no doubt that is motivating that. There are various other Scriptures which demonstrated this same love.

A fifth question we raise: If God wants me to be saved why do I feel so miserable when I do wrong?

Romans 2:4 "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; that is the part I would underscore. It is a foundation for our salvation and our assurance of salvation, the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. I think it is very important that we have a right view in relation to God, and I believe that this is essential, that this is a foundation of assurance of salvation. If we see God as a hard taskmaster who is out to get us every chance He can there is we will not be able to have assurance of salvation, but that is not our God and that is what the Scripture here is pointing out. He talks about the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering. Despising the riches

of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; it is interesting here to think of the conscience, God speaks to us through our conscience and our conscience condemns us if it is working properly, it can condemn us when we do wrong.

Compare your conscience to your nerves. The conscience is to the soul and spirit as the nerves are to the body. If you didn't have nerves, if your nervous system didn't work properly you would have no feeling, then what would happen if you laid your hand on a hot stove? What would happen? Well you would burn it severely, that is what would happen if you kept it there. God has given us nerves and we could say: Well why did God make me with nerves? You know if I just didn't have any feeling I wouldn't have any pain. Is that true? Well yes that is true; if we wouldn't have any feeling we wouldn't have any pain. However maybe it is not fully true, it is a little difficult for me to think through all of that, not really being in that situation, but yet maybe we can understand it a little bit better you know we can imagine, we can visualise the trouble that we could get ourselves into if we had no feelings.

I know of a young girl, she is no longer living, but she had no feeling from her waist down and she was burned very badly when taking a bath because she turned the hot water on and let it run on her legs, she had no feeling so she did not know that it was burning her and it burned her severely, it took a long time to heal.

Well that's the way we would be if God did not give us a conscience in our souls if we had nothing to alert us to the fact that there is a danger here, there is harm here! And so God has given us a conscience, could we say out of the goodness of His heart? The goodness of God leadeth to repentance. God has given us His word out of the goodness of His heart, we know the Scripture says: All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned each one to his own way (Isaiah 53:6) and Scripture also tells us in plain words that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

God has given us His word out of the goodness of His heart to tell us in plain words what is our true condition, and it is true, but you know that by nature we tend to have a pretty good opinion of ourselves and we tend to

look after ourselves quite well, every way of a man is right in his own eyes, and somehow God has to break to us the news that every way we tend to go is not right and that we need direction from Him to help us understand right and so God in His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering has given us a conscience, He has given us other Christians who help us, who understand when we are taking a wrong course as well. He has given us His Word, His Holy Spirit, all these out of the goodness of His heart.

God is desiring our best. Psalm 34:8 says “O taste and see that the Lord is good:” You know the person who never tastes might never see that the Lord is good. The man who had received the one talent he went and he hid it in the earth and when the day of reckoning came he said to the master: I saw that you were an austere man, you’re hard to please, difficult to work with and so I just went and hid your talent in the earth and its fine, it is there. And the Lord said: Thou wicked servant out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. (Luke 19:22) If you knew I was that kind of master why didn’t you do something about it? Why did you respond accordingly? And he will not escape, the person who responds: Not now - they will not escape the judgement of God but if we come to God in simple faith and acknowledge our need of Him, acknowledging that there is only one thing that can wash away our sins and that is the blood of Jesus.

We need to be willing like Zacchaeus to stay and say: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.’ Luke 19:8

You know we need to be willing to make that restitution for our wrongs and if we are going to hold back in any area we won’t be able to taste and see the goodness of the Lord but, if we have no reservations, if we come to God and humble ourselves before Him we will find out that the Lord is good, we will taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him (Psalm 34:8)

Psalm 145:9 says the Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

That means sinners and saints alike and Jesus also declared that in the sermon on the Mount when He said (Matthew 5:45) “... he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the

unjust.” And in Psalm 84:11 “..... no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

And I think we could make an application to that in relation to assurance of salvation and I realise that some people struggle a good while with coming to rest whether they are right with the Lord, and I have experienced some of that myself. But we come back to this truth: No good thing will He withhold to them that walk up rightly (Psalm 84:11)

Do you think as a child of God that God wants you to be miserable? Do you think that God wants you to be miserable? Or do you think that He wants you to be at rest, at rest and at peace with Him? Being satisfied that as far as you know you're walking according to the light that He has given you.

Well there is no doubt about the answer to that question. God does not want us to be miserable when we are right with Him. Does God want us to be miserable when there is sin in our lives? Well, maybe the answer that one is yes, God does want us to become aware of wrong in our lives and He doesn't want us to enjoy it, He wants us to repent of it, He certainly will but when all is well between us and Him He does not want us to be miserable. He wants us to be able to come to peace and rest. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk up rightly.

Nahum 1:7: “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.”

Matthew 23:37: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

We see the heart of God here. In the book of Hosea as well where God says of his people: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” (Hosea 4:17)

And if you look at a Scripture like that alone you could begin to think: Well maybe God is hard, maybe He is severe, but if you look a little bit further in the book you will also find these words: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” (Hosea 11:8)

That is the thought there, that God is saying I don't want to pour out my wrath, I want to show you my mercy but you have taken a course and this is the only thing left for Me to do is to pour out upon you My judgement. And that is the way operates. He is a God of justice, He is a God of wrath, and it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31)

But also the Scriptures make it abundantly plain that He is a God who is rich in mercy and He is a God of whom the Scriptures says that mercy rejoices against judgement (James 2:13)

The sixth question But I have committed terrible sins are they not too great for God to pardon?

Let's turn to Isaiah 55:6-7 for an answer. This is a question that individuals at times struggle with severely and the devil does his best to prolong that struggle and to overwhelm the soul with a sense of hopelessness and a sense of despair so that they will not turn to God in faith and find the cleansing that He wishes to give. Look what the Scripture says here: in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

I would like to underscore those words: He will have mercy and He will abundantly pardon. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return on to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him.

It is talking about the wicked here isn't it? That's who he addresses: Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, turn to our God for He will abundantly pardon.

Again this is a foundation for faith, that God is actually interested in you and me, that God actually does want us to come to peace and rest in Him. Do you believe, do you think it would have been possible for Judas to have been pardoned of the sin that he committed?

I believe with all my heart that it was possible.

What makes you think that? Well what did Jesus say to Judas when he came to Him? What did Jesus say when he came to betray Him? Did he say: Enemy get out of here! No. He said: Friend wherefore art thou come?

(Matthew 26:50) and in another gospel He said: Judas betrayeth thou the Son of man with a kiss? (Luke 22:48)

I believe that both of those were the appeal of Jesus Christ to the heart of Judas to repent of his sin and I believe that Judas could have been pardoned just as much as you and I could be pardoned or we could turn it around the other way around and say that you and I can be pardoned just as much as Judas could have been pardoned.

We may tend to think of Judas as the worst of sinners because he betrayed the Lord but I ask the question: Did you ever betray the Lord?

There isn't any one of us that with honesty can answer: No. We must all say: that all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned each one to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6) We have all had a part in the reason for Jesus Christ going to the cross. It is true that we were not there in body as Judas was, we did not say those exact same words, but we also have denied Him, we also have betrayed Him, we also have taken our own way. And yet the mercy of God is greater than that and that is a marvel of His mercy. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return unto the Lord and He might have mercy upon him? That is not what the Bible says, it says: And He will have mercy upon him, and let him return unto our God for He will abundantly pardon.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 again is a Scripture that is addressed to believers. "..... and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 24 says: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

You know if we yield ourselves to God he will help us to make it safely to the end, that is what that Scripture is saying.

Psalms 130:7 says "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

I believe that whenever we have trouble coming to simple faith and resting in a right relationship with God we do need to search our hearts and see if there is any wicked way in me like the Psalmist prayed in Psalm 139

Psalm 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

We need to come to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal anything in our lives that is contrary to His will and whenever we cannot with honesty say that no, this is standing between me and God, whenever we can with honesty say that as far as I know I have confessed all the sin in my life then we need to come back to the promises of God, the word of God that He has mercy and He abundantly pardons and rest our faith on this foundation, the foundation of the word of God.

Let's turn to 2 Peter 3:8-9 for the seventh and last one question. This Scripture is talking about how in the last day there will be scoffers who will mock that Jesus is coming again and say that things will continue the way that they always were and he says in verse five that God sent the flood because of the people's sinful life, they were continuing as they always were and then he talks about the fact that God will keep His promise 2 Peter 3:8-9 “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

The question I would raise is this:

But how can I know that God is really interested in salvation and assurance for me. You know this is really the crux of the matter isn't it?

We can look at all of these truths of the Scripture and we can say yes it applies to this person and it applies to that person and it applies to Jew and Gentile and it applies to young and old and it applies to rich and poor, it applies to you know Canadian and Russian or whatever nationality we might name but we can still hold some of the truths, or some may, at arm's length if we don't bring it home to our own selves.

How can I know God is really interested in salvation for me?

2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Both of those words are in this verse, any and all, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The Lord is long-suffering not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. This is the foundation I see for the insurance of our salvation: The Lord is long-suffering.

Now I don't know for sure about Methuselah, some sources, one source at least would suggest that the name Methuselah meant that: In the year he dies it shall be seen. And according to the biblical record Methuselah died in the year of the flood, at least you can do the mathematics of that in Genesis 6 where there is a listing of the various men of the godly line, how long they lived until their son was born and how long they lived after that and their total number of years and in that is certainly interesting to me because of the fact that Methuselah lived to be older than anyone else, he lived longer than anyone else, and to me that is a beautiful illustration of the long-suffering of God. And the Scriptures say that the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the Ark was a-preparing (1 Peter 3:20) and this Scripture tells us that the long-suffering of God waited for me and it is also telling us that the long-suffering of God is waiting today, that is the reason that Jesus Christ has not come yet, the long-suffering of God. The Lord is not slack, it is not that God has forgotten His promise, not that He is just well too busy and can't get around to it, He is not slack concerning His promise but He is long suffering to usward not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

I know the devil can tempt us with all sorts of doubts but let's come back to the simple truth of the Word of God: God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. That is all inclusive. God is impartial in providing salvation for all men.

Romans 5:8-10: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

And then he speaks about how now that we are reconciled with God, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life (verse 10) If God would send Jesus to die for us so that we could be redeemed wouldn't He do more for us after we are redeemed? That is what the Scripture is saying; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. God doesn't

want us to have a miserable existence as His children but rather God wants us to have an enjoyable relationship with Him. He wants us to as Jesus said I come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10) This is His desire for you and me.

Psalm 32 illustrates this picture, it says my bones waxed old through their roaring all day long (Psalm 32:3) and he begins that Psalm by saying: Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,.....” (Psalm 32:1-2)

He clears the slate, the record is clean blessed is that person and truly there is no one more blessed than that.

Well there are many Scriptures that could be called to mind here in relation to this truth that God is not willing that any should perish, the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. I will just read a few verses from Isaiah 41: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys” (Isaiah 41:17-18)

Just another Scripture that shows us the heart of God is seeking the welfare of man and it is again so impartial; When the poor and needy seeketh water. It is not when the Jew and the Russian seeketh water but the poor and the needy, that is whom God is seeking for and when Jesus was on the earth the Scripture says the common people heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37) Why? Well because that is whom He came to save. The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost. (Luke 15:4) and Jesus made it plain to some of those who dialogued with Him that the reason He was unable to help them because they were not willing to admit that they were lost, they were not willing to admit their need, but when the poor and needy seeketh water and there is none and their tongue faileth for thirst the Lord will hear them, the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

That is why we don't have to despair about the Christian woman whose husband is taken and though she has a family to raise, we don't have to despair about a person in that situation. We don't have to despair about

those Christians who are beaten openly because of the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know it's not easy and we can add a whole lot to that list, some of which we have experienced. We don't have to despair about those things because God has promised a river for us when we are poor and needy if we call on Him for his help God has promised a river for us.

We could say in summary: What are the foundations of the assurance of salvation?

I've tried to emphasise a few Scriptures that point out the foundations and in summary we could say that the foundation of the assurance of salvation is first of all; The character of God.

That is really the foundation of the assurance of our salvation – the character of God. You could read on, Exodus 33 and 34 where God revealed himself to Moses. He said “I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee” (Exodus 33:19). And also He said, “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6). It is interesting to read those Scriptures which reveal the heart of God, the desire of God for His people.

Well again it comes back to our understanding of God. God is not a hard taskmaster, who is out to destroy you and you know to take you off the face of the earth the first time you do wrong, God is not that way but our God is rather one who is saying that all day long, all day long I have stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. Well that is our God. He is there pleading, rising early and “sending My servants the prophets, to show you your need, all day I've stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people” and that is how God relates to sinners. (Jeremiah 25:3)

He is standing and waiting desiring that men come to him, look unto Me and be saved all the ends of the earth. Have I any pleasure at all in the death of the wicked? God says. The answer is no. I have no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but that the wicket turn from his wicked ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why would ye die O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11)

That is the God that the Scripture reveals to us.

I know that the Old Testament Scriptures reveal more of the severity of God, that judgement and the justice of God and the New Testament Scriptures reveal more to us in relation to the love of God but when you look at the Old Testament Scriptures through New Testament eyes you can see that the love of God permeates it all.

These characteristics; the love of God and the justice of God are not contradictory, so in summary the foundation of the assurance of salvation is the character of God, the truth of His Word.

Again if we don't accept His Word is truth we have no foundation and thirdly our faith in those two things, God's character and God's love, they are true and pure and that they are the foundation of our faith.

### *3] FINDING ASSURANCE OF SALVATION*

Our thoughts today are a continuation on the Assurance of Salvation.

We thought about the Fact of Assurance, that God does make it possible and does want us to have an assurance that we are saved, He does want us to be saved and He does want us to know that we are saved. We also thought about the Foundation of Assurance, thinking especially of the character of God and His desire for our well-being.

This morning we want to direct our thoughts to Finding Assurance of Salvation, and as I thought about this Proverbs 28:13-14 stands out to me; they are verses that are beautiful and precious. The Scripture here says that:

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief."

Those are verses that are worth pondering many times, it is really the way of salvation and what God has provided is not complicated, we are the ones who complicate it, it is very simple, but there is a responsibility on our part if it is going to be a benefit to us. In thinking about Finding Assurance of Salvation there are three basic things that I think we need to do in order to find the assurance of salvation.

The first is: "Believe God's Word."

Secondly is: "Meet God's Conditions."

The third is: "Claim God's Promises."

So looking at those three this morning they form the outline for thoughts from the many, many verses that come into focus and maybe you would have a different outline and no doubt this message this morning is not comprehensive in relation to what the Bible has to say about finding assurance of salvation but it is an effort to bring into focus what the Scriptures do have to say.

1] Believe God's Word.

What do we need to believe about God's Word?

First of all we need to believe God's word about sin. The Scripture has a lot to say about sin and as we look there at the beginning, the fall of man and how God created the perfection there at the start and the fall of man and the consequences of that fall, it makes us aware of the truth of God's Word, we understand at least in part but what God said was true when He said: In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Genesis 2:17

We also have God's word in Ezekiel 18 verses 4 and 20. "The soul that sinneth shall die."

And in Romans 6:23a: "For the wages of sin is death;....." there it also uses the word wages that points out to us that you and I can actually earn death. Wages are something a person earns by what he does and as mortal men we have that potential, we can actually earn death. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23b)

I think it is important for us to understand that death is not a ceasing to exist but rather death is a separation. When Adam and Eve sinned there in the Garden of Eden they were separated from God, immediately their communion with God was cut off and they wanted to hide. Whenever a person dies physically his soul is separated from his body and we put the body in the tomb and whenever a person dies spiritually as Adam and Eve did when they ate the forbidden fruit, he is separated from God as God says in the book of Isaiah: (Isaiah 59:2) your iniquities have separated between you and your God, that's why God won't hear your prayers. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

The second death is an eternal separation from God. So death is basically a separation and I think it is important for us to understand that but this is what God has to say about sin.

James 1:14-15 "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

And there is a tendency on our part to blame the devil. I remember seeing it written already on the back of vehicles: The Devil made me do it!

Well there is some truth to that statement but I think that James 1:14-15 and a look at Adam and Eve there in the Garden of Eden and a look at our own heart reveals the truth of this Scripture that sin is not appealing to us unless we have a desire for it, there has to be a desire for it for us to be lured further into sin, it is not really a temptation to us unless we have a desire for it.

To illustrate I can say that whenever somebody smokes there is not really a desire on my part to do the same but I'm not saying that that can never be a desire, we have a carnal nature that can find many expressions. But there are other things, there are so many different areas where the devil can tempt us, many different ways that we can fall and just because we are not tempted in one area it doesn't mean we won't be tempted in another.

God has a lot to say about sin. When lust has conceived it bringeth forth sin and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

Romans 7:13 "...that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

I believe this is why God gave the commandments; this is why God gave the law, the Old Testament law because He wanted to make man aware of how sinful sin was. When we look back at Genesis 4 there and wonder how they knew, how much they knew and how they knew what God really wanted and we can't explain all of that that. We do realise that the Mosaic Law was not given until almost 2000 years or over 2000 years after the creation but God had a law that somehow He had made it plain to the man and then He added, the Law was added because of transgressions the Scripture says (Galatians 3:19) and God's intention was to help man understand how sinful sin really is.

The Bible really does name a lot of sin but as far as I know it basically gives one definition of what sin is. It says that the thought of foolishness is

sin, that is naming a sin and it says that, I also see some of the other things that the Bible says that are sin, many things that are named, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, covetousness, you know there is a catalogue of sins named at various places. But the one that stands out to me as the definition of sin is: "Sin is a transgression of the law." I think it is the only verse that it gives it that way it says that sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4) The thought of foolishness is sin. (Proverbs 24:9) That gives it in reverse, it names something that is sin but here in 1 John 3:4 sin is the transgression of the law and "transgress" literally means to step across: "Trans" means across and "gress" means step. God has a line and whenever man steps across that line that is sin. For Adam and Eve in the garden it was that tree, don't eat of this fruit, as soon as they stepped across, reached across, stepped across that line it was sin. So we must believe God's word about sin.

There are many people who say: Well you know I really haven't lived such a bad life and surely God will accept me the way I am? But we need to believe what God has to say about sin if we are going to find assurance of salvation, we can't make room for ourselves.

We also need to believe God's word about eternal judgment:

Psalm 9:17 "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Mark 9:43-50 mentions three times about how it is better to cut off part of our body to keep from being tempted by sin than to be cast into hell and into an unquenchable fire, their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

God makes it plain that there is an eternal fire that never shall be quenched.

Luke 16:24, the rich man cried out to father Abraham he said: "Send Lazarus that he may dip his finger in water, and cool my tongue; because I am tormented in this flame." He understood as I understand the Scriptures to be teaching that he is still suffering in that same fire.

Revelation 14:9-11 talks about those who worshipped the beast and the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever:....."

Revelation 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

We need to believe God's word about eternal judgment. It is amazing how many people don't believe that. Not long ago a man was telling me how he does not believe that it means that, he was saying that the fire is eternal but that people don't live forever. He said that his reasoning was something like this: (I am just trying think exactly what he did say) "You know would you, if a boy stole a piece of chewing gum do you punish him for ever?"

Would you giving him a severe punishment was his point and I think what is wrong with that reasoning is that he was then saying: "Why would then would God put people in hell to suffer forever and ever?" He was suggesting really that the punishment is not equal to the offence but what is faulty with that reasoning is that man does not tend to understand how serious sin really is, that is what is wrong with that reasoning. God is just whenever He puts people in hell, He will be just whenever He puts people in hell, He will not be unjust, He will be fair.

And I know that the Scriptures speak about that those who didn't know being beaten with a few stripes and those who did know being beaten with many stripes and so that makes you and I more responsible, we need to believe God's word about eternal life if we want to find assurance of salvation. We need to believe God's word about myself when the Bible says in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," that means me and when the Bible says in Isaiah 53:6: "We all like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," that means me, I am one of those who has taken my own way, gone astray and taken my own way. We look at Cain and see how he did that but I have done the same thing.

1 John 1:10 "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

We must come back to what God has to say about me. It is not good enough to say; "Yes, well that is true about you and that's true about the other person and surely he's a sinner," but we need to believe God's word about myself.

We also need to believe God's word about God's love for everyone including me.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

That is the most profound expression of love that ever has been or ever will be, God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son.

Isaiah 55:1 "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, ....."

Come ye, He doesn't make any exception and we shouldn't either. God's love is for everyone including me.

Isaiah 45:22 "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come unto me, (who?) all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

These are just a few Scripture examples that show us that God loves you and me, there isn't anyone excluded and I pity those people who believe that God chooses some to be saved and He chooses others to be damned, really pity people who believe that because it is a terrible doctrine, that is not what the Scriptures teach. God loves you. God loves me and He wants us all to be saved He doesn't want anyone to be in hell.

We must also believe God's word about God's remedy for sin.

We have some of these verses of course criss-cross these ideas. Hebrews 9:22 says without shedding of blood is no remission. That means of course the remission of sin.

Almost all things are by the law purged by blood, purged with blood. Without shedding of blood there is no remission.

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

That is the way God washes our sins away with the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? - Psalm 119:9 - by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

We are going to have to follow God's outline if we are going to have salvation, we must believe what God has to say about these things and everything else that He says in His Word is truth. We must accept God's Word as truth if we are going to be saved and find assurance of salvation.

## 2] Meet God's Conditions.

We need not only to believe God's Word but we also need to meet God's conditions.

And here I think that in the strictest sense of what the Scriptures say we could summarise meeting God's conditions with one word either the word "believe" or the word "faith" because the Scripture says in Acts 16:31, the answer of Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

That needs to be understood by comparing scripture with scripture but the believe that that verse is talking about is not just a head knowledge, it is not just a mental assent but rather it is a faith that affects one's whole life and that is what God is looking for, by grace ye are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). God's part is to apply His grace, God's part is to make the provision and man's part is to exercise faith to believe what God has said, to believe that the provision through Jesus Christ is sufficient to believe that God is satisfied by the provision which He made through Christ.

So the first thing that we need to do really in the strictest sense is believe but it includes all the rest but I think for our understanding it is useful for us to look at more than this and there are other things that the Bible does have to say that we need to do in order to be saved and then of course as a result of that have Assurance of Salvation.

The second thing besides believe is confess.

Romans 10:9-10 let's say it together: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Here he is speaking about confessing the Lord Jesus. This as I would understand it is talking about our willingness to tell other people about what God has done in our hearts and so if a person becomes a Christian and he continues in his, shall I say walk with the Lord, without being willing to tell other people that he has experienced salvation that God loved him and that God loves them, we have the right to question whether he will remain saved. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

This is one of the things that many times I believe that God has made it this way because as we tell other people what God has done, we tell them where we stand and what we want to live by is actually a help to us to then do it. If we don't tell anybody where we stand, if we don't speak up about truth and righteousness it is easier for us to flow with the tide, that's the way it works and so God calls us here to confess the Lord Jesus.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As I understand that verse whenever we help individuals to find salvation this is one of the Scriptures that is as plain and simple as any, if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In the context there it says that if we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8) and if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:10)

If we say that we have not sinned is talking about committed acts of sin and if we say that we have no sin I would understand that to be saying that if we have no sin tendency or sin nature, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, and so there is a need to help individuals who are desiring to be saved to realise that there is a carnal nature inside of you and you also have committed particular acts of sin and so there is a need to confess our sins to God.

I personally would believe that there is value in confessing both the fact that we have a sin nature and also whatever sins come to our mind, whatever God brings to our attention to confess it. Tell God that we are sorry for what we have done. I believe that that is the route we need to take according to this Scripture. Now where people sometimes struggle in relation in this is because they don't pay attention enough to the ending of the verse - if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I believe that that means we are not necessarily responsible to confess all the sins that we have ever committed but whenever we come to God in penitence and confess those things that we are aware of and confess our sinful nature to God then God makes us clean the whole way through and if at later point He brings something to our attention that we committed previously, some wrong we committed previously, well we correct it then.

But I would really doubt I would tend to think it is impossible for a person to really remember all the wrongs he has ever done or for him to maybe even know all the wrongs that he has ever done and I don't believe that God intends for us to try to dig them all up either. You know we certainly believe in restitution and I am not talking about avoiding it, but some people have created problems for themselves because of the tendency to just try and keep rooting down and maybe they confess to something and then they come back and they are not quite sure whether they confessed it right and they are afraid that maybe they didn't quite have the right attitude when they did it the first time and well this can be a real snare that the devil would try to trip us up in.

I believe that what God is calling us to here is surrender and that's the next point; Meeting God's conditions of surrendering.

We need to believe, we need to confess, we need to surrender to God's will by deliberate choice where we make our choice that we want to do God's will. I like the way it is given in Philippians 3 where the apostle Paul says: "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Philippians 3:16) and he also says in the verse before that: "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:15)

To me that Scripture is a great comfort because if we are not aware of sin in our lives that would condemn us but God in His faithfulness will bring that to our attention. God is not going to hide some sin from us that is in our lives until we pass the point of no return and have to go to hell, God is not going to do that. That is not the way God operates but rather if we are sincere in desiring of His will He will reveal to us sin in our lives that stands between us and God as all sin does, but He will reveal anything in our lives that is contrary to His will.

There is more in relation to the fact that we need to surrender to God's will by deliberate choice. Luke 15 gives the account of the prodigal son. What did the prodigal son determine? What did he say to himself when he thought about that there were his father's hired servants who were faring better than he was he said: I will arise and go to my father. I will arise and go to my father and I will say unto him: Father I have sinned against heaven in thy sight and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as

one of the hired servants. Those words "I will arise" demonstrate the need to surrender our will to God's will by a deliberate choice. In the gospel of John it says: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17)

Really the human will is the deciding factor in relation to whether or not we are saved and whether or not we remain saved, whether we can claim assurance of salvation depends on whether our wills are surrendered to the will of God.

Another thing that we need to do to meet God's conditions is to repent. Acts 2:38. On the day of Pentecost Peter preached and pointed out to the multitude that they were personally responsible for the death of Jesus and the question was: "Men and brethren what shall we do to be saved?" Peter answered: "Repent and be baptised."

You know they had gone along with His crucifixion earlier, they were in support of that in their minds even though they had not been there or with their hands helping them to carry it out, they were supporting it in their minds and repentance is a change of mind, you look it up in the Strong's Concordance, that's what it means, to change one's mind. And so there has to be a change of mind toward ourselves, there has to be a change of mind toward God in order to repent. Matthew 3:1 to 12 John the Baptist taught the need to repent, he said: "The axe is laid to the root of the tree." God is looking at the root of the matter, He is not only concerned about the actions He is concerned about the motives and the attitudes of the heart which produced the actions and so he says here: "The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and in verse eight, therefore bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

If I truly have repented how can I know if I've repented? Well our lives will demonstrate it. If you keep on sinning and keep on doing the same evils how can we say we have repented? Well if we really haven't had a change of mind in relation to those things we must be enjoying it too much. You know we must be nursing our wounds too much or something like Cain we just are not ready to acknowledge our wrong, he (Cain) could have, he didn't have to go out of the presence of the Lord but that was his choice.

There needs to be repentance where we change our minds. Psalm 38:18: "For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

That is a demonstration of repentance, declaring our iniquity and being sorry for our sins. There are other ways of saying this, other terms that the Scriptures use. Be converted, except ye be converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of God. (Matthew 18:3)

To be converted, the word convert means to twist, to turn quite around, so it speaks of a change of direction where a person is no longer following the devil but he is following God and John 3:3 speaks about being born again. All of these are involved in and related to repenting; except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

We need to die; another one of God's conditions is to die.

The Scriptures use various terms in relation to this, it uses the word "die" in John 12: 24-25: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone:....." You know how it is to plant the seeds, if you plant the potatoes at the end of the season they are all whole in the ground you just don't get fruit that way do you? You find that once in a while, one that is still there whole, it hasn't died; it hasn't given up its life that life could come forth from it. Well that is an illustration, a corn of wheat, grain of wheat or a corn of barley or whatever it might be a grain of barley, any seed that is going to be fruitful it has to give up its life so that life can come out of that death and that is the principle that Jesus is demonstrating here. We, you and I, whosoever will save his life will lose it. (Luke 9:24) That is what Cain did, he saved his life he wasn't ready to give up to what God had to say, he saved his life and what was the end of that? Well I know nothing more than that he must have lost his life, the Scriptures as far as I'm aware don't indicate that he repented later. That is the result, we save our lives but if we are willing to die, if we are willing to crucify our carnal nature, if we are willing to mortify it, mortify therefore your members, (Colossians 3:5) put to death is what it means.

The morgue is where dead bodies are, mortify, put to death your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, and the Scripture names various ways in which self can express itself and these things must be put to death. In order to meet God's conditions we must die:

Romans 6:4-5 "Therefore we are buried with him (that is with Christ) by baptism into death:"

Our Lord Jesus Christ died He gave his life so that life could come forth from His death and He set us an example, you and I also must die if we are going to have life. There are various ways; I remember Brother Melvin Burkholder said: "Dead men don't hurt." If there is a hurt there whenever someone says something, you know as mentioned this morning if someone else's way is taken and not my way, somebody else's counsel and I see myself as Ahithophel, I can't accept that I go and hang myself (2 Samuel 17:23)

Well that is self that rises up like that, dead men don't hurt. If we are crucified then people can speak against us, they can do many things to us and we want hurt for ourselves, maybe we will hurt for their sakes, Jesus did that He said: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:24) He hurt for their sakes. And whenever the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5) we can have that same kind of hurt, it can grieve us, it will hurt us to see other people damaging their own lives like Cain taking their own way. It will hurt us it will grieve us. But we don't need to hurt as the song says: "God give us grace to grieve or mourn for others' sins then for all the wrong that we receive" So we need to die.

We also need to enter the door: John 10:9: Jesus said "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Jesus Christ is our only hope. We need to recognize that.

1 Corinthians 3:11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Enter the door. These are not necessarily in order of sequence but parts of what Scripture says, various ways of expressing of what the Scriptures call us to in meeting God's conditions.

We need to commit our life wholly to God.

I like the words of the Psalmist he says in Psalm 116:12: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

One of the things he says in Psalm 116:16 "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds."

Commit your life wholly to God. We need to have the attitude of the love servant back there in Deuteronomy who said: I love my master I will serve him forever (Exodus 21:5-6) That needs to be our attitude, in fact isn't that what Jesus said as the first commandment? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and all thy mind, this is the first commandment." (Mark 12:30) and greatest commandment in the Old Testament and in the New, love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

We need to commit our lives wholly to God. How can we say we love Him, it is sort of like the question that Delilah asked Samson: (Judges 16:15) How canst thou say, how can you say you love me when your heart is not with me?

Well God could ask that too: How can we say we love Him if our heart is not with Him, if we haven't really made it our whole purpose to do His will? How can we do the will of God?

Well we can't really say that and so part of meeting God's conditions is committing our lives wholly to God, we are here, I am thy servant, here is a blank page you just fill it in, you tell me what to think, you tell me what to do, you tell me where to live, you tell me how to conduct my life, you tell me how to relate to other people, that is what we want and God has filled a good bit of it in right here, in the Scriptures.

We also need to walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:4-5 ".....that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

For therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature all things are passed away all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17)

Another thing Scripture names is that we need to be baptized:

Acts 2:38 "..... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

This of course was spoken on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was first given.

1 Peter 3:21-22 speaks about baptism being the answer of a good conscience toward God.

Yes I personally feel that one of the values of baptism is that a person can look back and say: Yes, I was baptized.

It is you were baptised or you weren't baptised, there is no halfway ground is there? You can't really say: Well no I was never baptised. Either you were or you weren't. Well you can say I have to accept it and change your mind about it. You can say; Well it wasn't a proper baptism or I didn't have the right attitude, you can come up with all different kinds of ideas, and if you haven't read it would encourage you to read it the article that is in the Christian Contender (published by Rod & Staff) about "Adult Re-Baptism."

But a person either was baptised or he wasn't, it is black-and-white isn't it? It is pretty easy to tell, either you were or you weren't and in relation to salvation a person with a sensitive conscience they struggle with that a good bit more and say; Am I saved or am I not?

And if a person is able to look back to the time when he was baptised can say; Yes I was. You know that if we are honest with ourselves. As a church we don't, we only baptize one way by pouring, but we don't feel so strongly about that that we won't accept people who have been baptised by immersion they were baptised all the same, but we won't accept infant baptism because: He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved. (Mark 16:16)

So what am I saying? It is something that a person can look back to and say: Yes I was baptised.

Then if a person was baptised, if his desire was to do the will of God, if his desire was to walk in the light why it is you need to be baptised again? And will it change anything if I'm baptised two or three or four times, will that help me to be a better Christian? Well no not really.

It is important that we come with a right to desire and yes as we grow we are going to realise that there were a lot of things that we didn't understand and maybe our motives weren't as perfect as they could have been but at least we had a right desire because it is the right thing to do. And I think that there is a value, one of the values of baptism is that we can look back to it and say: Yes I was baptized; I did this because I want to obey God. And we shouldn't belittle that experience of baptism.

3] Moving on to the third point. Claim God's promises.

We need to believe God's word, we need to believe God's conditions, and we need to claim God's promises.

First of all the promise of salvation: In Luke 18 and there are other verses that we have referred to this morning that probably come to your mind first, these verses tell about the two men who went up to the temple to pray, the Pharisee and the publican.

Luke 18:13-14 "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (What does it say next?) 14I tell you, this man went down to his house justified ....."

Isn't that beautiful? All he said, he didn't have a flowery speech, he didn't tell God how good he was like the Pharisee did, he recognised his corruption and that was what on his mind and that is why he called upon God for mercy because he knew God could help him, all he said was: God be merciful to me a sinner. And this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. How beautiful that is.

If he can be justified that way cannot you and I?

And also look at the thief on the cross. He cast the same into the teeth of Jesus according to the gospel, he was one of those who reviled Him at first but according to Luke's gospel as I would understand it later he changed his mind, later he had some different things to say (Luke 23:42) "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "Jesus said (Luke 23:43) today thou shalt be with be in paradise"

That is a beautiful. God will not hold off a person that comes to Him in penitence. He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37). God is always willing and ready, more so than we are, to save us, to make us clean and notice how quickly He does it, and it is instantaneous whenever we call upon God for mercy. And there isn't a set of words that a person has to use, it is always interesting to me to hear a person or whenever we help individuals who respond in revival meetings and at other times too, to come to salvation it is always interesting to me to hear their prayer. I really enjoy listening to that and they are not all the same, there is a fair bit of variation but God hears the heart, God knows a desire and you do not have to have a perfect way of speaking, God is not looking for that, He is looking for sincerity, He is looking for an understanding of my own corruption and the fact that He can help me, He is the one that can save me and that is what God hears and that is why He cleanseth.

Claim God's promise of salvation; claim God's promise of forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to (to do what?) forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

You know we could raise the question: Well, how can I know that the sins that I confessed to God today He will not hold against me somewhere down the line? Do we have any Bible answer that question? Yes we do.

Hebrews 10:16-18 ".....I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17And their sins and iniquities will I remember (you finish it) no more." Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Now in Matthew 18:29 to 35 I have a Scripture that sheds a slightly different light on that, and the Bible does mean what it says, but in Matthew 18 Jesus makes it plain our forgiveness by God depends upon our willingness to forgive our fellow men. And in that account of the man who owed his Lord 10,000 talents and his fellow servant owed him a hundred pence when his fellow servant couldn't pay him he wouldn't forgive him but had him cast in prison, when the other servants told their master he called him in and what did he do to him then? Well his Lord had cast him into prison until he should pay his debt, and so there is a sense in which he brought back all his former debt upon him.

Now I am not sure if I'm theological enough to be able to explain all of that. I guess it doesn't make much difference whether those former sins are held against you again or whether they are not, the fact is that he is still guilty because he wouldn't forgive his fellow servant, but in looking at those verses it does seem to suggest that it brings back all the former debt upon a person again if he rejects the forgiveness which God gave him. And that is in a sense what he did, didn't he? He rejected the forgiveness which his Lord had given him and so his Lord accepted that rejection of his forgiveness.

But the fact is that Scripture says their sins and iniquities I will remember no more, if we walk faithfully with the Lord and if we exercise ourselves in holiness as God has intended that we should then God will not hold our sins against us anymore.

Another of God's promises is cleansing.

Psalms 51:7 "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

The hyssop was a bitter herb and I you know I don't think it is possible for a person to be cleansed from sin without tasting some of that bitterness is it? Is it possible for a person to say come smiling up to God and say: Lord forgive me for my sin. Do you think God forgives a person with that attitude? I don't think so. But rather the Scriptures always call for "I will be sorry for my sins" There needs to be a tasting of that bitterness, of that remorse in our heart. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

What a beautiful day to read that verse: I shall be whiter than snow. Beautiful and white, whiter than that he says. If we walk in the light as he is in the light the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Claim God's promise of justification.

We could question how can God really do this. We are guilty before if Him. Is God fair in letting me by? We should say: well He is not letting us by. Well the fact is that the Scripture says in Romans 3:24-25a "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25whom God has set forth to be a propitiation by faith in his blood....."God set Him forth. Isaiah 53:11 says that: He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.

God did not let man by, God provided a provision through Christ which satisfied His justice, and that is what the Scripture is saying, and Romans 3:26 there uses the language that He might be justified and the justifier, and God is both of those. He is not just letting man by; He has made a provision that really satisfies the demands of God so that we can be just as if we had never sinned.

And another one of God's promises is transformation.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the acceptable and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2)God will change our minds.

Another is sanctification.

The Scriptures says that such were some of you but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified. You are sanctified. (1 Corinthians 6:11) Set apart for the Master's use (2 Timothy 2:21)

You are sanctified, made clean and dedicated to God.

Another one of God's promises is acceptance.

Sometimes people struggle with acceptance, they say well I have committed so many sins and you know this record is too great, and I know that you were stubborn and disobeying God but I was more stubborn, and how can God ever forgive me?

You know the devil brings thoughts like this but what does the Bible say? "Then Peter opened his mouth and said of the truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is what? Accepted with Him." (Acts 10:35)

Accepted with Him, that is what God is looking for he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him. Now there it is given in the context of that it doesn't make any difference whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, which is in the context of Cornelius in Acts 10.

But this is a truth that stands forever and the Scriptures says in another place: He has made us accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6)

God accepts us, Colossians 1:20-21 "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled to God."

There is not anything between us any more, you are accepted by God.

In the last one I would share is adoption.

Romans 8:15: "..... ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father"

Abba as I understand it was a term that the servants weren't allowed to use, it was a term that can only be used by children or people who were very close and we have that privilege, we are close to God now, He doesn't make us His servants but He makes us his sons and daughters, (2 Corinthians 6:18) yes we are His servants but He counts is even more than that, He counts as brethren (Luke 8:21)

It is beautiful to think about and so in the search for assurance of salvation I would say yet a few things in relation to that.

We need to believe God's word, coming back to these three points, We need to believe God's word. Have we done what God says? Have we met His conditions?

Well God's word is always true, so if we have done what He has said, we have confessed our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, we don't need to wonder we know that He has forgiven us. And you know I think sometimes whenever we struggle with wondering if God has actually forgiven us we are a little bit like Joseph's brothers and when they came to him after their father was dead because they were afraid that he was going to take vengeance on them so they came and begged for forgiveness and what did Joseph do? The Scriptures say that he wept when they spake unto him (Genesis 50:15-17) You know he had forgiven them a long time ago and maybe part of that weeping was that he felt sorry for them that they had not accepted his forgiveness and how must God feel when God says that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just forgive us our sins, and then we go away and wonder if He has done it? How must God feel?

Well I think it must make Him feel sad for our sakes as well and we need to believe His word. It is valuable, there is some benefit in being able to say that I was saved on this date but more important than that is being able to say that one thing I know that whereas I was blind now I see. That is a whole lot more important than being able to say I was saved on such and such a date.

And so as you look back on your own experience and have questions, I have questions too, I responded at a very young age, younger than we would accept today, we had revival meetings and the evangelist really didn't give much of any explanation to me he basically said to me we are glad that this is your choice, and I'm not faulting him for that, but I am just saying when we look back we might have questions about how exactly we started out, well that is not so important.

Are we walking with the Lord today?  
Do we see where we were blind?

That is what matters, are we maintaining our relationship with the Lord. Maybe we have fallen into quite a few side paths along the way but are we walking with God now? That is what matters most and if we are faithfully doing the will of God today we have every reason to be able to say in truth that by the grace of God I am His child.

#### *4]FOES OF ASSURANCE OF SALVATION*

I'm thankful this morning that we have such a friend as the Lord Jesus and we bring you greetings in His name with the confidence that it is alone through Him that you and I can be children of God, that we are children of God, that we can walk in the way of Holiness.

In continuing our thoughts on assurance of salvation we want to take a look this morning at false ideas about assurance of salvation. It is not surprising that so important a subject as this is one where the devil works as well. For every good thing that the Lord does it seems that the devil is busy to contradict and can use it and assurance of salvation is certainly included in that. It is one of those areas where the devil works to obscure the truth.

I will share this morning 12 different ideas that people promote, that people think, that are contrary to what the Scriptures teach about assurance of salvation. There may be an element of truth in many of them or perhaps all of them but there is a need to compare scripture with scripture in order to have a proper understanding of what Scripture teaches.

1] The first one I would share is this statement: I feel alright so all is well between God and me.

Now the Scripture does say in first John 3:21: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." And I believe that God certainly does want us to feel right however neither feelings nor self-confidence are a sound basis for assurance.

Proverbs 28:26 says "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but who-so walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

I think there is an application in that verse in relation to our assurance of salvation, whoso walketh wisely he shall be delivered. It is not just a matter of our thoughts or our feelings but it is more a matter of our walk and so in some cases maybe all of us have experienced this at one point or another, we must first lose our assurance that we are saved and come to an assurance that we are lost, that we have sinned against God. If we are going to come to a proper assurance of salvation we first of all need to understand that we are lost.

1 John 1:9 says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I think it is very important for us to emphasise in our own minds the need to have the facts first and faith second and feelings last. It is finally what God says and what God thinks about this matter that matters the most and that is the facts, what the Bible says, and our faith must be coupled with that and then our feelings need to follow after, sometimes they will be right and sometimes they will be wrong and so we need to keep the other things first.

2] The second idea that people share at times: I am not so bad, I treat my neighbours right, God will accept me.

Now human reasonings can never replace human repentance.

This statement does indicate that that person does have an understanding of the fact that God expects our actions to be noble and right. When a person says I am not so bad I treat my neighbours right, yes it is scriptural it is God's will for us to treat our neighbours right, it is God's will for us to walk in righteousness. And the Bible does speak about people being judged according to their works so this statement is not totally off from what the Scriptures teach. However maybe we should turn together to Romans three, the Scripture here is a quotation from the Psalms.

In this chapter he is talking about Jews and Gentiles and in verse nine he says Romans 3:9-12 "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

This Scripture goes on and then gives further description of that truth and then verse 23 says Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

It is important for us to realise that there is no one that is good enough on the basis of his own actions to make it to heaven but rather there is a need for us to acknowledge our sin to God, there is a need for us to repent and as John 3:3 says except a man be born-again he cannot see the kingdom of God. There is a need for us to humble ourselves in calling on God for mercy and cleansing, repenting of our sins and making us new creatures if we are going to make it to heaven.

John Bunyan said it, this is a loose quote of what he said, I care not at all for that form of religion that begins not in heaviness of mind.

I think that is a scriptural concept because of the fact that in order for us to come to God in true repentance there needs to be a heaviness of mind which is so clearly pictured in the repentance of David in Psalm 51. It is very plain that he was weighed down and burdened down with guilt and the feeling of the need of God and the work of God his life, and that is how he found a restored relationship with God.

3] A third idea about assurance of salvation is: My good works will save me.

Now this, I don't know if you will find anyone who would actually make a statement like that: My good works will save me. However there are various expressions that amount to that same thing.

Some people believe in baptismal regeneration based on verses like Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

If that is the only Scripture that we had in relation to baptism and regeneration then we would probably safely conclude that it is by baptism that a person is regenerated however as we compare scripture with scripture we discover that is not the case.

Another good work that some people would base their salvation on is speaking in tongues Acts 19:6 the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues. That would be another expression. Or maybe if we would bring it closer to ourselves we might think something like this: I have clean speech, I wear a plain suit and I pray daily, we add these onto our lists and on the basis of these things I am right with God, I am safe.

Well what is wrong with that kind of reasoning? My good works will save me. You and I would probably never say that my good works will save me but we might think that. There is a tendency for us because of the fact that we emphasise obedience to the Scriptures and a carefulness in our lives there is a tendency then for us to trust in that. I think that the reason that is and the other statements about baptismal regeneration and speaking in tongues and a whole long list could be added to that of what people promote, is the fact that there is a tendency for us to look for some kind of tangible proof, something that I can lay my hands on and say: Now here it

is, see I am saved! And there is that desire that tendency for us to try to prove that we are saved simply on the basis of something that we do.

That concept is not totally wrong because of the fact that, well maybe let me back up a little bit, Isaiah 64:6 says "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

So all the good works that we can do if they are done in an effort to gain our salvation in the eyes of God that is filthy rags, they are really worthless as far as gaining salvation for us is concerned. However good works are the result of true saving faith, in Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

Good works are the result of true saving faith but they will never save us if our faith is in good works and not in God.

The thing that we need to keep reminding ourselves about is that our trust needs to be in the Lord and yet we do need to walk in obedience and we do need to do the will of God but finally it is a living faith that is the key to a living relationship with God, it is a living faith, and that is not something that can necessarily be spelt out in a certain little capsule.

4] Number four. As a result of the fall man is so depraved that he cannot even exercise his faith but God must do it for him.

Now this is the first of the five points in relation to Calvinism. T.U.L.I.P., the first one being total depravity. I am not sure what all the Scriptures are that individuals who promote this teaching use, perhaps Romans 3 would be one, maybe we could turn together to Mark 9:22-24, this is something, I'm not sure if you have ever spoken with someone who really believed this, I was asking Brother Jerry about it because I thought I had heard him talking about it and he said that at one occasion at Vanderhoof he had finished preaching about us exercising faith to be saved, and there was an old white-haired man who was present at that service who came to him after that service and told him: "Young man, you are just proud, you think you can do something to help God to save you." And in his opinion it was all in the hands of God.

Well there are people who hold to this type of thinking, there are probably not so many who would say a lot about it but the Scriptures here in Mark nine we have the account of the man who had a son who had a dumb spirit and he brought him to the disciples of Jesus and they could not cast out this evil spirit and so he brought him to Jesus and in Mark 9:21-24 Jesus asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Now is it scriptural to think that God helps us to believe? Yes certainly, it is scriptural to believe that, it is scriptural to think that, this man prayed that: Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

We pray and we sing: Increase my faith dear Lord I pray, and it is right to do that. Jesus did say to him first: If thou canst believe, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Now why did Jesus say that? I personally feel that He said that because He wanted to strengthen the man's faith. He wanted this expression of faith that came forth: Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief. He wanted that for you and me to learn from. Did the man have faith before he said that? I believe he did. Why did he come to Jesus if he didn't think that He could do something for him, he had a measure of faith and Jesus pointed out that he had a responsibility in that: if thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth. And so this and other Scriptures point out that God calls us to exercise faith.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17) Certainly God does help us to have faith. In Psalm 37:4 it says: "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." That is a beautiful promise. But I think that if we desire faith that that is included in that promise, if we desire greater faith we need to delight ourselves in the Lord and God will give us the right kind of desire and faith is a right kind of desire, something that God wants us to have.

This idea that as a result of the fall man is so depraved that he cannot even exercise his faith but God must do it for him really makes God re-

sponsible for our destiny, it does not put any responsibility on man, and it lays aside the free will and places all the responsibility upon God.

Some of the ones that follow here, the next four, are also related to the five points of Calvinism.

5] The fifth one: God has elected certain people to be saved and I have been elected. (Unconditional Election)

This is the second of these letters that form the word T.U.L.I.P. which give the five main points of Calvinism as least as they were given in the past. Not everyone who believes in Calvinism believes all these points but some people do believe them. There are various Scriptures that you and I may struggle with in relation to this.

Romans 8:33 Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? (who are God's elect?) It is God that justifieth.

1 Peter 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience....."

This Scripture may raise the question but I think it also helps to answer the question about what is involved in election, the election of God.

1 Peter 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit,...."

There are some people who think that this is all something that God does without our surrender or without our wills, but Jesus couldn't do many mighty works in His own town because of their unbelief. The unbelief of man limits the work of God and the faith of man allows gods to work, that is what the Scriptures emphasise again and again.

God in His foreknowledge as I understand it, the election of God is related to His foreknowledge, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. God in His foreknowledge knows, we say that He knows the hairs of our head based on what it says in Matthew, He knows the number of our steps and Job teaches that, and He knows our thoughts, He knows everything about us, He knows the day of our birth and the day of our death, God knows all those things and also God knows when a person will respond in faith to Him or if a person will never respond to faith in him, God knows all those things, or whether we will fall out by the way or whether we will be faithful to the end God knows all those things. And in His foreknowledge God not only calls those who will be saved unto salvation but

He calls all people to salvation through Jesus Christ and those who choose to follow the will of God are what He calls the elect.

The elect are those who walk in obedience to God.

Peter 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit,..." and that is you and I, the degree of our surrender to God determines the degree of sanctification that the spirit is able to accomplish in our lives: "..... unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

Let's turn to Romans eight verse 29 this is another Scripture that speaks about predestination, election and predestination these two terms go close together.

Romans 8:29-30 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

If we only look at the verse 30 it would be easy to conclude that these people are thinking right that God has elected or predestinated certain people to be saved and they are the ones who are saved.

Well I would just like to underscore in verse 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

That is what the predestination is about, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, and I have heard it said already that the emphasis on predestination is more on the plan than on the people. He predestinated the plan. God's will for everyone who comes to salvation is that he would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, isn't that the will of God? Absolutely. And that is what salvation is all about.

God planned that you and I when we are born again, when we are washed clean in the blood of Christ would follow Him and become more like Him, and from the beginning that was His plan, He predestinated that. Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.

I would just like to emphasise that part - He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.

6] Another one number six. Jesus died for a select group of people and I am in that group.

This would be related to the third of Calvinism, Limited Atonement. There are many Scriptures that teach otherwise, I am not sure what verses a person would use to try and prove such a point. I am so thankful that the Scriptures emphasise that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16-18

We have that word "whosoever" and we have it again in numerous places in the Scriptures, whosoever will let him come and drink of the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17) This is God's plan.

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9) and the Old Testament says hell has enlarged herself (Isaiah 5:14) now I would personally understand that to mean that God didn't make it as big to start with as what it is now but there was a need to enlarge it. He never planned that there would be so many people in hell as what there will be, never planned that, it wasn't His will, it wasn't His desire.

Maybe that is saying more than what the Scripture says there but that is how I understand it.

Jesus did not die for a select group of people. He did not make Himself arbitrarily responsible to decide that you will be saved and you will be lost, these will be saved and these will be lost. Those people who really believe this teaching go so far as to say that there are babies in hell, you know they really believe that. Well you know the thing that is so dangerous, the thing that I wonder about this type of idea is how can that type of person then ever settle in his mind that he is one of the elect, that he is one of the saved? And I have been told by someone who I think was personally acquainted with such individuals that in groups where this type of teaching is promoted there are those who end up insane because they drive themselves so much to distraction trying to decide whether or not God really cares about them. And that would be a terrible thing, it is not hard for me to understand how people would end up there if you hold to this doctrine but it is not scriptural.

Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

7] Number seven. If God calls you to be saved you cannot refuse.

This would be an expression of the fourth point of Calvinism -Irresistible Grace. If God calls you to be saved you cannot refuse.

We have many Scriptures that teach otherwise. The Old Testament Scripture says all day long have I held forth my hands to a disobedient and gain-saying people (Isaiah 65:2)

We have the example right in the beginning of the Bible God with Cain, when He said why are you wroth? Why has your countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? (Genesis 4:6-7)

And God pled with Cain there and offered him a right way, a remedy for his wrong but Cain chose otherwise.

And again and again throughout the Scripture God in dealing with His people Israel and when He finally had to judge them for their sin He raised this question in Hosea: How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? referring to His people Israel, how shall I make thee as Admah and Zeboim? The cities that perished along with Sodom and Gomorrah, mine heart is turned within me, my repenting's are kindled together. (Hosea 11:8)

It reveals the heart of God and His desire for all mankind but it also reveals that man has a power to choose and man can walk away from God.

Hebrews 2:3 says: How shall we escape (if we what?), if we neglect so great salvation; That is our part it is not on God's part, the neglecting, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

8] Number eight. Once saved always saved. Once a son always a son.

This would be related to the fifth point of Calvinism -Perseverance of the Saints.

Let's turn to John 10:27-29. This Scripture is often used by people who hold to this teaching. And it was amazing to me when, perhaps two or three years ago, I was along with a brother visiting briefly with a couple of women in his community and one of them made the statement that, "Once saved always saved I know that is in the Bible but I don't know where."

It was quite interesting to me that she was convinced that that was in the Bible. Well there is enough of that kind of teaching around that some people think it is in the Bible. Here in John 10:28 it says "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

This is a Scripture that is many times emphasised to promote this idea that once you have been saved you are always saved - no one can pluck

them out of the Father's hand, once you are a son you always a son, this is an analogy that is used to try to prove that, you know I am, like you, are the son of my father what can you do to change that? But if that is really the way it is, I know one person who was talking to someone else who believes that once you are a son you always a son and he said to him: I pity you. Because we are also children of the devil and if we cannot change fathers how can there be any hope for us? Ye are of your father the devil Jesus said to the Jews. (John 8:44) You can't change fathers.

Yes I know in the human analogy there is nothing that we can do to change who our father is. All of us will always be the sons and daughters of our father but that is not really a scriptural teaching. Let's look at the context here around the verse before and after:

John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I think that verse 27 certainly needs to be kept with verses 28 and 29 and it is a part of the sentence you note, verses 27 and 28 form one sentence, it is a part of the same sentence and if a person is going to be a child of God, they are a child of God he is a sheep, he is one of God's sheep and he is going to hear God's voice - My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me.

And it is true what Jesus said in verse 28, it is a wonderful consolation that there isn't anyone, not even the devil, who is able to pluck us out of the Father's hand and to stop us being children of God, there isn't anyone who has that power and that is a wonderful consolation but at the same time we need to realise that we became children of God by the surrender of our wills to God and by exercising faith in Jesus Christ and you know if our hearts become, if our wills become stubborn we can walk away from God as well and there are many Scriptures that point out this truth.

Let's just turn to Romans 11:20-22. Many Scriptures point out that it is possible for us to choose ourselves to turn away from God. In Romans 11 the apostle Paul is speaking about the fact that God broke off the Jews so that he could graft in the Gentiles, maybe I should say it the other way

around, He broke off the Jews after he grafted in the Gentiles however we want to say it, but that is what he is talking about here:

Romans 11:20-22, Well because of unbelief (of the Jews) they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be (what?) cut off.

So these verses point out that there is a need for us to maintain faith. God maintains His hold, is it right to say that God maintains His hold on those who maintain their hold on Him. I think it is right to say that, it is scriptural God maintains His hold on those who maintain their hold on Him. God will not be the one who disappoints us, He will not give us up, He will in faithfulness through His Holy Spirit remind us if we are starting off on the wrong track. It won't be that a person leaves a right relationship with God and walks into the depths of sin without ever knowing it; do you think that could ever happen? I don't, because the Bible says: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, (what then?) God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:15)

I don't believe it is possible for a person to have a right relationship with the Lord has turned his back on the Lord and slowly one way or the other walks into sin and never know that anything happened, I don't believe that it is possible. I believe that God in His faithfulness will convict us along the way, help us, and give us His warning that is the way God has always operated.

9] Another expression similar to the eight one. If we live in sin after we are saved we will not lose our salvation we will only lose our rewards.

I have a brother-in-law whose father committed suicide and at the funeral his minister or the minister said: "You know you have to remember that this man was saved back there." As if that makes everything right now. Well that's another expression of this same idea.

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. This is a Scripture that is misunderstood and applied in this manner, it is a terrible doctrine that teaches that it

doesn't matter how we live after we are saved it is not surprising then that people who really believe that become careless.

It is like a man, I remember Brother Chester speaking about one man who came to the shop and wanted some mechanical work done and he made the comment, "You don't have to be afraid of dealing with this man you know he is going to be honest because he is afraid he will lose his salvation if he is dishonest."

Well actually that was a good testimony on his behalf. But think of the opposite think if you don't consider it important to be honest. Suppose that it is not really going to affect your salvation if you steal from someone. Suppose that it's not going to affect your salvation if you nourish hatred in your heart toward another. Well there is no stopping. What is going to keep a person then from sitting if he doesn't have that detour and in his life?

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Just again looking at those verses only and if that is all that we had in the Scripture, if we didn't have any other Scriptures to compare with them we might be able to conclude what these people are thinking, individuals who promote this idea are thinking that if we live in sin after we are saved we will not lose our salvation we will only lose our rewards of our work that he is talking about here, every man's work (v 13) the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Verse 14 If any man's work abide... he shall receive a reward. Verse 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss:

You only have to turn just a few chapters further 1 Corinthians 9 :1 the Apostle Paul explains what he is talking about he says: "Am I not an apos-

tle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?"

Are not ye my work in the Lord? And so on the basis of that it is as I would understand the scripture here it is proper to say that the work that he is speaking about here is our service, it has to do with our service for the Lord. In our efforts to spread the gospel and our efforts to help other people we know that there is a variety, there are some people perhaps whom we help who will truly make it to glory they will be faithful to the Lord until the end and they will receive an incorruptible crown. But there are also others whom we seek to help along the way that we aren't as effective with and some of them turn back, some of them were saved but they don't continue in salvation, they don't continue in a right relationship with the Lord and some never come to salvation some whom we seek to help.

I see that in light of chapter 9 verse 1 are ye not my work it points out that this has to do with our service and the Scriptures emphasise that again and again; (Galatians 6:7-8) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. If we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap corruption.

We can't live after the flesh: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13)

And I have said it this way already if God's bottom line is holiness God will not accept anything short of holiness, there won't be sinners in heaven. There will be people in heaven, everyone who makes it to heaven will be there you know by the mercy and grace and the cleansing power of Jesus Christ but there won't be people who are still sinners entering heaven. It is simply not going to be that way. The Scripture make it plain that soul that sinneth it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:20). That soul is going to be separated from God.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. That is Revelation 21:8

God is not going to accept sin He is not going to back down on that. Either sin is cleansed by the blood of Christ or it stands to condemn us.

10] You can never have assurance of salvation if you fear you might lose your salvation.

Now this is a statement that comes from those who have embraced Calvinistic ideas in some form or another, they would use verses like 1 John 4:18 “.....perfect love casteth out all fear:” And that is certainly Scripture and that is true but however we have other scriptures that we need to compare with it, we have Proverbs 28:13-14 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

And that is a beautiful promise: whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. The next verse says: “Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.”

And so there is a need for us to continue to fear even after we are saved. Now our fear changes, now many of us perhaps all of us who have been saved can remember times whenever we were not right with the Lord we feared. I remember before I gave my life to the Lord waking up at night to see if my younger brother was still there thinking that maybe Jesus is coming, maybe I am left behind. Well those were guilty feelings and guilty thoughts. But God does not want us to keep on fearing in that manner He wants us to keep on fearing him but our fear changes. Whenever we confess our sins to God He cleanseth them with the blood of Christ then we do not need to fear His judgements like we did before, we do not need to fear that but you know if we don't change our ways we are going to fall under the wrath of God. We are not under His wrath any more whenever our sins washed away, the wrath of God abides on those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, they are under His wrath.

We are not under that wrath any more but at the same time, maybe we could illustrate it this way, it is a little bit like the son who has disobeyed his father and so his father punishes him because of his disobedience, well he fears that, you know that he doesn't want to face his father when he knows he's done wrong but whenever that punishment is passed and his father no longer holds that against him he walks with his father and he isn't afraid to talk with him he isn't afraid to hold his hand and yet at the same time he maintains that fear of what will happen if he disobeys again. And I

think that is an illustration of how it should be in our lives. You know we should fear to disobey God, we should fear to displease God, we should fear the results of that disobedience but we don't need to cause that fear to create a distance between us and God.

Philippians 2:12 says work out your own salvation with (what?) with fear and trembling. So we can rest and fear God at the same time. We can have peace in our hearts, we can be assured of a right relationship with God and fear him at the same time.

11] Just sign your name here to show that you believe and you will be saved.

Acts 16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, James 2:20 says that faith without works is dead.

Really it is not faith, the Scripture is true when it says a belief on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

We know that the Bible is always true it is just that people misapply it. And I like so much the expression that is given in Galatians 5:6 "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

I think that is such a well worded and certainly a biblical, it just brings together the different aspects, love needs to be the motivation of our faith and works are the result of our faith. Faith which worketh by love. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ means the full surrender of our lives to Him, it means that we will want to do His will it will mean that we desire to please Him.

12] The last one, we cannot know we are saved until we get to heaven.

Now this idea is probably based on the truth that you and I cannot know for sure the end of our lives. We cannot know for sure that we will on the last day that we live be right with God and then we will make it happen. We don't know how long our lives will be, we do not know what temptations will befall us, we don't know what our responses will be, however, and it is quite possible for us to know that we are on the pathway that leads to heaven. It is quite possible for us to know that we are following God.

Romans 10:9-10 says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

And 1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. Now, now we are the sons of God, and God certainly wants us to be his sons and his daughters. (2 Corinthians 6:18)

Also 1 John 5:13 These things have I written that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

These verses and others point out that God does want us to have assurance. He does not want us to be miserable with a lack of assurance. When we are right with Him He doesn't want us to be miserable with a lack of assurance and when we are not right with Him of course He doesn't want us to be convinced that we are, He wants us to think clearly.

But I think Isaiah 32:17 fits here it says: And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

This is partly the gift of God to us and that the Spirit that He has given us and the conscience. You know whenever you do what you know you should do you feel good about it don't you? That is the natural tendency. I know that sometimes our thoughts and feelings have to be educated but basically that is the way it does, that is the way it works. You know if you observe children it is the same way with them, they are just delighted whenever they can share something with someone else, it delights them. Well that is because that is the right thing to do, that is the way God has made it. He has made us where whenever we do His will, whenever we do right things we feel good, generally.

Whenever we do the wrong then we feel condemned, we might not always know why we feel condemned. Then also like I said there are times our minds, our conscience need to be instructed. You know the person and there are many evil things that people have grown up with, that is all they have observed that is all they have seen all their lives, that is what other people are doing, that is what their parents did, that is what all kinds of people around them are doing and they go and do the same thing and it never dawns on them that it is wicked or half as wicked as it really is, they don't comprehend that because, maybe because they haven't had enough of a righteous example around them.

But the fact remains that this is still true: the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. (Isaiah 32:17)

God wants that in your life and in mine. Whenever we do righteousness there is quietness of soul. There is assurance evident that truly that this is the will of God. This is the way wherein He wants me to walk and His Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God. (Romans 8:16) This is His will for us.

I will read a poem in closing:

The worst of all diseases is light compared with sin  
On every part it seizes but rages most within  
'Tis palsy, plague and fever and madness all combined  
And none but a believer the least relief can find.

From men great skill possessing I sought a cure to gain  
But this proved more distressing and added to my pain  
Some said that nothing ailed me, some gave me up for lost  
Thus every refuge failed me and all my hopes were crossed..

At last the Great Physician how matchless is His grace  
Accepted my petition and undertook my case  
First gave me sight to view Him for sin my eyes had sealed  
Then bade me look unto Him, I looked and I was healed.

### *5] TESTS OF ASSURANCE OF SALVATION*

I bring you greetings this morning in the name of the God of all grace. His grace makes it possible for us to follow after Him and be peacemakers. His grace makes it possible for us to be justified. His grace makes it possible for us to live in victory.

I invite you to turn to the book of first John. I want to continue our considerations on assurance of salvation and this morning notice a number of

tests of assurance. The book of first John points out, maybe you will notice more than what I point out this morning, there are 12 that we want to notice as tests of our assurance.

I believe that it is the work of the devil to make us feel comfortable with our relationship with God and whenever there is something amiss it is the work of the devil and it is the work of the devil to make us worried about our relationship with God when all is well. The devil works on both of those scores and I am not sure how many of us this morning face both of them, it seems to me that perhaps there is a greater tendency to struggle with one or the other and maybe we face both of them, but the Scriptures are certainly given by God to guide us into truth and to help us to have a true and a living relationship with God which will make it possible for us to enter into His presence with confidence in this life and much more in the life to come.

So we want to look this morning at a number of these tests that the Scriptures give us here in this book of first John to evaluate our own lives, is our assurance valid? I think it is important for us not to single out just one of these tests and try and judge it all on the basis of that but the Scriptures give us many, I think we need to take them collectively and the broadness of the scope of them should illustrate to us the broadness of the efforts of Satan to destroy our spiritual experience. There are so many different ways that we can be off the track in so many different ways, there are different areas of our lives where we need the grace of God to be at work.

You will notice that this book uses that little word "if" numerous times and several of these tests we will see that word "if" and some of them do not use it but it is an important word in relation to our evaluating our relationship with God.

1] The first one we would like to notice from verse seven, chapter 1 verse seven:

1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

I am calling this the Test of Character. If we walk in the light, this speaks of a constancy in our communion with God, a constancy in our relationship

with God if we walk in the light, it is not jumping into the light and jumping out of it, it is not, but you know we like to run in the light we would really like to get somewhere fast, you know we would just like to get to heaven today yet if we could and have the trials all over. But that is not the way God has designed this life maybe some one of us maybe all of us will get to heaven today yet I don't know, you don't know either, but God has called us to walk in the light and this requires a constancy, a steadfastness, it calls for a purpose that keeps us pressing heavenward like we sang in the one song this morning: Each day stepping forward with the Lord.

And when he speaks of walking in the light it means avoiding all darkness. As Brother David was speaking about condemnation he said that we are the ones who condemn ourselves because Christ does not condemn us. And I looked there in first John three where he quoted from and in one of the other verses there it says that this is the condemnation that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil (1 John 3:19)

The light is shall we say the awakening of condemnation but the latter part of that verse says that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, it is by man's choices that they condemn themselves and I can be in that number.

Avoiding all darkness. Darkness of course refers to sin. Bringing all of life to the searchlight of God and His word that is what God wants us to be doing, if we are walking in the light that is what we are doing we are bringing all of life to the searchlight of God and His word, and we are not seeking some shadows and some obscurity and afraid that other people will see through us and understand that after all we are just a fake but rather we are out to make sure that our lives are out in the open, we don't have something to hide about our character because we want to be pure, we want to be holy, we want to be what God wants us to be and so if we come to the light and there is something that isn't the way it ought to be well other people can see that and they can help us to see it. This is walking in the light, a test of our character.

Johns 3:21 a little further down says: "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

You know after all this whole thing of the Christian life is about making sure that we are in the will of God and making sure that we make it to heaven. Why wouldn't we want to know now if something in our lives is in darkness? Why wouldn't we want to know it now so we can correct it now, why would we want to find out whenever we stand before the God of the whole earth? Well that is too late, we want to know it now, he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

And so this walking in the light speaks of enjoying the truth and loving it and loving to do God's will and loving to hear God's Word. It is a life of holiness with nothing to hide; it is an openness that produces God-likeness. And there are many areas of our live you know that we should not as a rule be, people should not as a rule have to pry out of us you know where we went to or what we did and things like that. There ought to be an openness about us where we just give that information out. I know there are things that others don't need to know, but if that is our pattern, if that is our pattern where people have to pry anything out of us to get any information well then it is the opposite of this, it is not walking in the light. We need to bring our deeds to the light so that they can be made manifest that they are wrought in God. It is a test of our character are we truly walking in the light?

If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the fellowship of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

2] The second test in the first nine is the Test of Confession.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We could raise the question: What is so hard about confessing our sin? Well you know with me that the human will does not want to admit personal responsibility for failure that is our tendency. As was mentioned in the Sunday school lesson this morning you know there is pride that rises up and I am afraid that people will think less of me if I expose my mistake, if I expose my sin, they will think less of me and they will despise me. Well that is pride that resists that. Pride resists coming down lower in the eyes of others. Human pride that does not want to admit that it cannot properly direct, I cannot properly direct my own steps. After all I really need God and human pride does not want to admit that, that is why it is hard to confess in

this matter. You will notice here, I think verse nine is written to Christians. Do you think it is? Or is it written to people who have never become Christians? If we confess our sins, it uses the word "we" I am sure it applies to people who have never confessed their sins to God but I think it applies to Christians as well. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and you know this applies to the first time when we initially confess our sins to God and it applies later.

The way that we maintain a right relationship with God is cleaning up letting Him, not ourselves cleaning up, but letting Him wash away our sins and it is sin that separates between us and God, and so we need to be willing to confess our sins to God because He is the only one who is able to justify, He is the only one who is able to wash them away.

We also need to be willing to confess our sins to others when what we have done affects them. We need to be willing then to confess our sins to those who have been affected by what we have done. Maybe we have spoken a sharp word we need to be willing to confess that to that person and where our wrongs have affected others we need to be willing to confess it to them.

3] The third point from first John chapter 2 verses 1 and 2 is what I am calling the Test of Trust.

1 John 2:1-2 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Here he uses the word advocate, we have an advocate. What does that word advocate mean? You know with me that it means according to Strong's concordance an intercessor, a consoler. It was interesting to me to discover that actually the words "comforter" used in John 14 through 17 is the same Greek word. Jesus said and it was interesting to note that He says there in chapter 14 verse 16 he says I will send another Comforter, another comforter. (John 14:16) If the Holy Spirit is another comforter then who is the first comforter? Well it is Jesus. Jesus is the first comforter, maybe he is referring to God. But we think of Jesus Christ as our intercessor and a little earlier in Romans eight and before what was read in devotions this morning it says that the Spirit itself, really means the Spirit Himself, maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered (Romans

8:26) so the Holy Spirit is an intercessor and Comforter and Jesus Christ is an intercessor and the comforter.

Now we tend to think of the Holy Spirit as we think of comforter, when we think of intercessor we think of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures certainly have more to say about them in those areas that is true that is correct. But an advocate is an intercessor or a consoler a comforter. Why do we need the advocate? Well these verses point out that we need the advocate if we sin it doesn't say when we sin. These things I write unto you that ye sin not and if any man sin. He doesn't say when any man sin we have an advocate with the Father. I think it could be worded that way that probably the reason for the difference is that God does not intend that we live in sin, He wants this sinning thing to be rare in our experience, He doesn't want it to be commonplace in our experience. If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

What do we need an advocate for? Well we need an advocate to plead our case before God and maybe that especially applies as I understand the Scriptures, I do not believe that God cuts off on a Christian who sins the minute he sins. And maybe that is where the advocate, the intercessor comes in, that Jesus is there to plead our case and to intercede on our behalf to God even before we acknowledge our sin. I heard one brother share it this way that whenever we sin Jesus Christ there at the right hand of God pleads with God: I died for him forgive him Father.

Perhaps even before we ourselves confess our sin to God. Maybe that is where the advocate comes in especially in pleading with God on our behalf so that God doesn't just cut us off. The soul that sinneth it shall die, yes. (Ezekiel 18:20) but God in His grace and His mercy is patient with His children, we can't presume on that patience or that mercy, but nevertheless God is there, Jesus is at the right hand of God on our behalf.

We need to realise that it is not we keeping ourselves saved, we are not able to do that. I'd rather we need to be truly trusting God to keep us saved. It is in God that we need to have our trust if we are going to have our salvation, if we are going to have assurance of it we need to be resting our case in God. Yes, we have responsibility, we need to do our part but finally you know without God we will never make it, we will never make it to glory. And in connection with this I would just like to turn to first John 5

verses four to thirteen the test of our trust. I won't read all of those verses but I will read from verse nine:

1 John 5:9 "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

Well what is that witness? Let's read a little further, what do you think he is saying is the witness of God which he has testified of his Son?

1 John 5:10-12 "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

What is this witness of God? Well as I read these verses it seems to me that what he says in verse 11 and 12 he calls it the witness and in verse 10 and 11 he calls it the record. God hath given to us eternal life in this life in his Son. This is what God has witnessed, this is what He has testified, this is what He has recorded about His Son, that eternal life is in His Son. There is no other place for you and me to find eternal life then in Jesus Christ. And verse 12 another part of this witness another part of this record which God has testified of His Son: "...he that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

And so that is why it is so important for us to keep trusting in Him because we can't have life in ourselves. It doesn't matter if we have yielded our wills to God and surrendered our life to Him to start with, that in itself will not save us we need to keep on trusting. That is a poor way of saying it but it doesn't matter if we have done that, I think you probably understand what I'm trying to say, it does matter yes, that's where it starts but what I am saying is that the beginning in itself does not keep us saved we need to keep on trusting in God throughout all of life just like we did in the beginning of our walk with Him.

The test of our trust, we trust in God for our salvation or have we somehow slipped away from that and are we to the place that we feel yes I'm doing this, I'm doing this, I'm doing this and therefore I am saved. Well we know that Scriptures call us to walk in holiness and to produce fruits of righteousness but they must be the result of our salvation and not something that we trust in to actually save us.

4] Going back to chapter 2 verses three to five the Test of Our Obedience.

1 John 2:3-5 “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”

Now this “His commandments” it is plural and it is not as we understand the Scriptures referring back to the 10 Commandments, some people see it that way, always whenever they read this in the New Testament they think it is referring back to the 10 Commandments and so they feel obligated to keep the Sabbath day, well we need to compare the whole of the Scriptures together. But when it says keeping His commandments it is talking about all that He expects us to do, all that He instructs us to do in the New Testament Scriptures, that is what it is talking about as I understand it. Keeping His commandments. There is a Scripture that says that Paul charged Timothy to keep these things without preferring one above the other, before another (1 Timothy 5:21) and so it applies to you and me in the same manner.

We don't have the right to select out a few things and say: Well to be born again that is the most important command of God and being baptised that is the second one and observing communion that's the third one, we don't have the right to list them in order of saying which is most important because God calls us to keep them all. And so we can't say well this command over here isn't really so important and so God won't care if I omit it. We can't look at the Scriptures in that manner but we must take all seriously – keeping His commandments is the test of our obedience.

And what this points out is that it is saying it is not enough talking about faith it is not enough, God is looking for the doing and in the keeping of His commandments and what should be our attitude? I think that is a part of it is well. Chapter 5 verses two and three points out:

1 John 5:2-3 “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

His commandments are not grievous, not grievous, it shouldn't be hard for us. You know not nurse in our minds a bad attitude toward another per-

son, it shouldn't be hard. Should we be wishing that somehow this would be okay for us to feel that way, that God wouldn't be so harsh on it? Well no, it shouldn't be grievous to us to obey God's commandments. Should it be hard for a son or daughter to obey father and mother? Should it be something that we are just biting at the bit and just wishing for the opportunity to do differently? Well no it shouldn't be. The Scriptures call us as children, to honour our parents, to obey them and honour them, the Scriptures call us to that, (Ephesians 6:1-2) it shouldn't be hard to do that, we should do that willingly. Jesus said I always do those things that please my Father. (John 8:29) And are we willing as children of God to go ahead a little bit further and apply the same principles in relation to the laws of the land and in relation to the standards of the church are we willing to apply the same principles?

Are these things grievous to us? Are we just wishing for an opportunity to cast them aside or do we do them willingly? Keeping God's commandments. It is a part of it, we need to realise that, the test of our obedience.

We should be convinced that all of God's commandments are for our best and well-being and we do ourselves a favour whenever we love God and keep His commandments. We do ourselves a favour as children whenever we love our parents and willingly obey them. As citizens of the land we do ourselves a favour whenever we avoid the common tendency to speak out against the laws and whenever we willingly obey them and likewise in the church we do ourselves a favour whenever we obey willingly whenever we follow Jesus Christ who said I always do those things that please my Father (John 8:29). The test of obedience.

5] The Test of Development in chapter 2 verses 12 through 14 you will notice in these verses he writes:

1 John 2:12-14 "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

He writes unto fathers well I'll have to go a little bit further in the middle of verse 13 he writes: "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one."

He writes unto fathers: "..... because ye have known him that is from the beginning and because you have" you see what he says.

Verse 14: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye

are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

The test of development. One brother put it this way do I have a spiritual size that fits my spiritual age? Why is it reasonable for God to expect us to grow into spiritual maturity, why is it reasonable? Well because He has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) God has done that He has made the resources available, and it seems to me that it would be accurate to say that the heavenly man has a high protein diet. God expects us to grow, He has made rich provisions for our spiritual growth and if you and I are not growing it is not God's fault it is our fault. We are the ones who decide how fast we grow. We are the ones who decide how seriously we take the word of God, how diligently we study it and how much it is our goal to do always those things that please our Father. You and I are the ones who determine that. And so the test of our development.

Can we look back in honesty and know that we have gained the victory on this point, on that point? You know is our speech more gentle, are our attitudes more gracious more forgiving more merciful than they were a year ago? Can I look at the brother or the sister who has tested me most in the last half year and see growth in my life? Can I see that God has helped me to victory in this area and in that area. The test of development.

We should be able to look in our lives and see growth, not with pride, and of course with an awareness that there is always so much more that we can grow in that we should be able to look back. Maybe we can't look back a day or a week and see growth but if we look back half a year or a year is there a difference in our lives, are we more like the Master? It is the test of development

6] Verses 15 to 17 in chapter 2 the Test of Loyalty.

1 John 2:15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Let me read it this way: If any man love the Father, the love of the Father is in him. If any man love the word, the love of the Father is in him.

You know he is giving it in a negative here, he says we are not to love the world: if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. Is it true then, is the opposite true? If any man does not love the world the

love of the Father is in him? Will I think it is because the Scriptures points out basically two choices, I think of that story that was in the Christian Example years ago. A man said to another the difference between me and you is that you love the world and I love the word. Just one letter. But it makes a tremendous difference.

If any man love the world of the love of the Father is not in him. And there really isn't any middle ground and either we love God or else we love the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. [17] And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:16-17)

It is a test of our loyalty.

The love of the Father is in him. Is that what God can say of you and me? The love of the Father is him. Do I shun the world's values and allurements? It is soon repulsive to me or is it secretly enjoyable? Do the things that are highly esteemed among men appeal to me? Prestige, recognition and early retirement. Plenty of toys. The things that are highly esteemed among men do they appeal to me. Money. Or do I truly love God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). Which is it that we love? Love not the world neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. It is given in the positive in the Gospels - Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; (Luke 10:27) It is a lot to measure up to I know but it is the test of our loyalty. We prove it by our love, do we love the word or do we love the world? Do we love God or do we love ourselves?

7] Chapter 2 verse 24 and 28 the Test of Steadfastness.

1 John 2:24: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

That word abide is interesting and solid. If you look at the verses surrounding this (1 John 2) he speaks about anti-Christ in verse 18 and how that in verse 19 there are those whom he said went out from us, they went out

from us that they were not of us. And so we can raise the question do I remain unshaken by false doctrines, anti-Christ, and by desertions of unfaithful members, do I remain unshaken. You know it is something that can shake us something that can make us wonder if we are missing the mark ourselves and maybe there is a right way in which we can ask that question, but the Scriptures here are calling us to abide in Him, abide in Him that when He shall appear that we shall have confidence and not be ashamed to appear before Him at His coming.

You know if you have seen the machines that have a little needle and maybe trace the person's heartbeat or other body functions and here the needle is going up and down sometimes if things are amiss, is that what would show in your life and in mine in relation to our walk with the Lord, our abiding in Christ, is there this up-and-down thing we are just kind of jumping around or is there a constancy about our lives? Is there truly steadfastness that we are abiding in Christ and we are enjoying our relationship with Him, we are feeding on the word of God daily we are not neglecting that. We are maintaining an even flow of Christian experience. Isn't that what God wants in your life and in mine? Surely it is. The test of steadfastness. Abide in me and if my words abide Jesus says you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7) The Old Testament puts it this way: Delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give the desires of thine heart. (Psalm 37:4) Would to God that we would delight ourselves in Him more, that our desires will be God-given desires, desires that will help us to walk in holiness.

8] Chapter 3 verses 1 to 3 the Test of Purity.

1 John 3:3: "And every man that hath this hope in him. (The hope of when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is [1 John 3:2]) every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Why is the serious Christian always diligent to maintain personal purity, why? Because the Scripture says the blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

You know so many different areas where we can become impure. It is just a little bit like trying to keep ourselves clean after we have taken a shower after we've taken a bath, we put on maybe our Sunday clothes and we try and we make sure we don't sit down where it is too dusty and we

don't want to bump against this or rub against that. Isn't that really what our effort is spiritually as well? We have come to the Word of God, we have washed ourselves clean in the fountain of the word, we have allowed God to wash us with the blood of Christ, we have been made clean we have been made holy and we want to stay that way. The soul that sinneth it shall die. Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

How can we do it? How can we stay pure? How can we stay holy?

Well I think one of the keys is the Word of God, I think the first one. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. (Psalm 119:9) I think we need to keep coming back to this book (the Bible) because as someone said this book will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from this book. That's the way it works.

And I think another key to our spiritual purity is our desire for that purity. We need to keep praying that prayer that David in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

And I would suggest a third one as well and that is I think that we need to be open to what other people see.

If we want to maintain purity we need to come to the Word of God and take it seriously, we need to keep praying and asking God to search our hearts and help us to see where we can grow, help us to see anything that is hindering us from being faithful to Him and then we also need to be open to what others have to say to us. Do you think if a person does those three things that it will help them be pure in his life? Well I think it will go a long ways. I am not sure if there is more that should be added to that list but I think it will go a long ways in helping us to maintain purity.

9] The Test of Control. Chapters 3 verses 4 through 10.

1 John 3:4-10: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

That is the definition of sin, "trans" means across and "gress" means step, whosoever sins crosses across God's line, God has a line between right and

wrong. He says these you may eat all these trees of the garden but here is one tree you may not eat of that one and as soon as Adam and Eve ate of that tree they transgressed, they stepped across God's line and they were condemned they were guilty. Sin is a transgression of the law, God's law [Genesis 3]

1 John 3:4 "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not:"

Is that hard to understand? Whosoever abided in Him sinneth not. The Scripture says no man speaking by the Spirit of Christ calleth Jesus accursed [1 Corinthians 12:3] It can't happen it never will happen the Holy Spirit will never make you curse God, that is an open contradiction. Does the fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter water? [James 3:11] It doesn't happen. That is not the way God operates. Whosoever abided in Him sinneth not. God will not make us sin, He will never make me sin. Whenever we are drawing our strength from God whenever the Holy Spirit is directing us we will not sin. 1 John 3:5 "Whosoever abides in him sinneth not, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

And understanding that is hinged on the definition of the word "sinneth" Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

If we walk in obedience to God, if we do the will of God do you think it is possible for a person not to know that he is saved when he is? Well I do. I think it is possible for a person to actually come to salvation without really realizing it because his understanding has not grown to that point. I think it happens sometimes that people become saved and they don't know it because they haven't taken the time to think through it or they haven't been instructed, they haven't learned that this is actually what has taken place. Here it says he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. A person can respond to God in faith and confess their sins to God and reach out to God to help in his life and be saved and not even know he is saved. I am not saying that is the common thing but I believe it happens and he is doing righteousness even as God is righteous he is righteous.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

I asked is the opposite possible? Is it possible for a person to sin and sin and sin and sin and sin and not know that the devil is controlling his life? Yes, it is possible. Now I'm not saying that that is the case nearly always,

surely in most cases people know when they are saved and in most cases people know when they are following the devil but to me it seems possible that a person could be committing sin and be controlled by the devil and not know it.

1 John 3:8-9: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

What is the seed that God has put into us? Well God put his Holy Spirit into us, His seed remaineth in him. I think perhaps that is what he is talking about, maybe he means something other than the Holy Spirit, the power of God, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God I'm not sure what else you might apply to; his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.

What I understand this to mean it is as I said before that God never makes us sin, He will never do it. And as long as the Holy Spirit is controlling us, as long as our minds are fixed on God we will not sin, but whenever we give place to the devil, that's what the Bible says neither give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27) As soon as we give place in our lives in our hearts to the devil that is when we sin. As soon as we yield to the appetites of our flesh that is when we sin and it is not God who makes us sin. And when it talks here about, I think these verses have to be understood, if you take 1 John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God", then you have to compare that with 1 John 2:1 "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father."

He is not saying that if I sin it proves that I never was a Christian, he is not saying that if I sin it proves that now God has forsaken me because we have to compare Scripture with Scripture but what he is talking about here is, let's put it this way, He that committeth sin is of the devil; God never makes people sin. Do I have to victory over deliberate and habitual sin? I think that is what he is talking about – he that committeth sin, the person who is walking in this way, instead of walking in the light he is walking in darkness and he is practicing sin there is habitual sin. You know that is

what he is speaking about as I understand it, whomsoever committeth sin is of the devil.

It is a matter of the tests of control. Who is controlling my life? Is the Holy Spirit of God controlling my life? We will think a little bit more about that in the last point but is the devil controlling my life? What is the proof that God is controlling our lives? Verse seven says he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. So we can look at his record as we did this morning in the life of Isaac and it was not hard for us to tell the God was controlling his life because he responded to those tests the way a person should and we just can't find any evidence in the record there that he had a wrong motive or wrong attitude or that he was seeking revenge, we can't find it. And so you know okay let's block out a period of our lives, an hour, and let's take a look at what we thought, let's take a look at what we said, let's take a look at what we did, now was it something that a Christian should do, was it something that a Christian should think, was it something that a Christian should say? If God is controlling our lives then we ought to be able to say yes and it shouldn't be too hard to figure it out whether it was God causing us to do that, enabling us to do that or whether it was the devil, it shouldn't be too hard for us to sort out that difference, the test of control. God is here to give us grace to do His will.

Do we sometimes find ourselves such that we continually keep doing things that you do not want to do? Do I? That is the situation that Paul describes in Romans seven, I want to do what is right but I do what is wrong, I just don't have the strength to do what is right, I know it is right but I don't do it. And that's not where God wants you and me to be living, that is a situation where the devil is in control, flesh is in control. Rather God wants us to be calling on Him for help.

I would just give an illustration that blessed my heart again and again. You know Brother John Martin after he committed his life to the Lord and smoking was a problem for him previously and I listened and I heard him say again after that, he went here and he went there whenever someone lit up a cigarette and what did he do? He said I prayed Lord help me I don't want to go back to that. Well who was controlling his life? God was. It is the test of control.

Being tempted is not proof that God is not controlling our lives but what we do about those temptations is what proves who is controlling our lives.

#### 10] The Test of Brotherly Love.

Chapter 3 versus 11 through 18, chapter 2 verses 7 through 11, chapter 4 verses 7 through 21, there are a lot about this in the book of first John the test of brotherly love.

1 John 4:12 puts it this way: “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

So we could ask the question as I look at this book it seems to me that it has more to say about this than anything else, why? Why do you suppose there are so many verses on this subject? Well we humans need a lot of help on this matter, we tend to be partial and selfish, we tend to forget others' needs and to think about ourselves, it is a test of brotherly love. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Luke 6:31). We ought to think about that more. You know the things that we do our wielding influence on others. Can I truthfully say that I wish, Paul said it this way, I wish that, see if I can put it together how did he say it (Acts 26:29) almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

One exception I don't wish that anybody is bound like I am but otherwise I wish that everyone else was almost as altogether as I am, can you say that? Can I say that? That this is my relationship with the Lord and the things that I am doing I can recommend everyone else to do exactly what I'm doing right now, everyone else in this group would be better or at least not hindered if they would do what I am doing right now. Can we say that in truth?

A test of brotherly love you know that is one way of loving our brother and sister is by being a right example and there is so many other ways in which we need to exercise a brotherly love. The Scriptures here point out if we don't love our brother whom we have seen it is not reasonable for us to say that we love God whom we have not seen.

#### 11] The Test of Conscience. Chapter 3 verses 19 to 21.

1 John 3:20-21: “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

God knows He has forgiven all my sins will He hold me guilty because my heart is condemning me? Absolutely not. God goes by the facts. When this happens brothers and sisters and we need to be patient with others when this is the case that there is a condemnation when they sense that it is just a condemnation of conscience but it is not a condemnation of God, we need to be patient with others when that is the case. But at the same time probably most of us, probably all of us, in the majority of cases our consciences are right and we should not make it a pattern in our lives to disregard our conscience and to tell ourselves that really that my conscience is telling me the wrong thing so I won't listen to it. That should not be the pattern of our lives. If our consciences are telling us the wrong thing yes they need to be corrected and yes sometimes we do have to correct them but quite often that help should come to us from other people I think.

You know how are we supposed to evaluate our own lives? How are we to evaluate our own thoughts? Yes we can compare them with the Scriptures but you know that people also come to the wrong conclusions by comparing their thoughts with the Scriptures. I think there is where we need the balance of others to help direct our conscience.

12] Well the last one, maybe you would put this one first: the Test of the Holy Spirit.

I have just taken these in this order because of the order that I find them given in the verses.

1 John 3:24: "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

1 John 4:13: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

Since the Holy Spirit like the wind is invisible how can we know that He dwells within us? Well we know it by faith, we accept it by faith, it takes faith to believe that and to know that it is true. And as the Spirit prompts us to do the will of God and we respond to that, you know maybe it is our speech maybe we were too harsh in what we said, maybe I was too harsh in what I said to my wife or to my brother and the Spirit convicted me of that and am I willing to go and correct that with God and with them?

Isn't that a proof that the Holy Spirit is living within the if the Spirit convicts me of my sin, as the Spirit prods me to do what is right isn't that a proof that the Holy Spirit lives within me and I respond to that?

So the question that we face is does the Holy Spirit have a voice in our life? Do we listen to His voice, or are we in a situation, God forbid that we would be, but are we in a situation that all we hear is this motivation to do wrong? If that is all we hear in our lives then something is wrong, drastically wrong. But if we find within the still small voice of God is prodding us to do right that is a proof of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

Does He have a voice in our life?

Do we respond to Him?

Do we let Him sanctify our attitudes?

Do we let Him sweeten our speech?

Do we let Him stimulate our actions?

Really you ought to write a letter to so-and-so, do we listen?

Really you ought to go and talk to that person over there, do we listen?

Do we let the Holy Spirit have a voice in our lives?

Do spiritually discerning people accept us as brethren and sisters?

Do they consider our evaluations to be spiritual evaluations, scriptural?

These are questions we need to ask.

Is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, they are tests of the Holy Spirit.

Well I am sure you could add to these tests and there are many more things in these verses that we have not said but again I repeat that I believe it is the work of the devil to make us feel comfortable when really something is amiss in our lives and it is the work of the devil to make us feel ill at ease when really all is well but it is also the work of God to help us experience rest and peace and find grace to do his will.

And let's remember that the Scriptures says where sin abounded grace did much more abound. (Romans 5:20)

## *6] BLESSINGS OF ASSURANCE OF SALVATION*

I bring you greetings this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus, the one who is worthy of our reverent worship and the one who is worthy of our enthusiastic singing and meditation on His word. I have certainly enjoyed the service thus far this morning and trust that as we continue to look into the Word together that it will further inspire us to serve the Lord faithfully.

The message this morning is the conclusion of this series on Assurance of Salvation. I invite you to turn to first John 5:13 which pointed out to us that it is God's will for us to know that we are saved, this is God's desire. Our focus this morning is on Blessings of Assurance of Salvation. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say blessings of salvation but as we look at the things that we want to notice from the Scriptures this morning, even if we experience these blessings of salvation in a measure that we don't have assurance of salvation it makes them a lot weaker and so I have chosen the title Blessings of Assurance of Salvation.

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."

This Scripture along with others proves to us that it is God's will for us to be aware of a right relationship with Him, not something that we fall into or stumble into unawares, but rather we know that the Scriptures teach that this is something that takes a personal choice on our part to enter into a right relationship with God, personal surrender of our lives, we have looked at that previously.

We want to focus this morning on the Blessings of Assurance of Salvation.

The Scriptures that I have chosen will not all be from first John, some of them will be but I have chosen to take them largely as they come in order in the Scriptures.

The first one I would like to refer to is Matthew 11:28-30, maybe we could all say these verses together,

Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am

meeke and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

And the blessing that I see in these verses is the rest for our souls. We think especially of this in light of those of us who have experienced difficulty in coming to assurance of salvation, we know how unsettling it can be to be wondering if we are really right with the Lord. He invites us to come to Him and find rest for our souls, I believe this applies to very many areas of life and in fact there isn't any area of life that isn't included here and whatever experiences we are facing in our life we can find rest of our souls if we come unto Jesus. Included in this is assurance of salvation. As we follow the formula outlined here: Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meeke and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

There is a blessed rest that comes from knowing that we have confessed our sins to God and He has washed them in the blood of Christ and that there is nothing standing between us and God that we are aware of and if there is anything between us and God He will reveal it to us. There is real rest for our souls in that confidence.

A second blessing in John 12:36 but I am going back first of all before that to the Old Testament:

Proverbs 4:18: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

Now I see in this the blessing of increasing light for our path. John 12:36 Jesus was speaking to a people who were not really quite ready to follow Him but what He had to say here is a principle that applies to all of us.

John 12:36: “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.”

That is the way it works. If we want to maintain the light that we have we need to live up to it, we need to use it and if we start going in the other direction darkness will come upon us like Jesus says in John 12:35: “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”

The blessings of the assurance of salvation is increasing light for our path. God has led us thus far and He will continue to lead us if we are faithful in following Him. (1Samuel 7:12) it is His desire to lead us, it is His desire to continue to give us light, He does not want us to be in darkness. He says I am come as a light into the world. (John 12:46) that is one of the reasons why Jesus came, He wants to continue to give us light on our pathway throughout life.

I encourage you to follow along in the Scriptures.

Romans 8:16: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”

I see in this the Holy Spirit witness as one of the blessings of assurance of salvation. The Holy Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Romans 8:14-16: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”

The Holy Spirit does not condemn those who are right with God the Spirit rather comforts us whenever we are in a right relationship with God, this is a blessing to us. God wants us to know that He is satisfied with the work that Christ has accomplished in our lives and so He has given us the Holy Spirit to testify to the fact that we are right with Him.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58: “But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

There are no doubt many other Scriptures we could be looking at but I think these should help us to realise and appreciate more the blessings that we have in Christ Jesus

One of the blessings of assurance of salvation is thanksgiving to God for victory. I think whenever we are thankful it always increases our joy. Whenever we express our thanks to God it helps us appreciate more what He has done for us because for us to be able to express our thanks to God.

We first of all have to think of what we are thankful for and that in itself increases our joy. And verse 57 also points out that victory is a gift, Thanksgiving to God for the gift of victory. It is not something that we have earned on our own but it is rather because we have leaned on God and depended on Him in the time of testing that we have experienced victory and further in verse "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

One of the great blessings of assurance of salvation is the absolute certainty that we never labour for God in vain. You know in this life we may take up work, we may take up an occupation and we may put ourselves heart and soul into it and work for a period of days or weeks or months or years even and in the end see it all go up in smoke, and we wonder what is it worth?

But when we labour for the Lord we have this assurance from God that our labour is not in vain in the Lord, it will never be empty, there will never come a time whenever we will look back and say: Well it just wasn't worth it at all. And I am not saying that our labours for the Lord will always appear to be fruitful because I recall as a youth, about the time that we joined the Eastern church (Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church) an older brother from the Conference in looking back over the years of his labour in the southern States he looked back and he realized that the church was just crumbling in many ways and it just looked like there wasn't really much fruit, it was disappointing to see it just falling apart, and where there had been several churches there were only a few. We are not saying that that will never happen but we still have the promise that when we labour in the Lord our labour is not in vain and so we know that we have espoused a good cause, a most noble cause and it is certainly worthy of our very best efforts.

Another blessing of the assurance of salvation is a clear testimony it says in 2 Corinthians 2:14: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."

I was pondering this morning and I would be glad for some input from you as to how the people savour His knowledge, the Scripture doesn't really comment on that very much but here it says that God maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place.

And this is in the context of spiritual victory, God always causes us to triumph in Christ, maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. Wherever we go if we are living according to the will of God, if we are experiencing victory, if we are walking closely with Him there will be a testimony that we will be leaving that God will be satisfied with that God will be pleased with, the savour of His knowledge, and that is a sweet smell, to God it is a sweet smell whenever His people are doing His will. The book of Revelation speaks about the prayers of the saints rising as an incense before Him. (Revelation 8:4)

And this speaks about our lives as we live for Christ, 2 Corinthians 2:15-16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

I am not sure I can understand all he means by these verses but he says: For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. God is pleased. In them that are saved and in them that perish, whenever we live in holiness and encourage others who are also holy to continue in the will of the Lord why God is pleased with that, and whenever we live in holiness and we declare to those by our words and our lives to those who are not saved that this is the way walk ye in it, (Isaiah 30:21) God is pleased with that as well. And so one of the blessings of assurance of salvation is a clear testimony.

Philippians 4:13 this Scripture was read this morning and I will refer to it again: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

It is a wonderful promise isn't it? And I see in that the blessing of all sufficient grace. one of the blessings of assurance of salvation. In Jesus Christ we have the resources to more than abundantly be able to carry us through, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

I realise that Joseph wasn't living under this but he demonstrated also the power of God in his life, he went through difficulties that you and I haven't experienced and many others have and many others are going through dif-

difficulties that we are not experiencing, have not experienced. Nevertheless God has called you and me also to go through some things in life that aren't always easy, that aren't always pleasant. And we can demonstrate the power of God in life: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

This is the promise of the Scripture and the testimony of the apostle Paul; he had experienced the grace of God in his life. We may look at the difficulties of others what they experience and wonder whether we would be able to go what they are going through. I spoke to a brother like that one time after his wife had died and his comment to me was that you don't need that grace but I do he said and God is giving it. And I appreciated that testimony. That is how the grace of God is, He doesn't waste it but it is always there it is always available for us in the need.

2 Timothy 1:9 another of the blessings of assurance of salvation is purpose in life. We are not here to wonder about aimlessly and try to find out what life is all about, God has revealed that to us in the Scriptures.

2 Timothy 1:7-11: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

A long sentence but it all fits together here to reveal to us that God has a purpose, whose own purpose in grace which He has called us to, He has a purpose for our lives. He saved us, and called us with a holy calling. Its purpose is that we walk in holiness and do His will here on this earth and He reveals that to us in the Scriptures and various other ways as well. He has a purpose for us in life; it is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation that God really does have a plan for my life it is not that I am left out.

And also in verse 12 I see several things in this verse, maybe we could say it together;

2 Timothy 1:12: “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

I see three different areas in this verse. One of the blessings, the first one I would notice is trust in God.

One of the blessings is a trust in God that triumphs in sufferings. He says I also suffer these things nevertheless I am not ashamed. You know this is the last written message from the Apostle Paul, this book second Timothy, and at the time of this writing I believe that he was aware that he was slated for death, he was aware that the time of his life on this earth was fast coming to an end and Nero had intended to kill him. But he says even though he was suffering these things for Christ's sake he says I am not ashamed. And so you and I need not to be ashamed in the midst of life's difficulties. One of the blessings of assurance of salvation is a trust in God that triumphs in sufferings. I suffer, for which cause I also suffer these things. That is a word that we choose to try to get away from as much as possible, we don't want to suffer, that is our natural inclination but when God calls us to walk through suffering we don't need to be ashamed, He has strength for us.

Also I see in the second part of the verse a growing love for God which reflects His love for us. He says for I know whom I have believed. Isn't that beautiful? The basis of the confidence of the Apostle Paul on facing these sufferings was that he knew Jesus Christ and he had learnt to know Him to a greater degree so that he was able to see that He was working for good in his life, and even if he needed to give his life in death what was that compared to what God had done for him? And it seems to me that it could even be a consolation to have that privilege to give our lives in death when we consider the fact that God has given, and Jesus Christ has given His life for us, He did the same why should I not be willing to do the same for Him as He has done for me? It could even be a consolation to us; he says I know whom I have believed. What a wonderful blessing I see in that - I have believed. What is the tense here? Well it is speaking about something that began in the past and has continued up to the present, and that is the tense that is used here; I know whom I have believed. He started back there and it is continuing up to the present and I see in that a growing love

for God which reflects His love for us. We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19) That is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation.

Also in the latter part of the verse and other blessing is a firm persuasion of God's ongoing faithfulness and His mighty keeping power. For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

1 Peter 4:19. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

You know God will not fail and this is a consolation to us. The more we learn to know the God of the Bible as we read the Scriptures and our faith increases, Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, (Romans 10:17) and the more that we are convinced of this fact that God is faithful and that He will never fail, He never has and He never will. He never failed the Apostle Paul and He never failed His children in the Old Testament, He won't fail us today either and also He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. There will be no failure on God's part and that is what Romans eight is pointing out:

Romans 8:35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or dis-tress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

You know there are all kinds of things that we can face in this life and people do face them and answer is that none of these shall separate us from the love of God. Not one has the power in itself because our God has tremendous keeping power, of course it is up to you and me to keep ourselves in His hand, He will never leave us nor forsake us but He is able to keep us. (1 Chronicles 28:20)

Titus 2:11-15, these verses could be a sermon in themselves but it says: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

I see another blessing of assurance of salvation is instruction for godly living.

You know if we are not really sure about our salvation, if we are not really sure about whether the message of the Scripture is for us we are not going to dig in and find the instruction that He has here like we will if we are assured that God has it here for our good, and this is how I find my direction, this is how I stay on the right path, instruction for godly living.

We are called to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, we are called to live soberly, to live the righteously and to live godly in this present world. We are called to be looking for that blessed hope and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28) These Scriptures are for our instruction and right along with that verse 14 another one of the blessings of assurance of salvation is a zeal for good works. It is closely related to the earlier thought that our labours are never in vain in the Lord. It is worth our most diligent effort and so let's give it that just like Joseph did.

Another blessing one is 1 Peter 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

I emphasize the "us" and the "you" and what I see in this he is talking about the abundant mercy of God, one of the blessings of assurance of salvation is the wonder of wonders that God's abundant mercy included me. There are people who really struggle with this, who really struggle, sincerely struggle with the question of whether God determined to save them. The Bible makes it clear again and again that the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men we just read that in Titus 2.

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9) and even though I cannot explain why God included me in God included you, the fact is that God did, most certainly did include us in the redemption that Jesus Christ provided, every soul, there isn't any-

one exempted and isn't it sad to think that you know the devil has promoted this misunderstood election doctrine to the point that many struggle with; Am I really one that God wants to save?

Yes you are! That is the Bible, yes you are and I am and this is a wonder of wonders that God is abundant mercy included me. Blessed be the Lord and Father of our lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fate is not away reserved in heaven for you - and you can put your name there and I mine.

You are kept by the power of God. Yes there are conditions to be met we understand that, but as far as God's desire and as far as God's provision there is no one who is excluded.

Also see another blessing in these verses he says He has begotten us again unto a lively hope. A lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance in heaven for all who stay close to God. A lively hope, it is not a dead hope it is a living hope. To an inheritance incorruptible. There isn't anything that we have on this earth that isn't corruptible, the body, even the bodies that we live in are corruptible. We build houses and we buy possessions and we use them and how long does it take to show signs of decay? How long does it take? It is kind of amusing sometimes when we hear our children speak of how old something is, it is really old and we say how old are you? And may be what they were talking about was only half as old as what they are, they call it old but they won't call themselves old. Well that's how things on this earth are, they decay, they wear out very fast but not so in heaven it is an inheritance incorruptible and it fadeth not away. It is one of the blessings of assurance salvation.

We find another in 2 Peter 1:10-11: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Another blessing here of the assurance of salvation is the settled satisfaction of knowing that the way of holiness most certainly leads into the everlasting kingdom of God. This is the way walk ye in it. (Isaiah 30:21) God will not spring any surprises on anyone. This is the way to heaven and He

has shown us in His word, this is the way. We can look and ask and He tells us what to do seek and ye shall find (Luke 1:9)

I know that there will be people who will miss it because they haven't looked carefully enough, they have made room for themselves and that could happen to you and that could happen to me, but at the same time God has made it plain and if we will seek Him with our whole heart He has promised that we will find. He says if you do these things you shall never fall (2 Peter 1:10). This is the way walk ye in it. The settled satisfaction of knowing the way of holiness most certainly leads into the everlasting kingdom of God.

We could summaries it this way: a guaranteed outcome of the way. We know that according to the Scriptures this does work, it will work, it has worked.

And now let's turn to the book of first John.

1 John 1:4: "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" A blessing of the assurance of salvation is the calm confidence that God wants us to enjoy a walk with him. That's the way it is. He wants us to enjoy our walk with him. These things we write unto you that your joy may be full; and so along with that we can conclude that he is seeking our very best.

1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Have you ever experienced a richer fellowship than the fellowship of faith? The fellowship with fellow believers whose hearts are warmed by the same things that your hearts are warmed by. I have not experienced it better than that. Fellowship one with another is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation. You know if we're not quite sure if we are right with God it hinders, it hinders our fellowship with one another and it may produce, it may be a temptation to us to envy or jealousy, they have what I want and I just can't seem to find it. Well it is available for all of us. Fellowship one with another is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation.

1 John 2:25: "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

The promise of eternal life is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation. It begins here on this earth but it will never end. We can experience that in eternal life. Of course we have to stay on the pathway to have the eternal life that we have begun to experience in this life otherwise we will experience in eternal death. But that is in eternal life for you and for me if we are faithful.

1 John 3:2: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

One of the greatest of assurance of salvation is the anticipation that we shall see Christ.

The song writer says this:

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ,  
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrows will erase,  
So gladly run the race until we see Christ.

That is the way the poet put it and it is very accurate, it will be worth it all to see Jesus. We will be able to see Him. Bless it are the pure in heart for they shall see God, (Matthew 5:8), we will be able to see Him in the fullness of His beautiful character. Now we see through a veil darkly, through a glass darkly, (1 Corinthians 13:12) we are not able to see Him as we will then be able. We can look into the Scriptures and it is a great blessing when we do to see the character of God, His Holiness, His Love, His Purity, His Justice, His Perfection through and through, there is no fault in Him. Anticipation that we shall see Christ is a great blessing of assurance of salvation. And right along with that we shall be like Him, the anticipation that we shall be like Him.

Now wherein has your likeness to Jesus Christ caused you any difficulty in your life? Well you know it just has never caused one of us any difficulty has it? It is not where we are like Christ that causes the difficulty it is where we are not like Him that causes us difficulty and so we look forward to the time that we shall be what we should be as the poet puts it. We shall be what we should be and we shall be what we would be. We shall be like Him.

Also 1 John 4:14-16: “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Is it complicated? The blessing that I see of assurance of salvation is that it is an uncomplicated salvation. You know we are the ones who make it complicated. It isn't really so hard to get right with God, yes it can be hard on the flesh, it is not that you have to have a high IQ or a college degree to get right with God, it doesn't take any of those. In the Old Testament Scriptures speaking about this Isaiah says that wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein. (Isaiah 35:8) You don't have to be wise to understand how to humble yourself before God and pray and confess your sins.

It is not complicated. The simple people, the common people heard Jesus gladly and still they do today.

1 John 5:1: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.”

Love for our fellow believers. That is one of the blessings of assurance of salvation. You know when we are right with God then we have a natural attraction to those other individuals who are right with God, that is the way it works, that is what God puts in us. We enjoy, we attract our own kind and we go after our own kind, that is how it works. In the book of Acts it says and being loosed they went to their own company (Acts 4:23) and that is what you and I do to we find our own kind. If we are faithful to the Lord will also seek out others who are faithful to the Lord. Love for our fellow believers.

1 John 5:4: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

What is the blessing here? Why it is the promise of victory in Christ every time we place our faith in Him. Isn't that what this is saying, and this is the victory that overcome with the world even our faith. Every time we place our faith in Jesus Christ we will have victory. It is a wonderful blessing of assurance of salvation.

1 John 5:11-13: “And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 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.”

What is the blessing here? Why it is the blessing of building on divine truth, this is unchanging and absolute, he that hath the Son hath life. That is what God has said and verse 11 says: this is the record that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. This is the record, God has testified, He has declared the truth.

1 John 5:19-21: “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

I see the blessing of spiritual understanding. He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, that goes along with salvation and the assurance of salvation. The son of God hath come and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, He has given us spiritual understanding. It is a great blessing. You know the Bible says that the natural man can't understand the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14) but as we come to God, as we have come to God and surrendered our lives to Him He has opened the eyes of our understanding and now these things make sense to us, it is not that we understand it all but there is more for us to grow, more areas of understanding for us to grow in, but this is the work of God.

Jude 1:24: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy>”

I ask whose is the joy? Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Is it our joy or is it Christ's joy that is exceeding here? Well I guess I am not able to answer that question, I think it could mean either one, it could mean both. One of the blessings of assurance of salvation is the anticipation of exceeding joy for Christ and for us. It is hard for us to understand how it could actually be exceeding joy for Jesus Christ, in a

way it is hard for us to understand how it could be exceeding joy for Him to receive us home, but on the other hand it is not hard to realise when the joy that was set before Him Jesus Christ that enabled Him to endure the cross. (Hebrews 12:2) And that joy I believe was the joy of bringing many sons to glory.

And so we know that the Scripture says that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents, (Luke 15:10)

So who is in the presence of the angels?

Well maybe it is the righteous who have died since then, it certainly maybe. There is joy in the presence of the angels but maybe it is also speaking about God Himself, that He rejoices for everyone who is saved, I believe it is a joy for Him.

The last Scripture we will turn to Revelation 19:7-8;

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

What is the blessing of assurance of salvation? Well it is the privilege to be counted spotlessly righteous with God. This is future of course for you and for me and for others as well. That privilege to be counted spotlessly righteous by God. To her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, to her was granted.

I am sure that there will be many things that we will marvel at whenever we make it to heaven, if we are faithful there will be many things that we will marvel at. I believe that one of the things that we may well marvel at some time or other, I don't know how it all fits into the heavenly picture but God will wipe away all tears from our eyes

Maybe some of the tears that He will have to wipe away from our eyes are from the realization of how close we were to missing it. How close we were at those times of temptation whenever we almost yielded how close we were to missing the glory of heaven, maybe those are some of the tears we will have to wipe away from our eyes I don't know.

The songwriter says:

I tremble still to think how secure I lived in sins,  
Sporting on destructions brink yet preserved from falling in.

We need all the help we can get to make it to glory and we will rejoice and be glad at that time at all that God has done for us directly, through the Scriptures, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer and through the Holy Spirit and indirectly through our brethren and sisters who have helped us to see how to walk in holiness and even through unbelievers who have at times pointed out our inconsistencies.

We will be glad for all the help we have gotten and we will rejoice at the privilege to be counted worthy there. To be granted to be arrayed in fine linen clean and white for fine linen is the righteousness of the saints of God and to be married to the Lamb for ever.

You know that is the capstone, to be married to the Lamb forever.

In this life marriage is a union that ends at death and it does not continue after that but in the next life you and I have the privilege to be a part of the bride of the Lamb.

Here he says: Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

What more would you want?

What more could we want then this?

You know the Lord has promised to us far more than we have ever understood or are able to comprehend in this life but you know it is simple enough and understandable enough that you and I can clearly see that there is no better way for us to walk then the way wherein God has called us to walk: In holiness.