

Reasons People Lack Assurance, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Code: 61-6

Let me draw you back to 2 Peter, in the time we have, briefer than usual tonight, 2 Peter, chapter 1. We have begun a study of this great epistle, and in particular, the first eleven verses. In these first eleven verses, Peter is speaking of the matter of our salvation. As we come into verses 5 through 11, he is concerned about making certain about our calling and choosing. And the matter under discussion here is the matter of the assurance of salvation. He is concerned that no one be blind or short-sighted, according to verse 9, having forgotten his purification. He is concerned that we be diligent to make certain about our calling and choosing. This is a matter, then, of assurance.

Before we get into the text itself in verse 5, I wanted to introduce it to you by consideration of the subject of assurance from a broader scriptural perspective. As a pastor, I say again to you that it is a heartache to realize that so many people lack the assurance of salvation. They lack the assurance that they are really forgiven for their sins, and that they are eternally secured for a place in heaven. Sad as it is, it is a fact. It is one that pastors deal with all the time. Many people wonder whether they are really saved.

Thomas Brooks wrote in 1654 these words, in a wonderful, wonderful book called *Heaven on Earth*. This is what he said, "Assurance is the believer's ark, where he sits like Noah, quiet and still, in the midst of all distractions and destructions, commotions and confusions," end quote.

In that same excellent book, he also wrote, "Most Christians live between fears and hopes, and hang, as it were, between heaven and hell. Sometimes they hope that their state is good; other times they fear that their state is bad. Now they hope that all is well and that it shall go well with them forever; and then they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such a corruption or by the prevalency of such to temptation. And so they are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there." This need not be, but it is the fact.

In spite of the truth that believers are the chosen of God, the elect of God, as Brooks calls them, "The picked and the culled;" in spite of the fact that we are the prime instruments which God will make use of to carry on His best and greatest work against His worst and greatest enemy; in spite of the fact that believers are hidden with Christ in God, and engraven on the Lord's palms; in spite of the fact that our names are written in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world; in spite of the fact that believers are children of God, heirs and joint-heirs with Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and anointed thus by God.

In spite of the fact that believers are the very living epistles of Christ, known and read by all men; in spite of the fact that believers are recipients of all blessings in the heavenlies, super-abounding grace, mercy, forgiveness, love and kindness; in spite of the fact that believers have peace with God, the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, all-sufficient standing in grace, and hope in eternal glory; in spite of the fact that believers have overcome the world, been given eternal names by Christ, names of affection and honor, been made pillars in God's temple, and been given the promise of royal robes and eternal righteousness; in spite of all the lavish mercies and all the benedictions God has given them, many still wonder about the security of their salvation and lack assurance.

Why? Why do they? Well, that is precisely the question that we are attempting to answer. In fact, the purpose of this series is to bring you into that ark, where you, in the midst of devastation and destruction, confusion and commotion, can enjoy your assurance. Now, last week we posed three reasons why people lack assurance; let me just review them for a moment. Some might lack assurance because of being under strong preaching on God's holy standard. We noted last time that a powerful confrontive pulpit produces anxious hearts. It stings the conscience, and the conscience knows no mercy or forgiveness. Some people doubt because they are under such strong preaching, and when there is sin in their life, it creates doubt.

Secondly, some might lack assurance because they can't accept forgiveness. They are tyrannized by their emotions, feeling they are too bad to be forgiven. They are fixed on God's holiness, fixed on God's high law, and they are focused on God's justice, which knows no mercy, and they do not believe they can be forgiven. In fact, they have crowned the devil king. He has conquered Christ, for the one who will not forgive has conquered the one who will forgive in their minds. They believe that Satan's condemnation is sufficient, but Christ's grace is not sufficient to cover their sin. And so, in a blasphemy of sorts, they have deemed themselves unforgivable, and thus they have exalted Satan above Christ, and that is a frightening reality.

Thomas Brooks says in that regard, drawing us back to Scripture, "Manasseh is saved; O despairing souls, the arms of mercy are open to receive a Manasseh, a monster, a devil incarnate. He caused that prophet Isaiah to be sawed in the midst with a saw, as some rabbis say. He turned aside from the Lord to commit idolatry, and cause his sons to pass through the fire, and dealt with familiar spirits, and made the streets of Jerusalem to overflow with innocent blood. The soul of Mary Magdalene was full of devils, and yet Christ cast them out and made her heart His house, His presence chamber. Why dost thou, then, say there is no hope for thee, O despairing soul?"

"Paul was full of rage against Christ and His people, and full of blasphemy and impiety, and yet, behold, Paul is a chosen vessel. Paul is caught up into the heaven and filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Why should you then say there is for you no help, O despairing soul? Though the prodigal had run from his father, and spent and wasted all his estate in ways of baseness and

wickedness, and yet upon his resolution to return, his father meets him and instead of killing him, he kisses him. Instead of kicking him, he embraces him. Instead of shutting the door upon him, he makes a sumptuous provision for him. And how then do you dare say, O despairing soul, that God will never cast an eye of love upon you, or bestow a crumb of mercy on you?

“The apostle tells you of some monstrous miscreants who were unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, and yet these monsters of mankind, through the infinite goodness and free grace of God, are washed from the filth and guilt of their sins, and justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and decked and adorned with the graces of Christ. Therefore do not say,” writes Brooks, “O despairing soul, that you shall die in your sins and lie down at last in everlasting sorrow. Did it make for the honor and glory of His free grace to pardon them?”

“And will it be a reproach to His free grace to pardon you? Could God be just in justifying such ungodly ones, and shall He be unjust in justifying you? Did their unworthiness and unfitness for mercy turn the stream of mercy from them? No. Why then, O despairing soul, should thou fear that thy unworthiness and unfitness for mercy will go and stop and turn the stream of mercy as that thou must perish eternally for want of one drop of special grace and mercy?” Well, you understand what he’s saying. And so we’re reminded that some people lack assurance because they emotionally find it hard to believe they could be forgiven.

Thirdly, and where we left off last time, some might lack assurance because they do not comprehend the gospel and the plan of salvation. They do not understand it. The whole reality of gospel truth and the work of Christ is not grasped. They don’t understand, for example, the full sufficiency of Jesus Christ’s death for sin. They don’t understand the extent of grace, the extent of mercy, the extent of forgiveness. They don’t understand how the justice of God is fully and completely satisfied in the death of Christ. If they grasped gospel truth, they could enjoy assurance. With the Arminians, those who believe you can lose your salvation, it is this very failure that destroys their assurance. Because they believe that man is a partner with God in salvation, they therefore cannot have a secure salvation, because man can violate his partnership.

Since they believe that men must perform to maintain their salvation, assurance is impossible because you can’t trust man. And even if you could trust God, you can’t trust man, so you can’t trust salvation. For the Arminian, at best, assurance is a moment of feeling, and therefore unstable. That kind of assurance that reveals itself in shouting and singing, in revival meetings, or charismatic hysteria is not dependable. It easily turns into a feeling of depression and even a feeling of despair, because if it is built on a salvation in which I am a partner, I can violate that. And if you believe you can lose your salvation, you can never have full assurance. But if the gospel is understood, the assurance of the promise of the gospel can be enjoyed.

And we noted last time that assurance is a personal conviction that is rational, not emotional. It is built on facts. It is built on the historical reality of what Jesus Christ accomplished. It is not a feeling without reason, or a feeling induced by emotion. It is built on the understanding that salvation is complete and eternally secure, and you have to start with that comprehension of the gospel, or you can never know complete assurance. Now, remember the definitions that we made. Security is the Holy Spirit-revealed fact that salvation is forever. Assurance is the confidence that I possess that salvation. But I can't enjoy assurance unless I understand that salvation, which is secure.

Feeling that I'm in possession of a salvation that isn't secure doesn't give me any assurance. Knowing the fact that salvation is secure doesn't give me assurance if I don't know I have that salvation. So everything has to be built on the fact.

Now, there's an element of gospel truth that I want to mention specifically to complete this third point, because of its major role in the issue of assurance. I could speak about the cross, and we could go into all of the matters of the work of Christ on the cross, the marvelous, miraculous work of Christ there, and how it purchased our eternal salvation. But I want rather to just look at one very important element, and that is the resurrection.

Leaving the cross for a moment and moving to the resurrection, I want us to focus on it, because I believe it is the heart and soul of understanding the fact of security, which is the very foundation of assurance. The resurrection – now mark this in your mind very carefully – the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the proof positive that the Lord's work on the cross effected a salvation that was eternally secure. Did you get that? The resurrection was the proof positive that the Lord's work on the cross had effected a salvation that was eternally secure. The key, then, to security, and therefore the key to assurance, the cornerstone of it all, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

You say, "Why?" First of all, it attested to the truthfulness of His claims. He said He was God, He rose from the dead to prove it. He said He had come to accomplish the work of salvation, God raised Him from the dead to approve of His work and affirm that indeed He had accomplished it. If He failed to come out of the grave, He wasn't who he claimed to be, or He didn't do what He claimed to do. That's the bottom line. If He was God and had the power over death, and if He accomplished perfectly the redemptive work, and the Father raised Him from the dead, then we have confidence that salvation was fully accomplished.

Everything that Jesus Christ claimed and everything He came to do is validated by the resurrection. It displayed God's power over death for sinners. In fact, when you read about the power exhibited in Christ, it is usually associated with His resurrection. In Ephesians 1, the apostle Paul is praying that we might be enlightened, in verse 18, and that we might know, verse 19, the surpassing greatness of

His power. And what is that power? The power by which God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. The power of God that raised Jesus is the same power that quickens the spiritually dead. The resurrection is a historical fact that shows that God can raise one who bears sin from the dead and exalt Him.

In Romans 4:25, it says He was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. He was delivered to death because of our sin, and He was raised for our justification. If He completely covered our sins – mark it – if He completely covered our sins in His death, He completely secured our eternal life in His resurrection. As completely as His death dealt with our past, so completely did His resurrection deal with our future. The young convert is right who said, “If anyone is ever to be kept out of heaven for my sins, it will have to be Jesus, because He took them all upon Himself. But that can’t happen because He’s in heaven already so now I know I am secure.”

You understand his reasoning? If Jesus took all my sins and paid the penalty for them, and God took Him into His heaven, then God will take me into His heaven whose sins Jesus paid for. And if anyone is to be held accountable for my sins, it isn’t me; it’s the one who said He took them on Himself. And since that has already been settled, as He is already seated at the right hand of God, so will I be seated there as well. That is why we need not worry; that no matter how sinful we are, we can be forgiven. Second Timothy 1:9 says, “Who has saved us, called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

He abolished death. He brought immortality, not only, obviously, to Himself, but to us. It is essential, then, for us to understand that in the death of Christ you have the penalty of sin totally paid, in the resurrection of Christ you have that affirmation of that total payment, and if my sins are totally paid for, there is no sin that could keep me out of heaven. So an objective understanding of the full forgiveness provided in the perfect death and resurrection of Christ is the ground of security, and security is the ground of assurance. If I believe the gospel is true, and I believe the gospel, then I can enjoy my assurance. Now, let me take it a step further. Therefore assurance is inherent, to some degree, of course, in saving faith. That’s right.

First John 5:13 says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.” I want you who believe to know that inherent in your believing is your assurance, because that in which you believe is a secure salvation. Revelation of historical fact, then, and the essence of saving faith carry the basis of assurance. And we can sing with the song writer, “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His” – what – “His excellent Word.” That’s where you go to get your assurance. “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.”

And so, if we understand the gospel, and its eternal character, and the full sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, as evidenced in the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, and His being received to the right hand of the Father, we can understand we have a secure salvation in which all of our sins are paid for, and we need not fear that we are insecure. And if we believe in that true work of Christ and in Christ, then we can know and be assured. So, some people lack assurance because they are under strong preaching, lifting a high and holy standard, and because there's sin in their life, they feel that they are not saved, or they doubt their salvation.

And some people are not enjoying assurance because they can't accept forgiveness. They think themselves to be too bad, and so they crown Satan king rather than Christ. They can receive condemnation but not grace. And then some people doubt their salvation, frankly, because they don't understand the saving work of Christ. I'll tell you, the churches of our world are filled with people like that, who are insecure about their salvation because they have an insecure salvation to start with.

Let me give you a fourth reason why people lack assurance. Some lack assurance because they don't know the exact time of their salvation. Does that ring a bell? Some people lack assurance because they don't know the exact time of their salvation. They can't remember when they believed. They can't remember the moment of their salvation. And because they can't remember when it was, they don't know whether it was. Which is like saying, because I can't remember my birthday, I'm not sure I'm alive. I see. Or because I can't remember when my plane landed, I don't know if I'm here. We have made such a fetish out of decisionism, we have so isolated and identified this little formula and this little prayer that you pray at some point as being the moment of salvation, that if you don't have that little moment that you signed a card, or raised your hand, or walked an aisle, or prayed your prayer, or did your little formula thing, you can't identify when it happened, so maybe it never happened.

I remember a man saying to me, "Last Sunday morning I settled my salvation." I said, "How did you do that?" He was here in the church. He said, "On my way home I stopped on Roscoe Boulevard, and I never could remember the moment I was saved, and so I never felt saved. And so I got out of my van" – he was in a van, he said – "and I went over to the sidewalk, the grass between the curb and the sidewalk, and I took out a piece of wood and I hammered it into the ground. And I drove that stake, and I said, 'This is' – I think it was June of a past year – 'this is June something, and this is the day I am committing my life to Jesus Christ.' And now I know I'm saved, because I know when I did that." And so I had to pull up his stake – metaphorically speaking.

But there are some people who have been so over-exposed to a decisionistic approach, or what you call decisional regeneration – there's some point in time, some mystical moment when you do your little formula, and you're zapped by God. Now, for some people there is a moment in time; obviously, for many people there was a very decisive moment in which they exercised their faith in Jesus Christ.

But for many, many people, particularly those raised in a Christian environment, they can't identify that transformation. They can't identify that moment, because they have always believed. People often ask me, "Have you been a Christian all your life?" My standard answer is, "Not yet." But that's looking at the future end of it.

Going on the other direction of it, I do not know a time when I did not believe, but that does not mean I'm not a Christian. There are those today who would even teach that the remembrance of such a past event is the real, legitimate basis for a believer's assurance. And in fact, if you can't remember that event, you might not be saved. The exact time is not the issue – not at all. But that will create a lack of assurance if people have been exposed to too much focus on some event, and that if you can't remember the event, maybe you're not a Christian. One contemporary writer says, "The only legitimate point of assurance for our salvation is the past event." The exact time is not the issue.

I can't remember the moment that I was saved. I don't know when I passed from death unto life, but I know I did. I don't know a time when I didn't believe. I never went through a time of rebelling openly and flagrantly against God. I had a car accident when I was a freshman in college, but I can't say that was the time of my salvation. I remember praying a prayer with my father on the steps of a church in Indiana when he was holding a revival meeting; his sermon convicted me because I had done some things that week that were not right. I don't know whether that's the moment I passed from death unto life.

There were times as a little child when I prayed prayers. There were times as a teen-ager when I went to camp, and I remember as a fourteen-year-old going forward and throwing a pinecone in a fire, teary-eyed and wanting to make my life right with God. I don't know when I passed from death unto life. I know I did, but I don't look for a past event to make it real, I look for a present pattern of life. There are some people at this particular point who have a false assurance because they can remember a past event, but the reality of it is there isn't any present righteousness.

Fifthly, another reason why some people lack assurance is because they still feel the flesh strongly, and they wonder if they have a new nature. They feel so strong the pull of the unredeemed flesh. You see, we are a new creation incarcerated in unredeemed flesh, unredeemed humanness; we're waiting for the redemption of our bodies at the glorification, when Christ comes back and we have what the Bible calls the glorious liberation of the children of God, and we get liberated from our unredeemed flesh. But as long as we are fighting the Romans 7 battle, and not doing what we want to do and doing what we don't want to do, and as long as we see the flesh in us warring against us, it is possible for us to wonder if we're possessors of a new nature, because we feel so strongly the pull of the flesh.

That is really what I think Peter has in mind here when he says, "If you don't have certain qualities in your life," verse 8, "then you're going to lack the confidence that you have been purified." If sin is

overwhelming and overpowering you at any given point, you will lack assurance. You will struggle with that. And people wonder sometimes, “Did I repent enough? Am I sorry enough for my sin? Do I have enough faith?” And what they’re doing is focusing on the unredeemed flesh, rather than the new life. You can read Romans 7 two ways, or three ways, I guess; you can read it in two imbalanced ways and one balanced way.

You can read it where all it says is I don’t do what I ought to do and I do what I ought not to do. And you can read it and it says it is that is in me, that is in my flesh, and you can read it, O wretched man that I am, and you can become introspective, and you can just keep looking and looking at the garbage and the sin of the flesh, and you get a warped perspective. And you literally overstate your condition. You can look at it another imbalanced way, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man, and there is a principle in me that desires to delight and to do God’s will,” and you know, all of that. You can read it the other way, and say, “O look, all those good things are in me.”

But you have to read it in balance. And if you see in you the will to do what is right, the love of God, the hatred of sin, the desire to obey, the delight in the Word, even though you see the flesh, the battle is indicative of the new nature warring against the flesh. But if you become preoccupied with the flesh, and you become victimized by the flesh, where sin begins to overpower you, you’re going to struggle with that. Focusing on the flesh is not a healthy thing to do. Listen to what Dr. Ironside said. “Now test yourself in this way. You once lived in sin and loved it. Do you now desire deliverance from it? You were once self-confident and trusting in your own fancy goodness. Do you now judge yourself a sinner before God?”

“You once sought to hide from God and rebelled against His authority. Do you now look up to Him, desiring to know Him and to yield yourself to Him? If you can honestly say yes to these questions, you have repented. Your attitude is altogether different than what it once was. You confess you are a sinner, unable to cleanse your own soul, and you’re willing to be saved in God’s way. That’s repentance. And remember, it is not the amount of repentance that counts, it is the fact that you turned from self to God that puts you in the place where His grace avails through Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking,” he says, “not one of us has ever repented enough.

“None of us has realized the enormity of our guilt as God sees it, but when we judge ourselves and trust the Savior whom He has provided, we are saved through His merits. As recipients of His lovingkindness, repentance will be deepened and will continue day by day, as we learn more and more of His infinite worthy and our own unworthiness,” end quote. That’s very helpful. Just test yourself. Do you have the impulses of the new nature there? That’s indicative of salvation. You might want to remind someone who is wondering whether they’ve really been saved because they see so much sin in their life of that beautiful old hymn, written by Horatius Bonar. “I was a wandering sheep, I did not love the fold. I did not love my Shepherd’s voice, I would not be controlled. I was a wayward child, I did not love my home. I did not love my Father’s voice, I loved afar to roam.

“The Shepherd sought His sheep, the Father sought His child, He followed me o’er vale and hill, o’er deserts waste and wild. He found me nigh to death, famished and faint and lone. He bound me with the bands of love, He saved the wandering one. Jesus, my Shepherd is, ’twas He that loved my soul, ’twas He that washed me in His blood, ’twas He that made me whole. ’Twas He that sought the lost, that found the wandering sheep, ’twas He that brought me to the fold, ’tis He that still doth keep. I was a wandering sheep, I would not be controlled. But now I love my Savior’s voice, I love, I love the fold. I was a wayward child, I once preferred to roam. But now I love my Father’s voice, I love, I love His home.”

That’s the difference. The change of attitude gives me heart assurance that I am now the child of God by second birth, and no matter how strong the pull of sin, that is there as well. God’s will has become my highest joy, and submission to His lordship my greatest delight. Some lack assurance due to strong conviction, coming through preaching. Some lack assurance because of an inability to accept forgiveness. Some lack assurance because they fail to understand the rich truth of the gospel. Some lack assurance because of an inability to remember the time of salvation.

Some lack assurance because of the remaining power of their unredeemed flesh – number six, and this is so very, very important. Some lack assurance because they don’t see the hand of God in all their trials. Some lack assurance because they don’t see the hand of God in all their trials. Can’t tell you how many people I’ve heard say through my ministry, “How could God love me and let me go through this? How could God love me and take my husband? How could God love me and take my wife or my child? How could God love me and not hear my prayer and deliver me? Where is God when I need Him? How can I be a Christian?” Now, listen carefully to this. People who think like that not only sentence themselves to a lack of assurance, but they miss the very strongest source of assurance.

You say, “What do you mean by that?” Just listen. They miss the very strongest proof of assurance. You say, “What is it?” Tested faith – tested faith. If when I have a trial and trouble, and things don’t go the way I want them to go, I question God, and question His love, and question my salvation, and all of that, I not only lose my assurance, but I am failing the test that could for me be the strongest proof of my assurance. In Romans, chapter 5, and verse 1, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we’ve obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in the hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we exalt in our troubles.”

Why? Because “trouble brings perseverance, perseverance proven character, and proven character produces” – what – “hope.” And hope translates immediately into assurance. If I have a solid hope of my eternal inheritance, I have a present assurance. Where do I get that hope? When my faith is tested and proven. Oh, that’s such a great truth, such an essential truth. “Consider it all joy, my

brethren,” says James, “when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. Let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” I’ll tell you, the trials of life should never cause you to doubt God’s salvation, God’s love, God’s grace in Christ; they are simply given to you as tests to prove His love, to prove His power in your behalf.

In Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 10, “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” God is putting us through trials. God is putting us through difficulties. We are to be diligent. We are to endure. We are to be patient. The result: full assurance of hope. Trials are the very crucible in which assurance is formed. Now, let me give you the classic illustration, absolutely magnificent.

Romans, chapter 8 – this is so powerful – Romans, chapter 8, verse 38, listen to what Paul says. “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, you know that, and say, “Ah, that’s great; I know that verse.”

Now, listen to what I say. Paul says, “I’m convinced. I am absolutely convinced that none of these things can separate us.”

Go back to verse 35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to the slaughter.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. I am convinced.” Now, listen carefully. What convinced Paul of the security of his salvation? What convinced him and gave him assurance? What did that? He just told you. Now, listen to this. He had experienced everything he just mentioned. Did you note that? It was his own experience of tribulation, his own experience of distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, created things. He went through it all; none of it did it.

I want to tell you something. Trials become the source of your greatest confidence. I told you some time back, when Mark had that growth in the middle of his brain, and we were going through a time of prayer and fasting, and I was learning to lean on the Lord in that time, and how God, in His gracious way, delivered the sandwich to me to break the fast. That I saw God’s hand in my tribulation like I had never seen His hand in my prosperity. And those are the things that assure me. When the Lord in His providence – I was in my office after nine days of fasting, sitting at my desk, fasting and praying, and

when I felt the release of the Spirit and just this sense that I was to break that fast.

For the first time I was hungry, and I had yielded up Mark to God, if He wanted to take him with a brain tumor, it was okay, it was God's purpose, and all of that. And I felt peace in my heart; I even felt joy in my heart. And I was prepared to eat, and I just said, "Lord, I don't know how to break the fast," and within fifteen minutes, somebody came in and delivered me a sandwich, who didn't even know about the situation. And I knew God was involved in my life. I remember going in a room over there above the fireside room one night, and a girl was filled with demons, and when I walked in the door one of them started screaming, "Get him out, not him, get him out, not him." Then she began to kick my shins until they bled with this strength that she had. It was a most interesting evening.

My first reaction was to leave, saying, "Sure, you don't want me, I'm out of here; I don't need this." My second reaction was a tremendous sense that here I am in hand-to-hand combat with principalities, with demonic beings, and they know whose side I'm on. It is in the middle of those kinds of things that you have these tremendous testimonies to the reality of your salvation. God affirms that in those times. Paul says, "I've been through it all, and I'm convinced." What convinced you? "It isn't just the fact that it's written in the Word; it has been tested." "As one walks with God," says Ironsides, "and learns to suffer and endure at seeing Him who is invisible, eternal things become more real than the things of time and sense, which are everything to the merely natural man.

"Thus there comes to the heart a trustful calm, a full assurance, based not alone upon the revealed Word, but upon a personal knowledge of communion with God, which gives implicit confidence as to this present life and all that lies ahead," end quote. Well, I had two more, but I'll have to save them for next time. Let's pray. Father, we thank You that You have given us a secure salvation, that we can be assured. We pray, Lord, for those who are in the faith but can't enjoy the assurance of it. We pray that they might not be left, as it were, with a lack of assurance, but that they might come to confidence in their faith.

Thank You for giving us an eternal salvation, giving us reason to be assured in it, and help us to know that tests and trials are the greatest source of the personalized confidence that we belong to You, because we see Your hand so clearly in the midst of those. Thank You for the testimony of Paul, who could say, "I'm convinced because I've seen it all," and none of it separated him from the love of His Christ. Show us enough trials that we might see Your hand and be forever confident that we are Yours, for the glory of Christ. Amen.

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