Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Reasons People Lack Assurance, Part 3
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5-11
Code: 61-7

Tonight I want to spend our time in the lesson from the Word of God, completing what I had hoped to complete last Sunday evening. And so I invite you, if you will, to turn back to the text, that is the basic text for our study, 2 Peter chapter 1. And in this wonderful chapter we are embarking upon the section in verses 5 through 11. The theme of that section is really summed up in verse 10 with the words, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you." That introduces us to the subject of the assurance of salvation. And this is the third in a series on the assurance of salvation. Next Lord's day we will actually embark upon the text itself and get into details about what Peter has to say. But continuing by way of introduction along the theme, I want to fill in some of the blanks that I think that are most helpful to all of us.

Let me say that having the assurance of your salvation, knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are forgiven, knowing that you are indwelt by the Spirit of God and headed for eternal glory in heaven, is the supreme blessing of the Christian life. Because all of the other blessings of the Christian life can only be partially enjoyed if I do not know for certain where my eternity will be spent. If there's any diminishing of my assurance then I cannot fully enjoy the other blessings of my Christian life. So we can say that assurance then among all of the good things that God grants to us for joy and blessing is the best, the most precious of His gifts to believers.

Now we've been noting in this study that even though assurance is the best of the Lord's gifts to His people, there are some people who don't enjoy assurance. There are the Roman Catholics, for example, who do not believe that anyone can know for sure whether he or she is going to heaven. In fact, they decry those who would affirm an assured salvation, believing that if you for once thought that your eternity was settled once and for all it would effect your holiness negatively because once you knew everything was secure you would run amuck and you would not be able to restrain yourself because the fear of falling into hell is what restrains you from evil. And then there are the Arminians as that brand of theology is known who also believe that you cannot know for certain that your salvation is secure, you cannot enjoy assurance because in fact salvation is a cooperative effort and though God may not fail, you might. And so because it is possible for you to fall away and fail, consequently you can never be guaranteed of assurance.

So there are those then who do not enjoy the assurance of salvation from a theological viewpoint. But then there are those who do not enjoy the assurance of salvation for other reasons. They unlike the Catholics and the Arminians believe that a Christian can have assurance, they might even believe a

Christian should have assurance, they might even want assurance but they do not enjoy it. And we have been looking at that particular issue because it is so very very important.

In Hebrews 6:11 it says, "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the end." The writer of Hebrews says, "I want you to be diligent so that you have full assurance." And here in our text just read Peter says, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His...that is God's...calling and choosing you." So while the Roman Catholics and the Arminians and others might deny the reality of assurance, the Bible says you should know your salvation is for sure. In fact, you should be diligent to come to the experience of assurance. It is true that someone can be saved and doubt it. As one writer said, "One may go to heaven in a mist, not knowing he's going but that's certainly not the way to enjoy the trip." And while our salvation does not depend on our feelings about assurance, our joy does, our peace does, our blessedness does.

Let me talk about the blessedness of assurance for a moment and give you a little list of things that assurance does to bless us. First of all, assurance elevates the heart to live on the highest level of joy. Assurance elevates the heart to live on the highest level of joy. When the Apostle John wrote his epistle of 1 John as we know it, in the epistle of 1 John he gives a series of tests by which one may know whether his salvation is real. You remember them. If you confess your sin. If you walk as Jesus walked. If you love your brother. If you do not love the world. If your life is not characterized by an unbroken pattern of sin. If you demonstrate compassion to those in need. If you confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, etc., etc., etc. John's whole purpose in 1 John is to lay out test after test after test of a genuine salvation. But the sum of it comes in 1 John 1:4 where he says, "These things I write unto you that your joy may be full." Why? Because assurance of salvation lifts the heart to live on the highest level of joy. Takes away all the doubt and all the despair and all the despondency and all the depression and all the fear if I know for certain my destiny is sealed in Christ forever.

So assurance, then, elevates the heart to live on the highest level of joy. Secondly, assurance lifts the soul to seek holy purposes. Assurance lifts the soul to seek holy purposes. In other words, if I know I am saved and I know I belong to God and I know I'm a part of His kingdom forever, then I will be concerned about kingdom issues. It is expressed a number of ways in Scripture. One that comes to mind is in Matthew chapter 6 verses 8 to 10, remember these familiar words? "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What is the significance of that? Just this, you are concerned about the hallowing of God's name, you are concerned about the coming of His kingdom, you are concerned about His will on earth as it is in heaven when you are assured that He is your Father. The affirmation of our Father draws me into the conscious awareness of my relationship to the living God and makes His holy purposes the highest aim of my life. If I'm not sure I belong to God, then I'm not so caught up in His purposes. So assurance lifts the soul to seek holy purposes.

Thirdly, assurance fills the heart with songs and prayers of gratitude. A praising person is a person who has assurance. If I know my salvation is forever secure and nothing can separate me from the love of Christ, then my heart is filled with joy. Listen to Psalm 71:14, "But as for me, I will hope continually." And the psalmist says, "Because I have that continuous hope, I will praise Thee yet more and more." The assured heart is the grateful heart. And where you have the assurance of salvation the heart is filled with songs and prayers of gratitude. Listen to Psalm 103, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name, bless the Lord, O my soul..." Why? Why such a grateful heart? "And forget none of His benefits." Why? "Because He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your diseases, redeems your life from the pit." And when you know that you've been redeemed and when you know that your sins are forgiven, it fills your heart with songs of praise and gratitude.

The next point. Assurance strengthens the soul against temptations and trials. Assurance strengthens the soul against temptations and trials. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul says, "Put on the helmet of the hope of salvation." What is that in essence? It is the fact that Satan comes against us with temptation. He comes against us with testings and trials, endeavoring to make us fall into sin and doubt. And when you have the hope of salvation firmly in place, his blows are but glancing blows off of that protective cover. If I know my hope is sure and that I'm headed for heaven, then all of Satan's efforts against me cannot hit me, they only deflect off of the helmet of the hope of salvation.

Furthermore, assurance compels the heart to love obedience. Assurance compels the heart to love obedience. If I'm not sure that I'm going to heaven, I'm a little bit loose in my living. If I'm not sure that God has really forgiven me and given me eternal life, if I'm not sure that I'm on my way to heaven, if I'm not certain that God's salvation is secure then it has a negative effect on me because it is in that insecurity that I fall more readily into sin. Psalm 119:116 says, "I hope in Thy salvation, O Lord, and I do Thy commandments." Because I have hope in eternal reality, because my hope is fixed in Christ in God, because I'm secure in that and assured of that, I do what You say.

Assurance elevates the heart to live on the highest level of joy. Assurance lifts the soul to seek holy purposes. Assurance fills the heart with songs and praise of gratitude. Assurance strengthens the soul against temptation and trials. Assurance compels the heart to love obedience. Let me give you a couple more. Assurance calms the soul with perfect rest and peace in the midst of life's storms. It definitely calms the soul in the midst of life's storms. No matter what goes on around me, if I know I'm secure forever in Christ what do I fear? Listen to Hebrews 6:19. "This hope, this eternal hope, we have as an anchor of the soul, a sure and steadfast anchor." No matter what batters and beats the hulk of our ship, we are anchored in the confidence of our eternal hope. And so the soul is calmed with rest and peace in the confidence of a secure salvation.

Another point to ponder. Assurance teaches the soul to wait patiently upon God for needed mercy. If you're not sure of your salvation, guess what happens when you pray and God doesn't answer immediately? If I don't know that I'm a Christian, I'm not sure I'm really saved and I pray to God and I

don't get an immediate answer, what is my response in the flesh? Boy, God must not be listening. God must not care. That means I'm not His. But if I am sure of my salvation and secure in my salvation and assured of my salvation, then I have the patience to wait for God to act in His own time. And I'm not cast, as it were, into great fear. That's the patient heart that is exhibited by the one who is confident of his eternal destiny and the eternal care of God. In Romans 8:25 it says, "If we hope for what we do not see with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." If your hope is strong and your hope is based on fact and reality, then you can persevere in waiting for the realization of that hope. Read Psalm 130 if you want another illustration of that.

Another point, assurance purifies the heart...assurance purifies the heart. First John 3:3, "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure." When your hope is fixed, not moving and shaking and coming and going, when it's fixed then you purify yourself. It has a purifying power. If I know I'm going to see God, I know I'm going to see Christ, I know I'm going to see them face to face, I'm going to give an accounting for my deeds, I'm going to spend eternity with the Lord bearing the reward for that which I have rendered to Him by way of service, that's going to change the way I live my life.

Now those are very important matters and I just listed them. You might think of more than I thought of, but they are the very essence of what is essential in the believer's life to experience the full joy that the Lord has designed the Christian to have. And if you don't have that joy, if you don't have that full assurance, you can...you can have it. Wouldn't you like to live on the highest level of joy? Don't you desire to seek holy purposes, to be filled with songs of praise and gratitude? Don't you want to have a soul that is strong against temptation and trial? Don't you want to have a heart that is compelled to obey? Don't you want to experience calm in the soul, perfect rest and peace? Don't you want to be able to wait patiently on God for needed mercy and don't you want a pure life? Those things are the fruit of assurance.

It's a sad thing to realize that people who, one, deny assurance as a possibility, those who theologically deny that you can be eternally secure will never know these blessings. And those of us who believe it but don't live the way we ought to live will not enjoy them either. Assurance really equips the soul for every spiritual battle in every way.

I wish I could say all that is in me, and my words are not adequate. So let me borrow from the theologian Burkhoff(?), listen to what he said. "The Christian's life is intended to be a life of service in the Kingdom of God. He is a vessel of honor sanctified, meat for the master's use prepared unto every good work. And the service that is required of him is arduous and even partakes of the nature of a warfare. The believer is a soldier of Jesus Christ engaged in earnest battles with the powers of evil. Hence, he is urged to put on the whole armor of God that he may retain his position in the Kingdom of God and frustrate the works of the devil. He needs all the spiritual strength at his disposal, especially the strength that comes from a living and active faith and from the assurance of

salvation. If his gait is halting and uncertain, if his arms are unsteady, if his eye is not clear and true, if he is lacking in confidence, he will not be able to do his best for the captain of his salvation. But if he stands in the assurance of faith, he will march to the battle with confidence. He will occupy a strong position. He will aim with precision and he will fight with the strength that comes from the confident expectation of victory. They whose hearts are always filled with doubts and are constantly engaged in seeking assurance are like the soldier that spends all his time seeking his armor, or putting it in shape and meanwhile loses sight of the oncoming forces of the enemy," end quote.

Excellent statement. If you spend all the time fussing with whether or not you have your armor on, you're not going to be able to fight the battle. It is the confident Christians who have the assurance of salvation who are out there in the fray. Even James said, "A doubting Christian is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind, double minded and unstable in...what?...all his ways." Only the assured believer, the confident believer can say these words of the Apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day." That's the word of a confident soldier, right? A man who was assured of his eternal destiny. Beloved, to deny the doctrine of assurance or not to experience the doctrine of assurance is to short circuit your spiritual blessedness and usefulness.

Now, in spite of all of that, many Christians don't enjoy assurance. And we've been asking why, haven't we? We said, first of all, some lack assurance because of being under strong preaching on God's holy standard. Because the standard's held so high they feel they can't ever meet the standard and so they feel they must not be saved. Secondly, we noted that some lack assurance because they can't accept forgiveness. They think they're too bad. What they've done is too terrible. And they just cannot believe that they could be forgiven. Some lack assurance because they do not comprehend the gospel. They just don't understand the nature of the gospel and what the Lord has provided and in the place of knowledge they become tyrannized by their emotions. Fourthly, some lack assurance because they don't know the exact moment of their salvation. And since they can't identify a moment, they feel maybe they're not saved. Fifthly, some lack assurance because they still feel the flesh strongly and wonder if they have a new nature. Because the pull of sin and the flesh is so strong they wonder whether they really are a new creation. And number six, some lack assurance because they don't see the hand of God in all their trials. In other words, when things go wrong they think God's abandoned them rather than that God is using that for their growth. Now that's all review.

I want to give you the last two reasons why people doubt their salvation. Number seven, some lack assurance because they fail to walk in the Holy Spirit thus his affirming, confirming ministry to their hearts is forfeited. Did you get that? This is very very vital. Some lack assurance because they fail to walk in the Spirit and it is the Spirit's ministry to the believer to affirm his salvation.

Go with me to Romans chapter 8 again. We were there last week, we return. It is the single greatest chapter in Scripture on this matter of security and assurance. And I want to draw you to Romans chapter 8 verses 14 to 16. It says in verse 14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." If you want to put it the other way, you could say sons of God are all being led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is involved in leading all believers.

And in verse 15 he says, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba Father." Look, if we belong to God and the Spirit is in us leading us, we should never fear our condition. We have been adopted into God's family and we cry Abba Father, which means daddy, papa, it's a term of intimacy. And then verse 16, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."

Now listen. For every believer the Holy Spirit dwells inside. And from that perspective inside the believer He leads everyone of us. We should never fear because He is leading us to the conclusion that we are the children of God. That's one of the things He does. Now let me give you a little background of this.

In Rome it was very common to adopt...very common. And when a child was adopted there was a legal ceremony to go through. Roman adoptions had to be verified, get this, by seven witnesses. Seven witnesses had to sign the affidavit that this was a legal adoption. Why? Well let's imagine you had a very wealthy man. He was interested in adopting a young boy. He adopted that boy into his family. And then he died. And that boy immediately laid claim then to his inheritance. Who's going to verify that? Let's say there was one witness, and he was dead. There was nothing on computers, probably nothing in files anywhere. Everything was confirmed by a document and word of mouth. And so they stacked up seven witnesses for the purpose of always having someone to confirm the legitimate claim of the heir to his inheritance.

On the other hand, it could well be possible that if a wealthy man died, some fake might come along and say, "Look, he adopted me as his son," who's to prove it or disprove it? Back to the seven witnesses. One, two, three, four of them may have been dead, there may have been three remaining. And the whole idea of having seven witnesses was to affirm that indeed this adoption was legitimate, these seven witnesses had to be present at the adoption. Did you get that? They had to be present at the adoption. And they had to sustain the claim of the adopted child to the inheritance.

Here's Paul's point. If anybody questions your claim to your eternal inheritance, if anybody questions that you are a child of God, there is a witness who was there at the moment of your adoption. Who was it? The Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit will step forward and bear witness that you indeed are a child of God by adoption and have a lawful claim to your eternal inheritance. It is also an interesting coincidence that in Isaiah chapter 11 and verse 2 Isaiah presents the Spirit as a seven-fold Spirit. The

seven-fold Spirit becomes the witness to affirm that I belong to God.

So it is the ministry then of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the legitimacy of my adoption into God's family and my right to claim an eternal inheritance. Isn't that a marvelous truth?

You say, "How does the Holy Spirit do it? How does He bear witness?" A number of ways. Look with me at 1 Corinthians chapter 2...1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 9, "It is written, Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which hath not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." All right, Scripture promises immense blessings for those that love God. Those are taken out of Isaiah. Now verse 10, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit." The first way in which the Holy Spirit affirms our salvation is through illumination. In other words, the Spirit illuminates the Scripture. He makes the Word live. As we study the Word of God about these promises, the Spirit illuminates them to our hearts. That's what that text is saying. The Holy Spirit allows us to think and comprehend with the mind of Christ.

So the first way the Holy Spirit witnesses to me of my sonship and inheritance is by illuminating the Scripture. He illuminates Romans 8:14 to 16, for example. Let me show you a second way the Holy Spirit witnesses. First John chapter 4, and I wish we had more time to spend on each, but 1 John chapter 4 verse 13, this is what John writes, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us." How do we know that? How do we know that? "Because He has given us of His Spirit and we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world and whosoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God and we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love and the one who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him."

You say, "What's he talking about here?" What he's saying is this, the Holy Spirit came, verse 13, and showed us the gospel. The second way the Spirit witnesses to us is through salvation. When the Spirit convicts you of sin, righteousness and judgment, when the Spirit reveals to you that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, verse 14, when the Spirit reveals to you that if you confess Jesus as the Son of God, God will come and abide with you and you in God...in other words, the first way the Spirit bears witness to us that we're God's children is by illuminating the Scripture, the second way is through the whole matter of salvation where we believe in Christ, where we love God, where we love Christ...that's all the witness of the Spirit. That's an ongoing thing.

As we continue to study the Word of God, the Spirit will bear witness to it by illuminating the Word. As we continue to walk with Christ, the Spirit will bear witness to our childhood in the Kingdom of God, as it were, by faith and love which grows.

There's another way in which the Spirit bears witness. In Galatians chapter 4, very much like the text of Romans, it says in verse 6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son

into our hearts crying Abba Father." Listen, the very fact that Scripture is illuminated to me, that I understand it, is the Spirit bearing witness that I'm a child of God. Why? Because if I wasn't a child of God, I couldn't understand the Bible. Right? The natural man...what?...doesn't understand it. So the very process of illumination means the Spirit is in me and that's a confirmation that I belong to God...the matter of loving Christ. What made me hate sin and love Christ? What made me all of a sudden realize God had sent His Son into the world to die for my sin and if I put my faith in Him God would live in me and I would live in Him? And what caused me to love Christ and to dwell in the love of God and the love of Christ? The work of the Spirit. That puts me in touch with the Holy Spirit's work in me and that's how He witnesses to me that I'm a child of God. Unbelievers don't have that. The unbelieving world does not love God, does not love Christ, does not turn to Christ as Savior because the Spirit's not working in them, because they're not God's children.

The third thing here the Spirit does in us is draw us into fellowship with God. Abba Father, just term of intimacy, the Spirit produces prayer, the Spirit produces praise, the Spirit produces worship, all that's bound up in Abba Father. The Spirit produces a petition, a crying out to God as our Father, all of that is the Spirit's witness.

Turn to Galatians chapter 5, one chapter beyond where you are, verse 22, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self- control, against such things there's no law." Now you know this passage very well. But let me just mention that the next thing that the Spirit witnesses through is fruit. The Spirit produces in your life a supernatural love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and when those things are being produced in your life, you know they're not produced by your flesh, right? The flesh knows how to lust, but not true love. It knows how to be happy, but doesn't know settled joy. It knows a moment of calm, but not a deep peace and so forth and so forth. And so, when that's produced in your life, when those attitudes exist in your heart, that's the work of the Spirit producing those and you ought to say that's the evidence, the Spirit's evidence that I belong to God.

And one last note, Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses." Service, ministry, evangelism, that's the product of the Holy Spirit in me and in you.

Now what am I saying? I'm just...and you could probably add more passages, but I think I've put you in touch with a very important issue. The Holy Spirit living in you as a believer is constantly bearing witness to the fact that you belong to God. And when accusers come along and say, "Nah, that adoption never took place, nah, he's an illegitimate son or an illegitimate daughter, no it isn't real." The Spirit says, "I was there," right? You were born of the Spirit. "I was there, and I affirm that this person is indeed the child of God." And how does He bear that witness to us? By illuminating the Word of God which He doesn't do for an unbeliever, by leading us to a greater faith and love for God and Christ, by drawing us into an intimate fellowship with God and prayer, petition, praise, worship, by

producing in our lives those graces that are characteristic of a redeemed nature and by making us effective in service.

So when you talk about the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we're the children of God, don't wait for some little voice in your head to say, "Yes you are, yes you are, you really are a Christian." No. No, the Holy Spirit isn't going to whisper between your ears. He uses those means to illuminate your mind as to the reality of your spiritual condition.

I love what Thomas Brooks wrote, "The Spirit is the great revealer of the Father's secrets. He lies in the bosom of the Father, He knows every name that is written in the Book of Life, He is best acquainted with the inward workings of the heart of God toward poor sinners, He is the great comforter and the only sealer up of souls till the day of redemption. If you grieve by your willful sinning He that alone can gladden you, who then will make you glad?" That's the point. If the Spirit does all of this and you grieve the Spirit or quench the Spirit or walk not in the Spirit but in the flesh, you cut that ministry off. That's why people lack assurance. And the way to assurance then is not to sit down and sigh, not to sit down and complain about your lack of assurance but it is the path of walking in the Holy Spirit, honoring and obeying His Word and His prompting and His holy will. The path away from assurance is the path away from the Spirit, walking in the flesh. As long as you walk in the Spirit, that is in obedience to the Spirit of God, you're going to know assurance. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Yes, He sealed you for the day of redemption, that seal will never be broken, you are adopted and you are secure, but if you grieve the Spirit you will not enjoy that assurance. When the Christian is walking in the Spirit, assurance is the Spirit's gift.

Finally, we've really covered a lot of ground in these three weeks, some lack assurance because of strong convicting preaching of a holy standard. Some lack assurance because of their inability to accept forgiveness for their sins or their failure to comprehend the richness of the gospel of grace, or their inability to remember the time of their salvation or the remaining power of their unredeemed flesh, or the difficult trials in which they fail to see the hand of God, and I'll promise you some lack assurance because they fail to walk in the Spirit which may encompass everything else I've said before that. But there's one more things that is obvious, patently obvious. Some lack assurance because assurance is the reward for obedience and they are willfully disobedient. Assurance is the reward for obedience and they are willfully disobedient.

I'll promise you this, Galatians 5:16 to 21, if you walk in the lust of the flesh and fulfill the desires of the flesh, you will never know the fruit of the Spirit, right? Purity and assurance go together. Psalm 84:11, "No good thing does God withhold from those who walk uprightly." If you walk uprightly in obedience to God, He gives you assurance. Boy, what a glorious promise.

Hebrews 10, I think, in verse 22 strongly points this out. Let me just read it to you. "Let us draw near...listen to this...with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water." Boy, what a statement. The only way to have a full assurance is connected to purity.

Sinclair Ferguson writes, "High degrees of true assurance cannot be enjoyed by those who persist in low levels of obedience...high degrees of assurance are not enjoyed by those who live at low levels of obedience." If you live in sin and disobedience, you will not enjoy assurance. Sin will cancel it out. There is a gulf between sin and peace, sin and joy, sin and assurance. To live in sin is to live in doubt. When you sin, coming alongside of it is doubt about your spiritual condition and the Spirit of God withholds the good gift.

Often the psalmist when he got himself into sin would cry out as if the Lord didn't know him. I'm thinking of Psalm 31:22, "As for me, I am cut off from before Thine eyes." He felt abandoned by God. His sin had taken away his assurance. Psalm 77:7, "Will the Lord reject forever and will He never be favorable again? Has His loving kindness ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious? O, it is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed." How did the psalmist get himself in that mess? Sin. When you fall into sin, you fall into doubt. To live in sin is to live in doubt. So we need to deal with sin in our lives.

And I'll tell you, give you a little secret, if you deal with a major sin, the rest will follow along. It's kind of like when Goliath was killed, the rest of the Philistines fled. When the general is killed, the troops are scattered. And so it is in the life of a believer that by the means of grace, when he slays the sins that are most powerful and most compelling, those pet sins, those strong temptations that constantly come, when you deal with those, the rest will fall. Put a spear through the heart of Absalom, and all the rest of his rebels are gone. Deal with those besetting familiar sins and the others will disappear. But where there is sin, there will be a tremendous struggle for assurance.

Listen to the personal testimony of Charles Spurgeon. "Whenever I feel that I have sinned and desire to overcome that sin for the future, the devil at the same time comes to me and whispers, 'How can you be a pardoned person and accepted with God while you still sin in this way?' If I listen to this I drop into despondency. And if I continued in that state I should fall into despair and should commit sin more frequently than before. But God's grace comes in and says to my soul, 'Thou hast sinned but did not Christ come to save sinners? Thou art not saved because thou art righteous for Christ died for the ungodly.' And my faith says, 'Though I have sinned I have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and though I am guilty yet by grace I am saved and I am a child of God still.' And what then? Why the tears begin to flow and I say, 'How could I ever sin against my God who has been so good to me? Now I will overcome that sin.' And I get strong to fight with sin through the conviction that I am God's child."

If you fall into sin and you resolutely say I will conquer that sin, Satan may pound you with these kinds of questions. You fall back on the forgiving grace of God and it will strengthen you for the battle. Whatever the cause for the loss of assurance, whatever makes you doubt, whatever causes you to lose your joy and to become useless in Christian service, empty in worship, cold in praise, passionless in prayer, vulnerable to false teachers, whatever the problems are there is a cure. The cure is to walk in the Spirit. The cure is to walk in obedience.

You say, "You've got to be more specific than that." Oh I will be. Peter is much more specific than that. But that's for next time. Now right now as we close this wonderful lesson, I'm going to ask our ushers to come to and pass out a little piece of paper to all of you. I was reading on one of the flights I took some months ago a book called The Christian's Interest written by Thomas Guthrie. And as I read through it in his typical catechetical style of question and answer as he teaches, I began to track with his thinking and some of my own and so I put together a little catechism, a little question and answer process to help you think through and summarize everything I've said the last three weeks, okay? And so I want everybody to get one of these little yellow sheets. And we're going to work through this little catechism as we bring things to a conclusion tonight. Katacheo means to echo back. This is how everybody learned in ancient times through a catechism and some of you probably were raised on one in your spiritual life and background. But this will pull together and summarize what we've been saying about assurance.

All right, let's embark upon our little catechism together. I'll ask the question and you give the answer, okay?

Question: What is the essential duty a person has in this world? To consummate a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ which is to recognize His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead as the satisfying atonement for sin and to walk in accordance with that relationship.

Question: Do not all members of the church have such a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? No, only those who are truly saved.

Question: How can I be certain that I have that saving relationship? The Lord will have done in your soul His own sovereign will, that of effectually calling you to Himself through a work of conviction and humiliation so that you will have discovered your sin and misery and been so seriously agitated and threatened by it that you long for the Savior.

Question: How can I know if I have a sufficient discovery and admission of my sin and misery? By the fact that you will take salvation to your heart above any other pursuit in life so as to seek it above anything else. It will make you disclaim any real relief from sin and guilt, even in the best of times. It will make Christ, who is the redeemer, very precious to your soul. It will make you fear sin, repent and

seek to be saved on God's terms.

Question: By what other ways may I discern a saving relationship to Christ? By a strong and serious affection that reaches toward Christ as He is made known in the gospel. This love is saving belief.

Question: How shall I know if my heart's affection for Him is genuine and my faith is true saving faith? When your heart goes after Him in true saving faith, your soul will be pleased with Christ alone, and above all else and in all His offices to rule and teach as well as save and is content to cling to Him no matter the cost.

Question: Are there other marks of a saving relationship with Christ? You are truly saved when you have been made a new creation, graciously changed and renewed in the whole person and that is best known by the desire to shun sin and pattern your life toward obedience to God's righteous demands.

Question: What if I find sin prevailing over me? Although every sin deserves eternal vengeance, yet if you regularly confess your sins with unfeigned repentance and shame before God, fleeing to Christ for forgiveness for all known and unknown iniquities, He will grant you mercy and pardon because you stand in grace and your salvation is forever secure.

Question: What if my sins are serious and repeated? Whatever they are, Jesus Christ has paid the price for them so that if you sincerely and earnestly have turned to Him in repentant faith, you will never enter into condemnation. Moreover, His gracious provision for those who believe includes power to overcome sin and live righteously.

Question: Is faith alone the requirement for salvation? Faith is the response upon which God offers peace and pardon to men, but faith if it is genuine will not be alone in the soul but will always be attended with true repentance and an eager desire to conform to God's will and way.

Question: How can I be sure I have settled my eternal destiny with the Lord Jesus Christ? Express with your mouth to God what the Holy Spirit through Scripture has led you to believe in your heart.

Question: How do I do that? Consider your sin and lost condition and the remedy offered by Jesus Christ. Yield your heart to be pleased with and to desire that remedy and speak to God that you receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His gift of salvation and give yourself up to Him to be saved in the gospel way without reservation.

Question: What is the consequence of such a relationship? Union and communion with God here and blessed fellowship and glory hereafter.

Question: How can I come to full assurance that I have such a relationship? By affirming the attendant promises of God as revealed in Scripture by the internal witness of the Spirit and by the manifestation of real and righteous fruit born out of love for the person of Christ and a desire for His glory and honor.

Very good, class. We want you to enjoy the assurance that our Lord has given us of our eternal salvation. Let me say this, listen carefully, I know in a congregation like this there are some who do not have that assurance. It may be that you're not a Christian. It may be that you have never done what we just read, you have never expressed with your mouth to God what the Holy Spirit through Scripture has led you to believe in your heart. If you would like to come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, if you would like to give your heart and life to the only Savior who can forgive your sin and give you heaven, we would love to share with you. Our prayer room will be open behind the exit sign after the service is complete, we'll have some dear folks there who would love to pray with you, talk with you and help you. Or you might even talk with the folks you came with tonight...that would be well as well. Don't go away without assurance. If you need to come and pray, if you need to confess some sin, begin to walk in the Spirit, do it tonight. Don't live another day without the assurance of your eternal salvation. Get back living on the blessed level God wants you to enjoy.

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