

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

Tests of Assurance from 1 John, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Code: 61-9

As you know, we are in a study of 2 Peter, and I want to invite you to open your Bible, if you will, to 2 Peter, chapter 1. And as we are going through this first chapter, we are studying under the general topic "Our Precious Faith – Our Precious Faith." We have come to the section from verse 5 to 11, 2 Peter 1, 5 through 11. This section deals with the assurance of salvation. And because it is such an important subject, and one that is seemingly a topic of great discussion today, as it has been through the history of the church, I have indulged myself in a little bit of an extended discussion of this matter of assurance. In fact, this is message number eight on our precious faith, message five on assurance, and we still haven't gotten to the text yet. But it is very important that we have this preliminary understanding in place.

I do want, as we look at the text, to draw you again to verses 10 and 11, which kind of set the theme in mind without going into a great amount of detail. And Peter here says, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you." And here he is talking about certainty with regard to your election; certainty, then, with regard to your redemption, certainty with regard to your salvation. He is concerned that you know that you're saved. Back in verse 9, he is concerned about those who lack certain qualities, being blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. He does not want you to have forgotten your true spiritual state, but rather to have assurance about your calling and election. And so this introduces to us this subject of assurance of salvation.

Now, that subject reduces itself to two basic questions, and we have been noting these in our study. Question number one is, is salvation forever? Is salvation forever? Is our salvation eternal? Because we can't have assurance about our salvation being eternal unless, in fact, it is eternal, so question number one: is salvation forever – is it secure? Question number two: can I enjoy that security? First is the fact, then the feeling. First is the reality, and then the experience. Do I have an eternal salvation? And can I enjoy the assurance of that salvation? As we have noted, these two issues are inseparably related, because if salvation is not eternal, then there can be no true feeling of assurance.

If it is possible to lose my salvation, then I will have very great difficulty enjoying my assurance. If my salvation can be temporary, then at best, my assurance is temporary too. If on the other hand my salvation is eternal, my assurance can be permanent. This particular issue was again brought to my mind in the past few days, as I have been reading Ian Murray's careful and excellent biography of

Jonathan Edwards. In 1746, just about six years after the great awakening, in which Jonathan Edwards was the primary instrument of God to preach the gospel and bring the greatest revival in American history, just about six years after that in 1746, he wrote "A Treatise on Religious Affections."

The reason he wrote that was to deal with the problem not unlike the very problem we're discussing tonight. That publication, "A Treatise on Religious Affections," had to do with the matter of evidence for true conversion. The concern of Edwards in writing was to delineate the issues regarding who is really a Christian. In the explosive drama of 1739 and 1740, the years of the great awakening, it seemed as though conversions were happening in great numbers. It didn't take long after those years to begin to realize that there were some people who claimed conversions who were not real. There were many excesses. There were people who waxed into emotionalism and emotional experiences, which would be in some ways a sort of a precursor to contemporary charismania.

There were people who claimed to have had valid and real experiences with Jesus Christ, but whose lives did not demonstrate any evidence to verify it. There were thus those who were then attacking the great awakening, and saying it was nothing but a big emotional bath, and there was nothing real about it. And so partly in defense of true conversion, and partly to expose false conversion, Jonathan Edwards took up his pen and wrote "A Treatise on Religious Affections." And his purpose was to present evidence for true conversion. And summing it up very simply, "The supreme proof," said Edwards, "of a true conversion is holy affections, zeal for holy things, longings after God, longings after holiness, desires for purity."

And he really did touch the heart of true conversion, and at its heart it is a set of new desires. That's what he said. He said, "Where there is true conversion there is a zeal for holy things." He had been very concerned about Satanic counterfeits of conversions during the great awakening. And so he wanted to distinguish between what he called "saving operations of the Holy Spirit," and "common operations of the Holy Spirit." Saving operations of the Holy Spirit obviously produced salvation. "Common operations of the Holy Spirit," he said, "may sober, arrest, and convict men, and may even bring them to what at first appears to be repentance and faith, yet these influences fall short of inward saving renewal," end quote.

So the main thesis of this – one of the greatest pieces of American literature, frankly, to say nothing of theology – the main thesis of this classic work is that holiness and the pursuit of holiness is necessarily involved at the very outset of true salvation. "Grace, saving grace, planted in the heart at the time of the new birth is," he said, "a principle of holy action or practice." You heard young people in the baptistry tonight telling you that since coming to Jesus Christ they had a desire to obey God; they had holy affections. In the simplicity of their young faith, they have a desire to do what is right. They have a longing to know God, to follow God, to pursue holiness. "Grace planted in the heart," said Edwards, "produces holy action."

In fact, he said, “As the principle evidence of life is motion, so the principle evidence of saving grace is holy practice.” He said that true salvation always produces an abiding change of nature in a true convert; therefore, wherever a profession of conversion is not accompanied by holiness of life, it must be understood that the individual concerned is not a Christian. Now historically, he knew there were two alternatives. Alternative number one was this: permanent nature of regeneration in reality and experience. That was alternative number one, theologically. You could believe in the permanent nature of regeneration, both in reality and in experience. In other words, if you were genuinely saved, you were saved forever, and you would experience the longings after holiness forever – until you were made holy.

The alternate view was this: temporary nature of regeneration, both in reality and experience. The other view said, “No, salvation is temporary, you might lose it. It is temporary in its reality; it is temporary also, then, in its experience. If you fall out of it, you'll no longer experience those longings.” Theology had literally folded itself into those two perspectives. There were the traditional, reformed, Calvinistic folks, who said, “Permanent nature of regeneration in reality and experience is what the Bible teaches.” And then there were the Arminian Wesleyans, and John Wesley himself became a protagonist against Edwards, who said, “No, temporary nature of regeneration, both in reality and experience.” I point those two out because those are the only two alternatives.

Today, however, we have a new one – alternative number three. Alternative number three is permanent nature of regeneration in reality, temporary nature of regeneration in experience. Where did that come from? Who knows? Not from the Bible. But there are those today who say while your salvation is eternal in reality, it may be only temporary in experience. You understand what I'm driving at? This is a new theology. This is a theology that Jonathan Edwards didn't bother to deal with, to any significant degree, although I think the roots of it were running around loose even in his day. I don't think Edwards would have stood for that; I know Wesley wouldn't have stood for that.

Edwards would never have bought that the experience of pursuing holiness might be temporary, even though your salvation is permanent. And Wesley would never have bought that your salvation is permanent. So we have something new today. We have a new doctrine that says you can be saved forever, but the longings for holiness might only be temporary. And you might become an unbeliever, an agnostic, an atheist, reprobate, live any way you want. Jonathan Edwards said – and this is the thesis of his whole “Treatise on Religious Affections” – “The truly saved pursue holiness.” They aren't always as holy as they ought to be, they pursue it. They're Romans 7 type people, who long to do what is right even if they don't. They have holy longings, holy aspirations, and holy affections.

He stated then that the evidence for the reality of one's salvation was simply and comprehensively, quote: “The love and pursuit of holiness.” That, he taught, is the enduring mark of a Christian, and therefore singularly the best way to get in touch with the reality of a spiritual condition, and thus the

source of assurance. He said, "While the experience of a young Christian may be like a confused chaos, he will still follow holiness; and true religious affections differ from false affections in that the true are always related to holiness, that is, to doing what is right, to pursuing what honors God." Let me quote Edwards from his "Religious Affections."

"Natural men have no sense of the goodness and excellency of holy things, at least for their holiness. But for the saints, holiness is the most amiable and sweet thing that is to be found in heaven or earth. When persons are possessed of false affections, and think themselves out of danger of hell, they very much put off the burden of the cross, save themselves the trouble of difficult duties, and allow themselves more of the enjoyment of their ease and their lusts. Some of these at the same time make a great profession of love to God, and assurance of His favor, and great joy in tasting the sweetness of His love.

"Where joys and other religious affections are false and counterfeit," he says, "individuals, once confident that they are converted, have no more earnest longings after light and grace. They live upon their first work or some high experiences that are past, and there is an end to their crying and striving after God and grace. But the holy principles that actuate a true saint have a far more powerful influence to stir him up to earnestness in seeking God and holiness," end quote. Now, that's a lot of words to throw at you. What he's basically saying is the false Christian makes a profession, but has no holy longings. The true Christian makes a profession, and has holy longings.

I don't always do what I want, but I want to do what God wants. I don't always do what I desire, but I always want to do what God desires. And when my desire is the same as His, it doesn't mean my flesh is always going to cooperate. But my holy longings are evidence of regeneration. And so Jonathan Edwards insisted that the work of Christ in justification was always accompanied by the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. And to separate the two was to do terrible violation, both to Scripture and the purposes of God in redemption. "Free grace and holy practice," he said, "are not inconsistent, but perfectly joined. Even as the chief sign of life is motion, the chief sign of saving grace is holy motion, movement toward holiness."

In the very year, by the way, that the "Treatise on Religious Affections" was published, 1746, a man by the name of Reverend Philemon Robbins attacked it, and said that the only real evidence of true salvation is some kind of feeling based on an experience, usually the experience at the moment of conversion. Now, that introduces this erroneous concept that a person's true state is known by a past experience, rather than a present pursuit of holy things. Jonathan Edwards then went on to talk about assurance, and he said, "Your assurance then is based on the fact that you see in your life the pursuit of holy things." That's the substance of your assurance.

Now, we have already affirmed in our study of Scripture that salvation is eternal, right? That if you have saving faith, you're saved forever. The only question remaining then is, was my faith saving faith

– was my faith the real thing – how do I know that? Ask yourself whether you have a longing for holy things. Ask yourself whether you seek those things which honor God. Ask yourself whether you long to do His Word, whether you love His law and delight in it. Ask yourself whether you are distressed greatly by your sin, because you have such holy affections. Yes, Edwards would agree. He would say, “Yes, faith in Christ is sufficient for assurance.” Yes, faith in Christ is sufficient for assurance if you know your faith is real. How do you know it's real? By the love of holy things – by the love of holy things.

Now, this is precisely Peter's point. Jonathan Edwards is right on track with the Apostle Peter. What is Peter saying? Go back to verse 5 of chapter 1; let's find out. “Now,” he says – having already discussed matters of salvation in the first four verses, in verse 5 he says, “Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, in your moral excellence, knowledge, in your knowledge, self-control, in your self-control, perseverance, in your perseverance, godliness, in your godliness, brotherly kindness, in your brotherly kindness, love.” What do you mean? Well, just all these qualities you need to pursue. “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,” two things happen.

One: “you will not be useless or unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Two: “you will not be blind and short-sighted about your spiritual condition.” See, the point is if you add these things to your life – and these are all matters of holy affections – if you're longing after moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love, two things are going to happen. You're going to start to be fruitful; secondly, you're not going to forget you're saved. So assurance, Peter says, is predicated on holy affections, the pursuit of holiness. And we'll get into that in some detail.

Before we do that, I want to take us back to the text we've been looking at in 1 John, because this is John's whole point as well. I want us to go to 1 John. Now, we have already affirmed principle number one, salvation is forever. We've already affirmed principle number two, that you should enjoy the assurance of that forever salvation. What Jonathan Edwards says is that if you want to enjoy your salvation and be sure you're saved, then look at your life and see if you have holy affections, if you pursue holiness. Peter says if you are adding all these things, and pursuing all these things, and giving diligence to all these things, and you're going to be fruitful, then you're going to look at yourself, and you're not going to forget whether you're saved; you're going to know.

Well, John essentially says the same thing. John in his whole first epistle delineates the factors of such a pursuit. Peter says it involves faith, and knowledge, and self-control, and perseverance, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and love, and you want to know something? John says basically the same thing, only John says it in much greater detail. John delineates those same elements that identify holy affections; the pursuit of holiness which is characteristic of the regenerate. Now, we already covered the first five. We asked a series of questions that help us get into the text of John.

Question number one – let me just give them to you real quick, the first five we covered.

How do you know whether you're pursuing godliness? How do you know whether you have holy affections? How do you know whether you're longing after God, and pursuing His will, and His way, and what is right? How do you know whether you belong to God? How do you know whether you're really saved? Question number one: are you enjoying fellowship with Christ and the Father? That's pretty basic. Remember, in chapter 1 he talks about our fellowship is with the Father, verse 3, and with His Son Jesus Christ? And then he talks about it in chapter 5, verse 1: "Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." And we talked quite a bit about the fact that the first holy affection of a truly regenerate person is a longing after fellowship with God and Christ.

Do you have a desire to commune with Him – to pray, to know Him, to be with Him, to be in His presence? This is the experience of abundant life, rich with joy, peace, love, purpose. And if you're pursuing that, that's a holy affection. If you're enjoying that fellowship, if you are experiencing the God of all comfort, the God who supplies all our needs, the God who fellowships with us, and thus dispenses power for our Christian living. If you're seeking the God of wisdom, who holds nothing back but gives liberally to all who ask.

If you are pursuing time and fellowship with the God in whose presence you sing songs, and hymns, and spiritual songs, and sing and make melody in your heart. If you're coming to the God to whom you cry, "Abba," the one to whom you go for mercy and grace in time of need. If you're longing for fellowship with the Christ who is our consolation, who is our strength, who is our hope, whose love shines in us and through us, whose peace we possess and enjoy, these are clear indications that you have a longing for fellowship.

Second question: are you sensitive to sin? If you have holy affections and are longing after holiness, you're going to be sensitive to sin. In chapter 1, verse 5, John begins to deal with that. He talks about the fact that the true believer walks in the light, confessing his sin, and that the true believer is forgiven of his sin. And when he does sin, he recognizes – chapter 2 – an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation, the atonement, the covering for sin. Are you sensitive to sin, we asked? And John asks it. Or do you deny it? Do you say we have no sin? If you do you make God a liar. No, one of the evidences of holy affections is a hatred of sin in my own life, a revulsion.

Question number three to indicate holy affections: are you obedient to God's Word? We saw that, didn't we, in chapter 2, verse 3, "And by this we know we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." The holy affection is obedience. I long to do Your will, I want to do Your Word, I want to do what's right, I want to please You. That's a holy affection. That's evidence of a new nature. The unredeemed nature, no, it doesn't have any desire to obey God, it doesn't have any sensitivity to sin, and it doesn't long to commune and fellowship with God and Christ. Those are holy affections that indicate a regenerate heart.

Fourth: do you reject the world? Down in chapter 2, verse 15, we reminded ourselves not to love the world. And then in verse 17, he says further than that, “the world is passing away and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.” We are eternal, the world is passing. We don't love the world. In fact, if we love the world, verse 15 says, the love of the Father is – what – it's not in us. There's another holy affection, a rejection of the world and a longing after the Kingdom.

Then the fifth question we asked, as we noted John's recitation of these matters, is do you love Christ and eagerly await for His coming? Do you long for His coming? That's another holy affection. Down in chapter 3, and verse 2, he talks about the fact that we're going to be like Him, we're going to see Him. Then in verse 3, he says, “Whoever has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure.” Here's another holy affection, a longing after heaven, a longing to be in glory, a longing for Jesus to come. That's our hope, that's our joy, we wait for His coming. We eagerly wait. That is the blessed hope.

Now, do you have those holy affections? Do you long for fellowship with God and Christ? Are you sensitive to your sin to the point where your own sin repulses you? Do you long to obey God and His Word? Do you find yourself rejecting the world and longing for the Kingdom? And do you eagerly wait for the coming of the one you love? Those are holy affections. And John is saying throughout his epistle those are the marks of true believers. Now let's pick up the rest of them.

Number six: do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? One of the manifestations of holy affections is a decreasing pattern of sin. Chapter 3, verse 5, let's turn to it. This is a powerful, powerful section. To be honest with you, we probably won't get past it, but that's all right. Unbroken patterns of sin are characteristic of the unregenerate. No matter what someone claims, if there is a continual pattern of sin in their life, no different than before they made their claim, then theirs is only a claim and not a reality. When you became a true Christian and you were transformed, the pattern of sin was broken and a new pattern came in to existence, a pattern of obedience, a pattern of righteousness, a pattern of godliness, a pattern of holiness. Holy affections took over. And a believer's life pattern is pursuing holiness.

Now, you say, “Does that mean there's no sin?” Oh, there's sin, because the unredeemed flesh is still there. But the more we pursue and the more we move in those religious affections toward things that are right, there will be the decreasing frequency of sin. John makes that very, very clear in verses 5 through 10; it is so clear that it is incontrovertible. And John shows us – now, here's the key point – that sin as a life pattern is incompatible with salvation – it is incompatible with salvation. Particularly, it is incompatible with the work of Christ in salvation. To say that a person was saved by the work of Jesus Christ, saved, and redeemed, and fit for heaven, and made a new creation, but the continual pattern goes on unbroken, is to say something about salvation, and it is to say about salvation it is ineffective. Not so. John then takes us into the work of Christ and he shows us how effective it is.

First of all, His death – verse 5, look at this. “And you know that He appeared” – that is, Christ appeared – “in order to take away sins.” Hmm, he just said in verse 4 that there are people who practice sin and are practicing lawlessness. Now he says He appeared to take away sins. So to say that someone had the work of Christ applied to them, but they continue in the same pattern of sin, is to deny the very purpose for which He came, to take away sins. To continue in sin is not consistent with Christ's work. He lifted our sins from us, *air*; He lifted away sins. The purpose of His incarnation was to take away our sin, so that His followers would not go on habitually practicing sin.

If we did, His death, while having some efficacy in eternity, would have been useless in time. But He came to take away His people's sins. How can you say, then, that a person is saved, but their sins are not taken away – in fact, they're the same? Can't be done. He came to produce in His children a new pattern of life with the decreasing frequency of sin; that in His very death. Then not only that, but if you look at the work of Christ through our union with Him in verses 6 and 7, you see another element; verse 6: “No one who abides in Him sins.” Do you mean, John, that we never sin? Obviously he doesn't mean that – sins as a life pattern. “No one who sins” – as a life pattern – “has seen Him or known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

Now, the key word here in verse 6 is “abides in Him.” Not only was His death to take away our sin, but our abiding union with Him has broken the habitual sin pattern. So both in His death – listen to this – in His death on the cross, and in His ongoing life in the believer, He is taking away sin. It doesn't mean we'll never commit a single sin. He already said in chapter 2, “If any man sins we have an advocate with the Father.” But we will not be perpetual sinners in thought, word, and deed, as we were before we were saved.

Righteousness rules us because we reside in the righteous one. So how could you come up, then, with a view that said salvation is eternal in reality, but temporary in experience? You're saved forever, but you might all of a sudden go back to the pattern before you were redeemed, and live a completely sinful life. Wait a minute. He died to take away sins, He lives in union with us to conquer that pattern, and provide a new habitual pattern of righteousness.

The third note in his argument deals with Satan in verse 8. “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Now get this thought, it's a very simple thought: the devil is a sinner, and nothing but. Everybody who is associated with the devil is a sinner, and nothing but. Christ died to destroy the works of the devil; the works of the devil are – what – sin. And so in his death He came to rescue a people who were in bondage to the devil, and thus in bondage to sin. The point is this: habitual sin signals union with the devil. He came to rescue people from that, to destroy the devil's power.

How can you then say somebody is saved who continues to live a habitual pattern under the control of the devil? Then that's a pretty impotent work by Christ, right, and contrary to His purpose. He came to destroy the works of the devil, which are sinful works, and He destroys them in the lives of His people. Salvation was accomplished to destroy Satan's evil works in us. And if it didn't do that, then it didn't do what it was supposed to do, and His work is utterly ineffective and useless. Close the church, forget it all. See, if the purpose of Christ's work on the cross was to remove sin, and if the purpose of Christ was to unite us with Himself in righteousness, and if the purpose of Christ was to undo the works of the devil, then sin can't be the habitual pattern in the life of a Christian, or Christ came in vain.

Then in verse 9 he adds another argument. Sin is also incompatible with the Holy Spirit. Verse 9: "No one who is born of God" – no one – continually, habitually – "practices sin." Why? "Because His seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who doesn't love his brother." In verse 9, he says, "Look, the new birth, there's a seed planted," and we know the agency is the Holy Spirit. We're born of the Spirit. And the Spirit comes and plants that seed, a new nature, a new life principle, a new disposition, the very seed of God, His seed.

And that work of the Holy Spirit means a new life form has begun. Our supernatural birth from God's seed brings us into God's life. The Holy Spirit regenerates us with that new seed, and that new seed brings forth a new kind of life. Just as the seed in the ground produces a certain kind of life, the new seed produces a righteous life, and it breaks the pattern of habitual sin. Born of the Spirit of God, we can't continually sin. So look at it from the viewpoint of Christ's death. Look at it from the viewpoint of Christ's life with us. Look at it from the viewpoint of crushing Satan. Look at it from the viewpoint of the Spirit of God in His regenerating work. And every way you look at it, the pattern of habitual sin is – what – it's broken – it's broken.

And so what is John saying? John is simply saying, do you see the decreasing of the pattern of sin in your life? If you do, that's evidence of a holy affection. Verse 10 just sums it all up. There's an obvious difference between the children of God and the children of the devil. It's obvious. He uses the word obvious. You practice righteousness, you're of God. You don't, you're not. Plain and simple. So we would agree, then, wouldn't we, with Jonathan Edwards: regeneration is eternal in reality, eternal in experience. Why? Because the reality is a reality of total transformation; born of God, we cannot continually sin. If you see victory over sin in your life, if you see righteous motives, righteous desires, righteous words, righteous deeds, you're not all you ought to be, but you certainly aren't what you used to be, then you have eternal life; enjoy it.

Do you know that the Christian community is loaded with people who have very little or no assurance of their salvation? I am continually being accused, in print and on tape and a lot of places, of stealing

people's assurance, of making Christians feel insecure. I don't want to make Christians feel insecure, I want to make false Christians feel insecure, for their own good. I don't want you to be insecure. I want you to be secure. If you're a true Christian, I want you to be overwhelmed with assurance. And I'm not saying you have to live a perfect life to be sure you're saved, and I'm not saying if ever you fall into sin, whoops, well you might not be saved.

What I'm saying is if you have holy affections and longings, as I've put it in other times, if you love God, and hate sin, and long to obey, that's the evidence of regenerate life. Jonathan Edwards was right. He was burdened deeply, because out of the great awakening came an expanded church, and in that expanded church came the realization that there were all kinds of emotional excesses, and people falling into faints and trances, and claiming strange and bizarre experiences; people who made momentary professions and confessions. And there needed to be a careful delineation of what was true and what was false, not only for the sake of those who weren't truly saved, that their false assurance could be removed, but for the glory of God, because some people were saying the whole great awakening was a farce. And he wanted to preserve the integrity of the work of God in those glorious years. And so he said, "We must distinguish between the true and the false," and out of that great heart and mind and knowledge of Scripture came the simple truth that where there are holy affections, there is evidence of regenerate life.

That is precisely what Peter is saying; and that is why he is saying you must pursue those things if you are to enjoy assurance. That is precisely what John is saying; you must see the evidence of the pursuit of those things if you are to know you belong to Christ. In fact, that is the very reason why John even wrote this letter. That's what he had in mind all along. Chapter 5, verse 13: "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may" – what – "know that you have" – what – "eternal life." The Lord doesn't want you to lack assurance of your salvation. The Lord doesn't want that. The first thing you must understand is that your salvation is eternal. The second thing, that you have the faith that secures that eternal salvation, and can enjoy that confidence.

And John has written these things not to take away our assurance, to give it to us. And Peter wrote not to take away our assurance, but to give it to us – if we're real. If we're not, then these are effective tools to show us the reality of our false assurance. Well, let's bow together in prayer. Father, we thank You that when You sent Your Son, You sent Him that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. And that part of abundant life is assurance, for how could we possibly enjoy our Christian life if we couldn't even be sure we were headed for heaven? And so You just loaded us up with truth about assurance. Father, thank You that we can have assurance from the very moment of saving faith, if that saving faith is real, for there will be holy affections, holy longings. Not just the sense of "Boy, I escaped hell," not just the idea, "Well, now I'm on God's side and He won't punish me," not just the idea, "Well, now maybe my problems are solved," not just the idea, "Well now I belong to this group of nice people."

No, true salvation is indicated by those holy affections, and we believe they're there at the very beginning, Father, and they grow, expand, and become enriched. And we thank You for that confidence. And You've not sought to take away our assurance, but to multiply it to us, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. Thank You that the work of Christ in justification is linked inseparably to the work of the Spirit in sanctification; that even as we first longed for Christ as He prompted our hearts, we now long for Him as He continues to prompt our hearts. Father, help us to enjoy the assurance that is ours in Christ. For those who have no assurance because they have no true salvation, save them, Lord, even this night, for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

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