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

The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: DOC-13

I want to begin our study of assurance tonight by reading you a letter I received from an individual, and then a poem that he wrote that may set in context the importance of our study.

“Dear John: I have been attending Grace for several years, and as a result of a growing conviction in my heart, a result of your diligent preaching and seeming to be powerless against the temptations which arise in my heart and constantly succumbing to them, and talks with pastors and godly men about my growing doubts , has led me to believe I am not saved. How sad it is, John, for me to not be able to enter in because of the sin which clings to me and from which I long to be free. How bizarre for one who teaches in the Sunday School with heartfelt conviction, a trainer in Discipleship Evangelism, a seminarian at Talbot, a disciple. So many times I have determined in my heart to repent, to shake loose my want to sin, to forsake all for Jesus, only to find myself doing the sin I don’t want to do and not doing the good I want to do. After my fiancee and I broke up, I memorized Ephesians as part of an all-out effort against sin, only to find myself weaker and more painfully aware of my sinfulness, more prone to sin than ever before, grabbing cheap thrills to push back the pain of lost love. Mostly in the heart, John, but that is where it counts and that’s where you live. I sin because I’m a sinner.

“I’m like a soldier without my armor and running across the battlefield getting shot up by the fiery darts of the enemy. I couldn’t leave the church if I wanted to, I love the people, I’m enthralled by the gospel of the beautiful Messiah, I’m a pile of manure on the white marble floor of Christ, a mongrel dog that snuck the back door of the King’s banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor and by being close to Christians who are rich in the blessings of Christ, I get some of the overflow and I ask you to pray for me as you think best.”

And he signed his name and then wrote a poem.

“I have no wings to Godward fly, but I slither quiet in slime. I have many tears to cry, but no repenting heart. There’s no end to my sin, I have no hope to enter in, except by the blood of Jesus, only His precious blood pleases. O, God, a wretched man am I, lacking faith and trusting. Dearest Lord, hear my cry and give the Spirit renewing. If I could repent, I surely would and be Christlike as I should, but no faith is in my breast and no assurance of eternal rest. My God, my God, forsake me not, but come to me and save me, take away my sinful rot and abide in me eternally. In You only is there hope, only You have power to cope. Quicken me and restore anew, I can’t be a son without You. My God, my

God, forsake me not, but come to me and save me."

Pretty sad, huh? Only God knows what is really going on in a heart like that. But that letter and that poem suffice to point up to us the importance of this matter of can you know you're saved? Is there assurance of salvation?

Now what I want to do tonight is just lead you in a Bible study so get comfortable, get your Bible out, maybe your pencil and pad and there's probably room for you to set it beside you or somewhere where you can write some verses down. And I want to ask two questions tonight, and only two, and endeavor to answer them from the Word of God. And I believe these two questions and answers will speak to this very, very important issue. Question number one; is our salvation secure? Is our salvation secure? Question number two; can we know experientially that security?

Question number one: is our salvation secure, question number two; can we know that, can we experience that security? And really those are the only two questions we need to ask and you can't ask the second one without asking and answering the first one. Question number one; is salvation secure? What's the answer? Yes. Now that takes care of question number one. Shall we go on to question number two? Is salvation secure? The answer is yes. We say that with great affirmation. We want to say that. I want to say that, you want to say that, our theology underpinings tell us that. But there needs to be some biblical data to support that and I believe the Bible makes it abundantly clear that our salvation is in fact secure.

In John chapter 5 verse 24, Jesus said, "He that hears My Word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life. And, therefore, shall not come into judgment but is passed from death unto life." That may be the single most monumental statement ever made in the Bible relative to the security of salvation. Let me say it again. "He that hears My Word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life."

Now frankly, it would have said enough if it had ended there because we would only need to ask the question, "How long is everlasting?" to have answered our basic question. But it is further defined, "And shall not come into judgment." So that you have then a negative supporting the positive, you have received everlasting life. Let me ask you, how long is everlasting life? How long is it? Everlasting. But in case there is any doubt, the negative is added, "And shall not come into judgment," which is the other side of it. "But…and back to the positive…is passed from death unto life." And there is no addendum, there is no fine print, that is it.

Now look with me, for a moment, at John's gospel and you'll note that this is supported multiple times in the gospel of John. For example, chapter 3 verse 16, a very familiar text, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And then verse 18, "He that believeth on Him," and here comes the negative, we see

the everlasting life, that's everlasting life in verse 16, the negative, he that believeth is not condemned. And then it says, conversely, "The one that does not believe is condemned already." And so again, the positive side, we have everlasting life; the negative side, we will not ever come in to judgment.

The sixth chapter of John's gospel affirms this, not so much simply by statement, but by theological inference. In John 6 verse 37, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." In other words, all those that God designs sovereignly to redeem, will come to Christ. Very simple statement. And from the human viewpoint, that should not restrain any man because him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out. In other words, only those whom the Father draws will come and only those will come whom the Father draws. So there is a perfect meeting. "For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me, and this is the Father's will who sent Me that out of all that He hath given Me, I should lose…how many? None." Of all that the Father gives Me, I shall lose nothing, but raise him up again at the last day.

In other words, all those chosen unto salvation, all those who affirm that salvation by coming to Jesus Christ, will be raised up in the last day. There's no loss, you see. Nobody escapes, nobody's lost, nobody falls through the cracks. And verse 40 sums it up, "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son…and that is with the eye of faith, the eye of true spiritual perception…and believes on Him, they have everlasting life."

Now that's all you need to say, but just because some people might be confused, He adds, "And I will raise him up at the last day." Anyone who ever believes will be raised to the fullness of eternal life in the last days. Now that is the promise of the Word of God and John makes a major point out of that.

John supports that point in another way in the seventeenth chapter of his gospel, and we might look at that for just a moment. In His prayer on behalf of the disciples, John 17 verse 11, and Christ here is praying for His own, in 17:11 He says, "And now I am no more in the world," He's anticipating His exodus, having accomplished His work, "but these are in the world," that is the disciples, those who are His children, "and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me that they may be one as we are." Now there is the Son praying to the Father that the Father will keep His own. Verse 15, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one."

Now since we know that our Savior always prays in perfect harmony with the will of the Father, we can be assured that this is indeed His will. And so you have the will of the Father to keep His own, and the affirmation of that will in the intercessory high priestly work of Jesus Christ.

Back again to perhaps the most familiar passage in John's gospel, chapter 10, and John makes a major point, of course, out of everlasting life all throughout the gospel. But there's a very familiar text

in John 10:25 where He says, “I do My Father’s works,” and then He begins to talk about His sheep who understand that while the others do not. And verse 27, “My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me.” In other words, there’s perfect commitment of true sheep to the true shepherd. “And I give unto them eternal life.” Now that’s the positive side again. And just because this is such a common misunderstanding that the table is turned again and the negative is offered again, “Neither shall any man pluck them,” or anyone, “pluck them out of My hand, My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all and no one is able to pluck them out of My father’s hand.”

So you have the positive, we have everlasting life. And you have the negative, no one will ever be taken out of that everlasting life relationship.

Now look, for a moment, at Romans because I think this again builds on the same concept. Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no judgment, there is no judgment, no final judgment, no ultimate condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” No judgment to them in Christ Jesus. Now at the end of that chapter, He begins to build a great crescendo affirming what He said in verse 1. Verse 28, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” When God calls according to redemptive purpose, everything works to that end. “For whom He did foreknow,” which means to predetermine to love, the word “know” meaning to set a love relationship in motion, it says, “Cain knew his wife and she bore a child.” It means more than he knew who she was. It says, “I know My sheep,” it means more than He knew who they were, there’s an intimate love relationship. It says, “Mary was pregnant but Joseph had not known her.” Amos 3:2, “Israel only have I know.” It implies intimacy. And so whom He did predetermined a love relationship with, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.

In other words, when God chose people to salvation, He will bring them to full conformity to Christ’s likeness. Nobody falls in the cracks. Nobody is lost. They will all be brought to that. “For whom He did predestinate, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Do you see any loss there? Whoever is called, whoever is predestined, whoever is redeemed, whoever is justified, whoever is sanctified, whoever is sanctified is glorified. No loss.

“Now what shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” In other words, you say, “Well maybe this is God’s plan, but the devil will get in there and mess it up.” Is the devil more powerful than God? “If God is for us, who can stand against us?” Who can stand against God? “He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall we not with Him also freely give us all things?”

In other words, the point being, that if God gave His Son to redeem us at that immense price, and could affect our redemption, with that kind of sacrifice, will He stop short of any other sacrifice to keep us? No. And this is the meaning of Romans 5. If we have been saved by His death, much more we

shall be being saved by His life. In other words, if we can be saved eternally from sin by Christ's dying, how much more can we be kept by Him living? Right? If His death is efficacious enough to redeem us, how much more shall His life keep us redeemed? Romans 5:8 to 10.

And so, verse 35, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And what's the answer to that? Nothing…nothing…tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, nothing. Verse 38, "Death, life, angels, principalities, powers," those are ranks of demons and angels, "things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other creation shall be able to separate us form the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now this is the affirmation that our salvation is secure. It is secure. When Jesus was confronted with the woman in John 4 and verse 13, He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give…but rather, whosoever shall drinketh the water in this well shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall…what?...never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You drink once and the well keeps springing and springing and springing and springing and springing everlastingly.

Now we are saved and secure by the affirmation of Scripture. We are secured, on the one hand, by the divine and eternal sovereign purpose of God. We are secured on the other hand by the continually faithful intercession of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you understand those two things? And they are in perfect harmony…perfect harmony. And that is why it says in Jude verse 24, in a marvelous benediction, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from…what?...falling and to present you…what?...faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Isn't that a great benediction. He is able, and we know from the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is also willing…He is willing.

Look at 1 Peter 1, I'll just add another dimension to this. The sovereign decree of the Father indicates our security. The High Priestly work of Jesus Christ, thirdly we could add the affirmation of Scripture. It says in verse 3 of 1 Peter 1 that we have been begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and we have been given an inheritance. And what kind of an inheritance is it? Do you see the word 1 Peter 3:4? "An inheritance…what?...incorruptible." Now when does an incorruptible inheritance corrupt? It doesn't, does it? Incorruptible. "And undefiled that fadeth not away." Now what is he trying to say by this? He's trying to say that when you get this inheritance, it's permanence, right? And then verse 4, "Who are kept by the power of God through our saving faith and we will someday be revealed in the last time."

So, whom He saves, He glorifies. That is the promise, the affirmation of Scripture. And I'm just giving you selected samples and there are many, many, many more. You read the twenty-third Psalm, one of the great statements in all of Scripture on the security of the saints. "Yea though I walk through the…what?...valley of the shadow of death, I will…what?...fear no evil for Thou art with me." And

some day ultimately the banquet in the Kingdom shall be ours. So there's no question about that.

Now let me just illustrate, if I may, from Luke 22 and John 18 so that you can see a very graphic way in which this security functions. Luke 22:31. I think we're all very much aware of the fact that Peter was an essential leader in the early church. Jesus made a tremendous investment in his life. And because of his important position in leadership, he is basically the key to the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts, and even after that has a very important place. And the Lord really wanted Him to be the leader among the Twelve. So he was under attack by Satan and there's a very interesting insight here in Luke 22:31, the Lord said, "Simon, Simon," and He called him that a few times when he was acting like his old self. He used to be Simon, he became Peter, but when he acted like Simon, He called him Simon. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat." He really wanted to put him to the test. And then this in verse 32, very important, "But I have…what?...prayed for you that your faith fail not and when you're turned around and get your act together, strengthen the rest of the brethren." "And Peter feeling his oats said, 'I'm ready to go with You both to prison and death.' And the Lord said, 'No, you'll deny Me before the cock crows.'"

Now the great truth here is that Satan may attack us, but who is interceding on our behalf? Christ. Great confidence. We are secure in the eternal plan of the Father and His sovereign purpose. We are secure in the intercessory work of Christ. So we're secure in Him.

You say, "What about when we sin? What about when we sin?"

First John 2, "If any man sin, we have an…what?...advocate…what's that?...a lawyer for the defense, an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is our advocate. He is our intercessor. And it says in the next verse, "And He is the satisfaction for our sin, right? "If any man sin, we have an advocate and He's already…He goes to the Father and you know what He says, 'Father, You can't hold that sin against that child because I have paid in full the penalty for that sin,'" Right?

So I ask you again. Is our salvation secure? Yes. And that's just an introduction to it. Let's ask the second question. If our salvation is secure, can we experience that security? Can we know that we are secure? What's the answer to that?

I think it's yes. It's yes. You say, "Well how do we know that our salvation is secure?" Well somebody might say well I remember the day I signed a card. I remember the day I walked the aisle. I remember the day I raised my hand. I remember the day I got baptized.

That doesn't do it. Going back to some point in time, I remember a man saying to me, "I'll never forget the day I was saved, just to mark that day I took a stick and drove it into the ground. And whenever I doubt my salvation, I remember the day I drove that stick into the ground." That didn't mean any more than sticking a fence post in the ground. You weren't saved by driving a stick in the ground. And just

having some kind of point in time, you know, people used to say, whenever you get saved, be sure you write the date in your Bible so you'll never forget that you're a Christian. That isn't how you affirm in your own mind the security that is, in fact, true if you're a saved individual.

Now it doesn't come by church attendance. You say, "Well, I go to church, I must be a Christian. I go to church and I listen to that MacArthur and nobody would go there and listen to that if they weren't a Christian. It's hard enough if you are a Christian." But how do you know? I mean, how can you really enjoy security? And I'll tell you very honestly, there are a lot of people who do not really enjoy the security of their salvation. You see, security…we ought to use a different word…security is the fact that we're secure, assurance is the feeling that we know that. And assurance, may I add this, and you can put this in your notes somewhere, assurance is a blessing, just like any other blessing that is forfeited in disobedience. So whenever you see someone who's not sure whether they're saved, you have several possibilities. One, they're not saved. Two, they're not blessed with assurance because they're walking in disobedience and that blessing is forfeited just like all the rest. Thirdly, they're being buffeted by Satan who is the liar of all liars and is seeking to cause them to doubt what in fact is true.

So if you doubt your salvation, it is because you aren't saved, it is because you are not walking in the place of obedience and knowing the blessing of assurance, or it is because Satan is hammering away at you and you need to affirm against that, that no one, Romans 8, can lay any charge to God's elect, it's God that justifies.

Now, I believe there are two basic ways the New Testament teaches that we can experience security or assurance. Number one, is what we'll call pure doctrine…pure doctrine. I believe that one of internal evidences, one of the things that gives us a sense of belonging, a sense of really knowing we're saved is when our doctrine is right. In 2 John verse 9, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, as both the Father and the Son."

True assurance comes only to those who abide in the true biblical doctrine of Christ. If you've got a wrong view of Jesus Christ, believe me, you're not going to have security in salvation. And I'll tell you, the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses and the isms, and chisms and spasms, and yogis, and cults, and occults and all the rest of them that identify themselves in any way, shape, or form with Jesus Christ and do not affirm the Christ of the Bible will never ever experience as long as they live genuine sense of assurance. That's why they work so frenetically, and frantically to earn the salvation that is so elusive to them in their own minds. And they have to be affirmed again and again that by doing certain works, they're secure, when they never experience that comes only to those who have pure doctrine to start with, relative to Jesus Christ.

In Colossians 1 verse 22, there's a similar word. "In the body of His flesh," it talks about Christ redeeming us and presenting us holy and unblamable and unreprovable in His sight, the day we are

going to face God and be presented to Him in glory, this will be true if we continue in the faith, grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Internal assurance comes when there is no deviation in our doctrine, when we affirm the Christ of the gospel and the gospel of the Christ.

Now there's a corollary to that and what I want to spend the rest of our time talking about, and I think this is the real issue here. I've covered one page, I've got six more, but we'll go fast.

You will feel secure, one, when your doctrine is right and most people can say, you know, certainly if they're in this ministry or related ministries, that our doctrine is solid on Christ and the gospel. But the second one is not pure doctrine, but pure living. And here's the real crux of this whole issue…pure living is the key to experiencing assurance in your salvation.

I mean, if you look at your life and you see nothing but garbage and corruption, like this guy who wrote me this letter, is it any wonder you don't have any sense of security? Because you're going to know what is a truism, as our Lord put it in Matthew chapter 7 when He said, "Can a corrupt tree bring forth…what?...good fruit?" And on the other hand, "Can a good true bring forth…what?...corrupt fruit?" And if you look at your life and you see corrupt fruit, you tend to think you might be a corrupt tree. So, you've got to be able to look at your life and if you ever are to know assurance, you must see a pattern of holy living in your life. You don't see that. There's no way that you can conclude that you're saved logically.

Secondly, the Spirit of God will remove that confidence and you'll become unblessed with that assurance. In Titus, I want to show you one statement in chapter 2, really a couple of verses there but makes one major statement. Verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Now here you have a saving point made, salvation comes, appears to men, redeems them. And what is it that salvation teaches? That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and Godly in this present age, looking for that blessed hope even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us in order that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works."

In other words, if salvation teaches you anything, it teaches you to deny ungodliness. Therefore if you're not denying ungodliness in your life, you're going to have a hard time believing that you're really saved. James says, "You say you have faith? Then show me your…what?...your works, for faith without works is…what?...it's dead."

Now, I want you to turn to a text and we're going to work our way through this text, most important text on the subject, 2 Peter chapter 1. And we're going to go very fast…so hang on.

Second Peter chapter 1, and I think it will all come into focus. And then I'm going to give you a test at the end, a little checkpoint test to help you to be able to evaluate assurance. Second Peter chapter 1, notice verse 12, "Wherefore," which means that everything up to this point is summed up in this statement, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth."

What things? The things he just said in the first eleven verses. I want you to know these things. I want you to remember these things. You already know them, but I want you to be established in them. And then he goes on in verse 13 to 14 to say, "I have to die pretty soon, so I've got to make sure you know these things before I die." Verse 15, "So that when I'm dead you'll still remember them."

What is it? What are these things? Verses 1 to 11, "These are the things that you must remember." And they all have to do with your salvation. Now let me give you several points. Number one, the reality of your salvation. Remember the reality of your salvation, verse 1. "Simon Peter, a servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness in God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

Now there is the reality of salvation. He says we have obtained, and that's the word to obtain by allotment, it is a gift to us, we have been given this. It's not as if we purchased it, it's allotted to us. We have obtained like precious faith and that has to do with saving faith, not the body of truth, but the saving faith, the active believing. And it is like precious, that is it is precious, it is highly valuable, and it is like all the other saving faith. Everybody comes on the same terms, equal in value, equal in honor with others. We have equal saving faith in a Savior who is equally saving all of us, so there is equal saving faith, there is equal standing. There is no distinction. So we've all been saved with the same kind of saving faith by the same Savior, entering into the same righteousness, giving us the same standing with the same eternal promise. It is a like precious faith. That is it's like everybody else's precious faith.

So we all then are on the same basis. Now it is due, according to the end of verse 1. It is due to the righteousness in God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. God has granted to us His righteousness. God has granted to us His holiness, the essence of His nature. And it came to us, verse 2, through the knowledge, *epignosis*, deep profound knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

So when a person comes to the knowledge, *epignosis*, not superficial knowledge, not just something on the outside, but the deep knowledge of God through Jesus Christ, he then receives the righteousness of God and Christ, thus he has entered into a like-precious faith as one who is identified with Jesus Christ. So all salvation is based on equal saving faith, equal standing with God and equal righteousness granted in Christ. Now that means we all stand on the same foundation. So

whatever problem we're going to have with assurance, is not because we have different levels of salvation. In other words, what we're saying is some salvations are not more or less secure than others, okay?

Let's look at the second point, the riches of our salvation. We saw the reality of our salvation, the riches in verse 3. And here is just absolutely monumental terminology. "According as His divine power hath given unto us." Now here's what is bestowed, take the "given unto us" can go right back to the obtained, right back to the *lanchano*, the allotment there. He's given unto us all things that relate to life and godliness.

Now divine power, that means eternal resources are dispensed with infinite energy. And we have received by divine power all things that pertain to life and godliness. Now again, our like precious faith has granted to us all the same substance, all the same resources, all the same blessings. We have been all blessed, Ephesians 1:3, with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Nobody has cheated. There are no gradations of salvation. We've all received all things. Colossians tells us in chapter 2 verse 10, "In Him is all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily and you are complete in Him." See. Nobody's got anything missing.

"Now it came to us," it says in verse 3, "through the knowledge of Him that's called us to glory and virtue." Would you notice this? He called us to glory, that's the essence of the life of God and the soul of man, and to virtue, that's the manifestation of the life of God and the soul of man. So He called us to an essential change which is a manifest change as well. We have everything we need and we have been called to manifest the life of God from within us.

Now he goes a step further into verse 4 and says, "We have been given exceedingly, great and precious, literally priceless, promises and by these we have become partakers of the divine nature." That phrase never ceases to stagger my mind when I think that I am a partaker in the very nature of God. Mind boggling. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ…what?...liveth in me." Paul says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And so, given unto us great and precious promises, we become partakers of the divine nature, we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Now we have like precious faith. We believed profoundly in Jesus Christ. We received His righteousness. Grace and peace were multiplied unto us. We have been given to partake in the very nature of God, escaping the corruption in the world through the knowledge of Him, we are called to glory that is the indwelling presence of the glorious God, and to virtue, the manifestation of that indwelling presence. So we all are in the same situation, our salvation is like precious salvation. And so we see the reality and the riches.

Now let's go to the responsibility. And here's where we really get into the issue. The responsibility of salvation in verse 5. "Beside this," I just like that phrase, Beside this. Your first reaction to that is how in the world could there be anything besides this? But there is something that goes alongside. "Giving all diligence." Give it everything you've got. This is where we get involved. This is where the quietists, that's historic terminology for the "let go and let God" people who said, just sit back and let the Holy Spirit go, sort of have a little trouble. "Give diligence, add to your saving faith." Now obviously he's not saying do it apart from the Holy Spirit. It's not saying do it on your own. But in the energy of the Spirit, there must be my will involved, so I'm adding to my faith, my saving faith, the faith involved in the transaction to find in the first four verses. I'm adding to my faith, now watch this, virtue, that's the word *arête* and it means the excellence of a thing. In secular Greek it's more commonly used, like the excellence of a knife is its cutting edge, the excellence of a horse is his strength, and add to your faith excellence. And what is the excellence of a man? The excellence of a man is to come to the fullness of the stature of…whom?...of Christ. And so we are then to come to excellence. And to our excellence we are to add knowledge, practical wisdom, *gnosis*. And to our knowledge we are to add self-control. You know what self-control is? I'll give you a very simple definition. Breaking your will to sin. Is that pretty clear? Self-control is breaking your will to sin. And you need to discipline yourself to do that.

And then to your self-control add patience, *hupomone*, persevering in what is right no matter what the cost. You're going to do what's right no matter what it cost you. You're going to do what's right no matter what kind of pressure is on you. You're going to do what's right no matter what kind of temptation hits you. You're going to do what's right no matter what the boss says to do. Persevering in what is right.

Add to that godliness, *eusebeia* means reference, practical awe of God. And add to your godliness, this is the word *Philadelphia*, brotherly love, friendship. And to brotherly friendship, or love, add love. And that is to be defined as unselfish service.

Now that's a very interesting statement. Here he describes a most amazing description of salvation. I mean, it's mind-boggling. To me it's the most descriptive passage of salvation anywhere in the Bible, to say we've become partakers of the divine nature, we've escaped the corruption that's in the world through lust. We have all things that pertain to life and godliness. We have been given divine and precious promises, great and exceedingly precious promises. All of this is ours. The righteousness of Christ is ours. Grace and peace is ours. I mean, it's monumental, but even adding to this, all of these things, and you say,

"Well to what end? Or to what purpose?" And that takes us to the result of our salvation, verse 8. Here's the key. "For if these things be in you." What things? Virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, and we could categorize those as well, but if they're in you and they abound in you, literally they grow and are increasing. And how many times have you heard

me say that virtue and holiness is not the perfection of your life, but if you're saved, it is the…what?...the direction of your life. For we are not going to attain perfection until we see Christ. But if these things are growing and increasing in you, they make you neither to be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I can't think of anything worse for a Christian than to be barren and unfruitful. But isn't it quite interesting to say that you could have the divine nature, the exceeding precious promises of God, you could escape the corruption of the world, you can know God through Jesus Christ, have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, all things pertaining to life and godliness, and be experiencing in your life a time of barrenness and a time of unfruitfulness. Why? Because you did not add to the substance of your salvation those things in the power of the Spirit.

Now what does it mean to be barren? It's a word that simply means to be useless or unproductive. It's used, I think it's Titus 1:12 where it talks about idol bellies. It's used there. It's the word…it's the same word where it says faith without works, in James 2, is…it's argae(??), this is *argos,* it's another form of the same word. It means unproductive, useless, indolent, inoperative, inactive. And what interests me about this word, very interesting to me, is that this very word is used to refer to unbelievers and their barrenness and their lack of fruitfulness. Consequently it is possible that you are, mark this one, indistinguishable, do you get the point?, from an unbeliever because that very term can describe an unbeliever. It is used in the New Testament several times for believers, several times for unbelievers.

The point being, that if there's the absence of these things in your life, added to the saving faith, there is a barrenness that makes you indistinguishable. Then he uses the word unfruitful. You will be unfruitful. And it's really a synonym, it means useless, fruitless, usually refers…seven times, the other one is eight times in the New Testament, this one is seven times and this usually refers to trees. It is, by the way, used, this word, is *akarpos* is used in Jude 12 of the unregenerate apostates who are without fruit. It is used in Ephesians 5:11 of the unfruitful works of darkness. It is used in Matthew 13:22 of the shallow soil that was unfruitful. And it is even used in Titus 3:14 of a Christian who is fruitless.

So again, unfruitful Christians are indistinguishable. They appear just like unbelievers, unproductive, inoperative, useless. Now the point of this verse, verse 8 is clear. When these things are not in your life on an increasing way, you become indistinguishable from an apostate, an evil doer, a false believer. Therefore you'll have no sense of assurance because you won't be able to distinguish yourself either.

We've seen the reality of our salvation, the riches, responsibility, and there's the results. If you don't have these things, the result is, you're not going to be able to distinguish yourself. Now look at…we'll call this the rest of our salvation, and this is where you kind of turn the page. Look at verse 9, "But he that lacketh these things is…what?...blind." "If you lack these things, you are blind and you cannot

see very far." You cannot see afar off.

What does he mean by that? What does he mean "afar" off? What are you saying, you can't see afar off?

Very interesting Greek word. We get the word myopic from this word, it means to be near-sighted. You're near-sighted. All you can see is what is right in front of you. In other words, you've lost your ability to see into the distance. You've lost your, if I can make the spiritual point, eternal vision. You've lost your eternal perspective. You no longer see eternity. All you see is what is immediately in front of you. Spiritual myopia focuses on the earth, focuses on passing things. You know, the reason you have that problem is your eye's focus in here, see, and by the time it gets out there, it's so far away you can't focus. And so spiritually speaking, if you can't see these things in your life, you have lost your eternal perspective. Your sense of eternity is gone. If you don't have fruitfulness in your life, you no longer can see the eternal perspective and your trapped in this immediate environment. And you will, it says in verse 9, have forgotten that you were purged from your old sins.

Now what was the purging from your old sins? A cleansing, the Greek word *kartharsis*, from the sin of the past time, the Greek says. You will have forgotten that you were cleansed in the past time from your sins. Literally, you will have forgotten that you are…what?...you're saved. See, so assurance is directly tied to the producing in your life by the Spirit of God of an increasing measure of these spiritual graces. And by the way, this blindness that is true of us is the same term in 2 Corinthians 4 where it says the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not. So you become just as blind as an unbeliever and again you no more can tell your salvation than an unbeliever could.

Now verse 10, "Wherefore, the rather, brethren." You don't want to live like that, do you? You want to live without the assurance of salvation? Of course not. "So rather than that, brethren, give diligence." Here we are, right back where we were in verse 5. "Give your diligence, be in a hurry," that's an imperative, "to make your calling and election sure." To whom? God? Do you think He knows? I think He knows. To whom? You…how are you going to make your calling and election sure? By giving diligence. "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Fall from what? What's the subject here? Assurance, confidence, sense of security.

And then the Greek text if verse 11 really makes the sense, and the Authorized Version sort of doesn't hit it, the Greek text says, "For so richly will be supplied to you entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." And what he's saying is that if you add these things to your life, you will make your calling and election sure. You will not fall from your confidence. And when you meet Jesus Christ, you will receive richly all that was promised and planned for you, a full reward. Don't forfeit the riches. Don't forfeit the fullness. Don't lose your eternal vision.

Now do you see what he's saying? This matter of assurance is directly related to your behavior. Now I want to show you another passage and then I'm going to give you a little test.

Jude verse 20, Jude verse 20, "But ye, beloved," this is as over against apostates, mockers, who walk after ungodly lusts and so forth, but you, beloved, be building up yourselves on your most holy faith." In other words, get after your Christian development. "And be praying in the Spirit." That doesn't mean you flip out, that means you pray consistent with the will of the Holy Spirit. So be building up yourselves and, of course, we know we're built up by the Word of God, Ephesians 4 tells us that. So we build up ourselves in the Word, we're building ourselves up in prayer. Verse 21, most interesting, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Oh my what a statement!

Now some people again will say, "That's a statement of insecurity. What do I have to do to keep myself in the love of God?"

Let me see if I can describe what this means. Let's assume you have a circle, you have a circle here on the ground and in that circle it just rains divine blessing all the time. If you're in that circle, you just get it. As soon as you step out of that circle, it's dry and barren. Now it's up to you to stay in the circle, right? And that's exactly what it's saying. God's blessings never cease to be poured out, they just happened to be landing in their circle of obedience. That's what that circle is, it's a big O and it stands for obedience. And as long as you abide in the circle of obedience, the rain falls on you. And when he says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," he simply means keep yourself in the place to experience the fullness of all the gifts that God's love intends to give to His own. You've got to build yourself up. Pray in the Spirit. Stay in the circle of obedience. And you never have a doubt, a lingering doubt, other than Satan's temptations which will be quickly dispelled by the assurance that comes to you by what you see when you look at your life.

Now, very quickly. Turn to 1 John and this, you couldn't talk about this subject without going to 1 John…great back on assurance. Twelve tests of assurance, eleven of them are in 1 John and I just threw the other one in because I thought it was good, it comes out of Philippians. But that's okay, too. I try like mad to find it in John, couldn't find it. Twelve tests of assurance.

Number one, and I'll put them in a form of a question, okay? Number one, have you enjoyed fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? Have you enjoyed fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? Have you? If you have, you know what? That's a sign you're a Christian, 1 John chapter 1 verse 3, "That which we have seen and heard, and declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." In other words, we have fellowship with God the Father, God the Son and everybody else who has fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. When you were saved you entered into a fellowship and if you have enjoyed fellowship with Jesus Christ and His redeemed people, if you have sat among His people in prayer and praise and testimony, if you have sensed the ministry of the Spirit of

God coming out of you to them, and out of them to you, if you've known that mutual sensitivity to the living Christ in the community of His redeemed people, that is an indication that you belong to Him.

Second question, are you very sensitive to your sin? Are you very sensitive to your sin? First John chapter 1, verse 8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is…what?...not in us." Somebody goes around and saying, "I don't sin," is he a Christian? I heard about a man who wrote a book, redefined sin, he said, "Sin is just having a low self-esteem and we have every right to be proud." Is that being sensitive to sin? And there are some people who come to church but they don't seem to ever mind that they sin all the time. And if that's true, if they deny their sin either in the way they act, or in the way they articulate, they deceive their selves. But if we are the ones confessing our sins, then we give evidence of the fact that we're the ones being cleansed from all unrighteousness. You see? "If you say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." So if you've ever been overwhelmed with your sin, and if there's a continual sensitivity to sin, a sense of holy awe in the presence of God that makes you despise your sin, that's an indicator that you're a Christian.

Third question, does something deep within you tend to hate the world and its evil? Verse 15 of chapter 2, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If you love the system and you love all that it stands for, the indication is you're not a Christian. If on the other hand, even though you may fall into its trap now and then, if the bottom line in your heart is a hatred of the evil world system, that's an indicator that you're a Christian.

Fourth, and we'll back up one. Are you obedient to God's Word? Are you obedient to God's Word? Is the direction of your life to obey the Word of God? Is that the hunger of your soul? First John 2:3, "And by this we do know that we know Him if we…what?...keep His commandments. He that says, 'I know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him, but whosoever keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected, by this we know we're in Him."

We know we're in Him when we love the fellowship. We know we're in Him when we hate our sin. We know we're in Him and we hate the world. We know we're in Him when we love the Word.

A fifth question. Do you love Jesus Christ with an unusual love? And do you eagerly await His coming? First John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the children of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope set on Christ, purifies himself even as He is pure." If you love Christ and you eagerly await His coming, that's indicating you're a Christian.

Sixth question, very important question. Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? Being a Christian and sanctified and the progress of sanctification, it's not the absence of sin, it is the

decreasing of sin. Do you see that in your life? First John 3:5, “And ye know that He was manifest to take away our sins and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abides in Him does not continue to sin, whosoever continues to sin has not seen Him, neither known Him.” There will be in the life of a true Christian a decreasing frequency of sin. And you know, as kind of a converse to this, you may not think it’s decreasing because you become more sensitive to it. But if you look carefully…I look back on my life and I can see that through the years there’s a consistent decreasing of sin, and that is not to say that I sin seldom, it’s to say that I used to sin an awful lot more than I do now.

Question number seven. Do you sacrificially love other Christians? First John 3:14, “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we…what?...love the brethren. He that loves not his brother, abides in death.” Very simple question…do you love other Christians sacrificially? And he gets into that in verse 16, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. And if you say you love and you don’t give him his need and you shut up your compassion, how dwells the love of God in you? Verse 17.

Number eight. Do you experience answered prayer? Do you see God at work in your life in answering prayer, chapter 3 verse 22, “Whatever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” In other words, who receives from God? The one who keeps His commandments who does what’s pleasing in His sight, therefore we could say that if you’re receiving from God and you’re seeing answers to your prayer, that’s a mark of the fact that God sees you as an obedient child, a pleasing child.

Number nine. Do you experience the inner working of the Holy Spirit? His witness in your heart, His power in your life, His conviction, His energizing your spiritual gifts? Do you experience the inner witness of the Spirit? Verse 24, chapter 3, “By this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” Chapter 4 verse 13, “By this know we that we dwell in Him and He in us because He hath given us of His Spirit.” And Romans 8 says that, “The Spirit is in us crying…what?...*Abba Father,* also Galatians.”

Have you sensed His leading? If you can look back in your life and say, “I know, I have sensed the Holy Spirit’s leading.” You may be going through doubts now, but if you can reach back and see the Spirit’s leading in the past, that’s an affirmation that you belong to God.

Number ten. Do you discern between spiritual truth and error? Do you discern between spiritual truth and error? You see, that’s a work of the Spirit. But look at chapter 4, “Try the spirits whether they’re of God and many false prophets have gone out into the world, by this know ye the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God, every spirit confess not Jesus is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist of which you heard should come and even now is already in the world. You’re from God, little children, you’ve overcome them because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. They are in the world, therefore speak they of the world and the world

hates them. We are of God. He that knows God hears us. He that is not of God hears not us. By this know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." A true Christian doesn't fall prey to false teaching about Jesus Christ, the doctrine of salvation and the basics of the faith. Do you recognize truth and error?

Number eleven. Do you believe what the Bible teaches? Do you believe the Scripture? The doctrine of the Scripture? Chapter 5 verse 1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Why should you believe that? Why should you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Because…what?...the Bible says that. Do you believe the Word of God? Do you believe the doctrines of Scripture?

And by the way, all of these little tests I've given you sort of wind their way through this book in a spiral fashion, repeated, and repeated, and repeated. Now let me give you the last one. This is kind of practical. Have you ever been attacked for your faith? That's a sure fire indication of a true Christian. It's amazing to me that the devil doesn't attack the tares, he just attacks the wheat. Have you ever been attacked? This is where I've got to go to Philippians 1, verse 28. This is good.

"And in nothing be terrified by your adversaries which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation." Isn't that good?

When you get blasted by the enemy, to them it's an indication of their judgment, but to you it's an indication of your salvation, that's why they're attacking you. That's the test. That's the test.

Well, may I add this as a footnote? You can pass the test, you can go down the list and say, "Oh yeah, I've had fellowship with Christians, I'm sensitive about sin, I've seen obedience in my life, and I've rejected the world, and I remember when I loved Christ and waited for His coming, and I've had a decreasing frequency of sin in my life, and I love other Christians, and I've experienced answered prayer, and I've known the witness of the Spirit, and I've discerned between truth and error, and I've received the doctrine of the Scripture and I've been attacked for my faith…and if you can get through all of that test, and it's all in the past tense, and you can remember when it was that way, and it isn't anymore that way, even though you've passed the test, you still will not experience assurance because that is a blessing that belongs to people who are in the circle of obedience.

And I'll close with 1 John 3:19 to 21. "And by this we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him, for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart. And knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemnest not, then have we confidence toward God." Did you hear what that said? If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart. You know something? There will be times when your heart will condemn you, you won't know that assurance but that doesn't mean you're not saved, because God is greater than your condemnation, right? But how much better that your heart should not condemn you so that you can have confidence?

Well, that will get your thinking, I hope. Let’s have a word of prayer.

Our Father, we do thank You that the grace of assurance is given to those who are obedient. We pray, Lord, that we might walk in that circle of obedience where we will know beyond shadow of a doubt that we belong to You. You belong to us. As the hymn writer said, “I am His and He is mine.” Thank You for that confidence available to us in a secure salvation, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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