

ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION

(Sermon Summary)

Sunday Evening, 11th September 2022

Preacher: Nick Davis (Jacksdale)

Reading: Romans 8:1-17. (vv12-17)

The doctrine of assurance is something to come back to again and again.

We are prone to go back to a form of religion where we add works to faith. We have to be reminded about the gospel. We can get discouraged because we are not making progress and revert to works. We risk getting introspective and questioning whether we are really Christians. Luther preached justification by faith every week because people forget it, he said.

We also have an enemy. Satan is a very powerful enemy who goes round like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We are prime targets for the enemy. We are saved by grace and we need to be strong in this (Ephesians 6:10). The enemy makes us unhappy and makes us question ourselves. He is the accuser who asks us 'Are you sure you are a Christian?' He brings to mind sins, both pre-conversion, and post-conversion. He makes us miserable and we become useless for the cause because we do not evangelise, we do not pray and we do not read the Bible. He takes away our joy and makes us weak.

This passage in Romans is very pastoral. It deals with real issues in the body of Christ. It looks at issues and questions we have. 'Are you assured you are a son of God? Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit?' We might have been a Christian many years yet still lack assurance.

How can we know we are children of God? We certainly should avoid false assurance. There are people who are assured who should not be. Simon the Sorcerer had some knowledge but he was a fake.

We will look at three evidences of sonship as they are found in this passage.

1. Led by the Spirit.

Vv12-14. In fact if we do not have the Spirit, we are not Christ's (v9). How do we know that we are led by the Spirit of Christ? Do we have dreams or special revelations? Are we guided in some special way when we make decisions? It is not these things. The opposite is to live by the flesh and this leads to death, namely hell (v13). Such people are not Christians. But if we are led by the Spirit, in other words if we are Christians, then we will battle against sin. To battle against sin is a sign that we are Christians. The Christian hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We will fail but this is not a sign that we are not a Christian. The difference is found in the following illustration. If you throw a pig into the mud it loves it and wants to stay in it. If you throw a lamb into the mud, it will hate it and want to get out. The non-Christian wants to stay with his sins. The Christian wants to get rid of them.

2. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit.

Vv15-16. This is a wonderful evidence that is so often ignored by Christians. Before we are converted, we are in bondage to the fear of death. Now we no longer have that bondage. We cry out 'Abba! Father!' God is not a distant entity but someone we know personally. Note it says 'cry', not 'say'. It is a deeper and more strongly meant expression that sums up our relationship with God. You can see it when we are in trouble. The true Christian turns to God and cries out 'Abba! Father!' As we cry, we might be saying 'Help me! Forgive me!' It is really felt and meant. We are in a relationship with God and this is how we express it.

In this, it is the Holy Spirit crying out inside us. This is referred to again in Galatians 4:6. When we say 'Jesus is Lord' we say it with affection and meaning. The unregenerate have no such affection when they pray. That we as Christians do have this affectionate relationship with the Lord, should take our breath away.

3. Provided we suffer with Him.

V17. The doctrine of suffering is mostly lost from the contemporary church. They just tell people that they are going to be happy, health and prosperous. People find their problems are not solved by becoming Christians and they fall away.

Christians can also be too comfortable. But it is granted to us to suffer (Philippians 1:29). We are not just to expect suffering but to look at it as a gift of God. James 1:2, 12 tells us of suffering. This includes trials, accusations, and being reviled. We should rejoice because great is our reward in heaven. We are assailed by the fiery darts of the evil one. Doubts and blasphemous thoughts can trouble us. This is all part of our suffering for Him. We all will suffer persecution, illness and grief. We are to be willing to go through it

for the Lord. We are not to grumble that 'I deserve better than this'. Like Job we should say 'Though He slay me, yet shall I trust in Him.'

When suffering comes, we go to our Father and cry out to Him. We grow best when we are brought to our knees. Suffering makes us more reliant on Him. We feel our burden of sin and cry out 'Have mercy on me.' We show we are sons because we go to Him.