

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

138. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 7

WAOY Tuesday 01/22/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to look at what the Apostle John taught about, "The Assurance of Salvation". So, let's read **1John 3: 19-24** again together:

19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Now we are well into our discussion of Biblical Assurance and we have already covered a lot of ground- but I want to deal with another aspect of Assurance that I pray will be of help to you about this issue.

On the last broadcast- I mentioned to you that the second view of Salvation that is so prevalent today- that teaches that lost people must choose God in order to be saved was not always so prevalent until the mid to late 1600's. And that time frame is very important for us to consider as we decide what to believe about both Salvation and Assurance. Sometimes when we learn about this history of a movement or a belief- it helps us to put it all in perspective.

During the early to late 1500's the greatest revival in the history of the world took place. This revival was not an emotional fad- but was

a *real* revival where sinful men became genuinely convicted of their sins and repented and began to put a high value on the things that matter to God. And the instrument that God used to *cause* this great revival was a renewal of love and respect and devotion and obedience to the Scriptures and it became known as the Protestant Reformation.

When God graced Martin Luther to rediscover what the Church had long ago forgotten- that genuine true Blood bought; Heaven sent Salvation is a sovereign Gift from a loving God to undeserving and unworthy sinners through Grace alone and that is appropriated to lost man – not by the keeping of Sacraments or the participation in the Mass or the receiving of indulgences from the priesthood- but through the agency of Faith alone- millions of souls were glorious saved and God was honored.

And this is the great dividing line between Catholics and Protestants today- and it is what has divided us for almost 500 years. The issue that divides us is not *personalities*- it is over how lost people are saved- which I would suggest to you is pretty important. Protestant Theology teaches that Salvation is a Sovereign work of God alone- while Catholic Theology teaches that Salvation is a *cooperative* effort between God and humans. And the result is that in Protestant Theology- both Salvation and Assurance are clear and certain- while in Catholic Theology- Salvation and Assurance are both conditional.

Now both of these positions cannot be true. Only one of those positions is correct- only one is Biblical- and the other is false and man-made. And since we are not talking about how to bake a cake here- but we are talking about how lost people are justified before God- we need to know which position is Biblical and true.

Catholic Theology about Salvation has many powerful and important people to back up what they teach. They have papal bulls, writs, and edicts. They have ex-cathedra pronouncements and encyclicals spoken by men who sit in the “throne” of St. Peter. They have church councils and great orators. They have the wealthiest and the most powerful religious system in the history of the world standing behind their position- and it is quite impressive.

Protestant Theology about Salvation has one thing and one thing only to back them up- the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of the Living God. Protestant Theology teaches that Salvation is a Sovereign work of God alone- because that is exactly what the Apostle Paul taught

in Scripture; that is exactly what John and Peter and James taught in Scripture. It is exactly what Moses and David and Isaiah taught in Scripture. And Protestant Theology says that Scripture and Scripture alone has the final Authority in the Church of Jesus Christ while Catholic Theology invests that Authority in the pope.

Now as time went on- people became dismayed that the two groups were divided and various attempts to reconcile them failed. We must understand that the reason that these attempts failed is because of what the Scriptures clearly taught. And one of those attempts was orchestrated by a man named Jacobus Arminius. Arminius began to teach a sort of “hybrid” theology that brought together the views of both the Protestants and Catholics. Arminius’ teachings became very popular and a large number of people ascribed to his new theology. They called themselves the Remonstrants which meant that they were actually “protesting” against the Protestants.

And around 1618, right after Arminius died- his followers submitted five statements concerning Salvation to the Dutch Church for their revue. And the Dutch Church convened a Council in the city of Dort to examine what the Remonstrants were teaching about Salvation. The leaders of the Church carefully reviewed each of the five statements that had been submitted by the Remonstrants of Armenian Theology and compared them to Scripture. And after careful analysis- the Council or Synod of Dort issued their response. And their response was in the form of five statements or “points”- one response for each of the five statements submitted by the followers of Arminius.

The Armenian position is that Salvation is conditional- that we are saved only to the extent that we do what we are supposed to do; and that Salvation guarantees nothing beyond the initial experience of desiring holiness. And the result is that the Remonstrants taught that people can and do lose their Salvation. The result of Armenian theology is that Assurance is very frail and fragile and totally dependent on what humans do for themselves.

But the Synod of Dort *rejected* what the Armenians proposed about Salvation and reaffirmed that what the Protestants taught about Salvation was indeed what Scripture said. Protestant Theology teaches that the Bible declares that since Salvation does not originate with Man and is a Sovereign act of God- then Salvation is permanent and thus

Assurance is also solid and permanent because it is based on what God does- and not Man.

The point here is that if Salvation is not *permanent*; if it is not *guaranteed*; if it is not *eternal*- then no one could ever have any Assurance that they are saved from one minute to the next. But the Apostle John did not teach that. John taught that Assurance was strong and vibrant and alive and continuous and permanent and something that transcended trials and failures and yes, even sin.

Now to be able to get this right- perhaps it would help if we would examine this issue of Assurance in light of a true understanding about sin. I believe that if we can see sin in light of Scripture- our understanding of Assurance and even Salvation would change.

So, because we are human beings- we sin. All men sin. Now some people want to rationalize this issue- but we must be truthful about this. If you do not keep all of God's Commandments perfectly in thought, word, and deed, 24 hours every day and 7 days every week- then you are sinning. If you break a single Commandment- even for a second- then you have sinned. If you violate not only the *letter* of the law- but if you violate the *spirit* of the law- you have sinned. For example- Jesus said that while you may not have *physically* committed adultery- but if in your heart- you have looked for the purpose of lusting- then you are *guilty* of adultery. You may not have *literally* murdered someone- but if in your heart- you have hated that person- then both Jesus and John says that you are a murderer. You may not actually steal something – but if you do not give what you know God wants you to give- then you are a thief.

So if you transgress in any way- in thought, word, or deed – you have sinned. And that is the high standard of Biblical Holiness and Righteousness that God has placed upon all mankind. And this standard is so high and so lofty and so perfect- that no one can live up to it and all men fall short of it. And God set it up this way on purpose.

Because as we have already discussed many times before- this makes Salvation to not be *difficult* for people to attain in and by their own efforts- it makes Salvation utterly *impossible* for any human to accomplish by and through his own power. And this high standard of Biblical Righteousness has the net effect of shutting the mouth of every single human being who would attempt to say that he is good enough to go to Heaven based upon his own efforts- absent a gracious and

sovereign Act of God. And this has the net effect of bringing all mankind to a place of being utterly guilty before God- because manifestly- all have sinned. So sin is the great equalizer of all mankind.

So lost people are not simply separated from God- they are also *helpless* to do anything about their lost condition by and through their own power- and to make matters even worse- because the Fall radically ruined our nature- lost people are entirely *unwilling* to do anything about their lost condition.

Now the reason that you need to understand that our lost condition is just this bleak- is because it makes Grace to be absolutely magnificent. If we were not totally ruined by the Fall- then Salvation would be just another choice that we could make. And if Salvation is just a choice- then we could “unchoose” it just as quickly as we chose it. Which is exactly what many people believe today about Salvation. This would have the effect of making Salvation as unreliable and unpredictable and undependable as everything else about us- and this would mean that we would have no Assurance at all. But again, John taught that our Assurance was solid and was *not* conditional. So what many people believe about Salvation is inconsistent with what John taught about Assurance- which is the fruit of Salvation.

So if it was true that people lost not only the *power* to be saved but also the *will* to be saved in the Fall- then that makes Salvation much *more* than simply a choice that we make- it makes Salvation to be a Sovereign Act of God. So if fallen humanity is really as bad and as helpless as the Bible says that we are- then this makes Salvation to be nothing short of a miracle- a supernatural event that is accomplished because of God’s Will- not ours.

And here is why this all matters. Because if Salvation is based upon what God does and not on what we do- if Salvation is based upon what God desires- not what we desire- if Salvation is about what God chose to do – not what we chose- then Salvation is solid and safe and secure and something that cannot be altered, changed; or diminished based upon anything that we say or do. And that would make our Assurance to be in alignment with what John taught.

So, the real question is, “How sinful are we”? And just how does our sin affect our relationship to God? We all agree that sin is bad and we all agree that we should not sin. But we also agree that even though

that is true- we all still do sin. So what are we to do about the sins that we commit after we are saved?

You see, when we were saved- our *soul* was saved- but our flesh was *not* saved. Our fleshly human bodies will *never* be fully redeemed- and that is why we are going to have a new body in Heaven. This sinful world was also not saved and the devil was not saved. So even though our soul is saved- the world; our flesh; and the devil are still in total and complete opposition to God. And it is from *these* three sources that we have all of our temptations. And one of the reasons that Heaven is going to be so great is because neither our sinful flesh nor the world nor the devil is going to be in Heaven.

But while we are still in this body- we fall short of God's glory and we miss the mark. Saved people are not trying to sin; we don't want to sin- we want to love, serve, and obey God. But we *do* sin- not because we're lost- but because we are still human.

So if it is true that we all still sin- even after we are saved- and if it is true that sin has the power to ruin or destroy our Salvation- then how do any of us stay saved? So we need to carefully look at this and Lord willing we will continue our examination of our Assurance on the next broadcast. May God help us all.

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