

So That You May Know

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

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

137. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 6

WAOY Friday/Monday 01/18-21/08

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 on the last broadcast- I was testifying to you how that I was wrong for years about what I believed and taught about Salvation and Assurance and how that by studying the Book of **Romans**- God graciously showed me that Salvation was a Sovereign Act of God and that the Assurance that believers are to have *about* their Salvation is certain, sure, and eternal.

Now many of you who know me realize that what I am saying here is far different from what I *used* to say about this issue- and that is true- it *is* different- but please allow me to show you *why* I have changed my position on this issue.

Here is the logic. If Salvation originates from Man- if that is true- then Salvation is *conditional*. And if Salvation is conditional- then our

Assurance would also be conditional. But if Salvation originates from God- and not Man- then Salvation is permanent. And if Salvation is permanent- then our Assurance is permanent also.

Now that is either true or it isn't. And the only way to prove it is to find out exactly what the Holy Bible teaches about this. And since our Assurance is linked to Salvation- the first thing that we have to get under our belt is how the Bible teaches that Salvation actually works.

Now out in the world today- there are three main views of Salvation. One is that lost people save *themselves*. And that view is not a Christian view- it is what is called "Secular Humanism". The second view- that is taught by many, many people in many, many churches is that lost people *cooperate* with God in their Salvation. And this is the view that I believed for over thirty years. But there is also a third view. And this third view says that God saves lost people- *sovereignly- or all by Himself- without any cooperation from Man*.

Now if the first view is true and lost people save *themselves*- as Humanism teaches- then Salvation is only as strong as the individual person. It is only as sure and as certain and as lasting as the person is sure and strong and lasting- because in *this* view- Salvation is totally dependent upon us.

But if this view is true- and lost people save themselves- by what they do for themselves- then we don't need God or Jesus Christ or the Cross or Grace. So most of us would throw this first view out all together as a patently unchristian view.

But let's examine the second view. This view teaches that lost people choose God. This view says that even though God is willing and able to save *everybody*- He *cannot* save *anybody* unless those people *allow* God to save them. This view teaches that lost people have to "make the decision" to be saved. That lost people have to take the first step toward God in faith. And this view says that those who take that first step of faith and choose to "give their heart" to God or accept Jesus into their hearts" are saved- while those who reject God's offer of Salvation remain in their sins- hopefully to be saved at some later date.

Now as I said before- this view is the view that almost everybody ascribes to today and is almost *universally* taught as being true. But there are some serious problems with this view that we must examine.

First of all- we must realize that until the late 1600's this second view of Salvation was *not* the prevailing view of the Christian Church.

And that is important for several reasons. First of all- that means that this second view has only been taught for about 400 years out of the 2,000 years the Church has been operating on the earth. And that means that this view is really a “Johnny-come lately” view and that for about 1,600 years- the Christian Church did *not* teach this view.

Secondly, when we take this second view of Salvation into Scripture and carefully analyze it- it won't be long before we will see that even though this view is very popular today- and even though it makes sense on some levels- it fails to meet the test of being faithful to what the Bible actually teaches.

For example- in order for this second view of Salvation to be true- lost and fallen people have to already possess both the desire and the ability to repent and believe. So, faith must be present in the lost unsaved person's heart *before* he can believe and the desire to be saved must be present in the lost person's heart so that he will seek after Salvation.

But if it is true that the lost person must have both the desire and power to believe *prior* to his Salvation- we are forced to ask some questions. From *where* did the lost person get his faith and his desire? And the reason that this question matters is because the answer to this question shows how much we understand about the Fall.

Again- in order to learn this properly- we must turn to the Authority- to Scripture- and not simply repeat what we have all been taught. The Bible says that lost people- in their lost condition- have neither the “will” nor the “power” to be saved or to love God or to serve God. Read with me a very important verse in **Philippians 2:13**:

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Now look how Paul wrote this verse. This verse says that it is God Who is at work in us- all by Himself- to do two things. The Bible says that it is God Who works in us- all by Himself- to give us both the “will” and the “power” to work for His good pleasure. Now what does that mean?

First of all- let's look at what it means when it says that “**God is at work in us**”. This is what is called an “exclusionary phrase”. And that means that the way we are to understand this is that God is at work in

us- all by Himself- *sovereignly*- without any help or cooperation from us at all.

Secondly, does this mean that God simply *desires* something- but leaves it up to us to accept it? No, the word that was translated here into English as “work” comes from the Greek word that means: *to put forth power; to effect; or to cause something*.

So for God to be sovereignly at “work” in us- is by definition God Himself putting forth His Own Power and *effecting* or *causing* something to occur or to happen *inside* of us that would *not* have happened if God had *not* been at work in us. In other words- God “working in us” as written here by the Apostle Paul is not some benign “wish” on God’s part- it is not some type of “hope” or “desire” that God has for us- but God “working in us” is in fact God *actively* utilizing His Own sovereign Power to *make* something happen in us and for us and to us that, left to ourselves, we would *never* have.

So this is God- sovereignly providing what we *do not* already have. It is God supplying what we do not normally possess. It is God giving to us those things that are *not* already found inside of us. It is God causing something to happen that would never happen if we were left to ourselves.

Well what does **Philippians 2:13** say that God is giving and providing and supplying and doing for us and causing in us and to us that we do not already have and that we do not already possess? Two things:

1. The “will” or the “desire” to do of God’s good pleasure
2. The “power” or the ability to do of God’s good pleasure.

Now we need to ask a question here. *Why* does the Bible say here that God has to sovereignly give us the “will” to do God’s good pleasure? Why don’t we simply exercise our own “free will choice”- like so many teach today? And why does God have to sovereignly give us the power to obey Him? Why don’t we simply make up our own minds by the power of our own intellect to serve God and apply our own will power? I pray that you can see that there would be absolutely no need at all for God to sovereignly give us something that we already had- would there? No, the only reason that God has to give us something or sovereignly cause something to happen in us- is because we do not already have it-

right?

So it is precisely because lost and fallen people do *not* already have any will at all towards God that God has to sovereignly give them that will. But why don't lost people have a will towards God? We lost that will in the Fall. And this is *why* God has to give unsaved people the will to love and serve Him- because- in our fallen state- no one has a will toward God or the things of God at all.

Yes, we choose all the time in things that pertain to this life. We choose what foods to eat and what clothes to wear and what city to live in. And that is because our "will" is based upon our desires and our loves and our wants. And our loves, desires, and wants are founded upon our natures. So because the nature of all lost people has been radically ruined in the Fall- our loves and desires and wants are now completely corrupt and self- centered and ungodly and sinful. And as a result of our desires being like this- our choices- are not "free"- they are not autonomous- but our choices are in bondage to our corrupt and fallen natures.

So lost people can choose all day long- absolutely. But they can *only* choose what they love and what they want. And lost people do not want God or the things of God. Lost people do not love God- they love sin and self. And so left to themselves- no lost person would ever voluntarily choose to suddenly love and serve God- without God doing something in them first to change them.

So the reason that lost and unsaved people do not *serve* and *obey* God is because lost people do not *love* God. And lost people do not love God because to love God is mutually exclusive to loving themselves- and to not love themselves- is contrary to their nature- which has been devastated by the Fall.

So even though it is true that unsaved lost people are free to choose many, many things in this life. It is also true that- left to themselves- without God sovereignly intervening to give them both the will and the power to do of God's good pleasure- lost people would never voluntarily choose God or the things of God in a million years.

You see, the Fall of Man was so great and devastated Humanity to such an extent- that it left us not only sinful and separated from God- but it also robbed us of both our desire and the power to even be saved. So unless and until God graciously gives to lost people the desire or the will to love and serve God and unless God mercifully gives them the

power or the ability to love and serve God- we are doomed. Lost people *cannot* save themselves. And we all say we agree with that. But we need to know that the Bible teaches that lost people are so lost- that they simply do not possess either the capacity or the desire to even *cooperate* with God in our own Salvation. Lost people are so lost and fallen humanity is so fallen that God must sovereignly save us- *without* our cooperation- and even in *violation* of our will- or else no one would ever be saved.

And this has the effect of making Salvation a sovereign Act of God- all by Himself. And that has the effect of giving all the glory and all the honor and all the praise for our Salvation- to God and to God alone.

You see, if lost people affect their own Salvation in any way; if lost people even cooperate with God in their own Salvation- then by rights- they would be entitled to at least *some* of the glory. But if the Fall has left us so helpless and so separated that we *cannot* affect our own Salvation and if we are so lost and so fallen that we have lost even the *desire* to be saved- then only God is entitled to be praised for saving the soul of fallen humanity.

And here is why all this matters. If Salvation is a sovereign Work of Man- as the humanists teach- then the Assurance of Salvation is totally dependent on what we do. But if the second view of Salvation is true and Salvation is the result of fallen people somehow *cooperating* with God- then again- our Assurance is- at least to some degree- still dependent upon what we do.

But if Salvation is a Sovereign Work of God alone; if Salvation originated from God- all by Himself- and was carried out by God- all by Himself- if the only reason that any of us ever came to God is because God first gave to us both the will and the desire to do so as the Bible says- then our Assurance is certain and it is sure and it is eternal because it is not dependent in any way on the frailty and unreliability of human effort or human accomplishment but is dependent solely on God and what He has done.

Now I have much more to say about this- but I'm out of time today- but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of 1John. May God help us all.

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