

# Assurance

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Verse:** 1 John 5:13  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 28, 2020

**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, it's always a truly sacred moment when we are able to open God's word and to study it together. We serve a sacred God, a holy God, one who is set apart from the world by his very uncreated essence and by the holiness which is a manifestation and central to his essence, and to think that he's given us a word by which we can know him and by which we can order our eternal destiny, so to speak, and to know him and to be confident of the fact that we belong to him is a profound blessing and I'm grateful that you all are here as we do that here this morning. We live in crazy days. It's a very strange era in which we are living unlike anything that I've seen in my lifetime, and so we look for the certainty and we look for the foundation upon which we stand and it is the Scriptures; it is God's holy Word and the Lord Jesus Christ which those Scriptures reveal.

So what we want to do and where we come in our text here this morning in 1 John 5, if you want to turn there, the uncertainty and the turmoil of our days is a wonderful opportunity for us to look for that which is real, to look for that which is enduring, to look for that which is certain, and to make certain under the influence of the Holy Spirit that we belong to this Christ because, my friends, if we belong to Christ all will be well with us in the end no matter what happens in the interim, and conversely if you do not belong to Christ nothing will be well with you in the end, no matter how things turn out on earth, no matter how try to shelter yourself from the storm, no matter how much you might try to shield yourself or hide from the consequences of living in this fallen world. So the times in which we live strip away all sense of false security and that's a benefit to us if we respond to it properly. If it gives us a humble teachable heart as we come to God's word and ask him to search us and ask him to save us, then this is a time that he will turn to great blessing for you and for those that would turn to him in this time. I'm planning later next month in July I want to preach about of Ephesians 6 about the nature of the spiritual battle that I believe that we are manifestly openly within, and so I'm looking forward to that time that is to come in just a couple of weeks, but for today for us to just look at the opportunity to be able to examine the things that point to what real salvation is like and what it is and what it manifests and how we can know if we are in Christ, and that's what I want for you here today. I'm grateful that so many of you are here visiting, visiting in the sense at least that I haven't met you face to face and so we welcome you here today, and we just trust that in the providence of God we have exactly before us what he would have us hear today from his word.

1 John 5:13 is our text for this morning, just this single verse where John says this, he says,

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

We've been teaching through this book for the past several weeks and there is a sense in which it's all been building toward this great climax. The whole point of everything that he has written, he has said, is so that his readers would know that they have eternal life. It's not the first time that the Apostle John has said something like that in his writings. In the Gospel of John which is an extended evangelistic text, go back to John 20, the Gospel of John chapter 20, and we see how this chosen apostle writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is continually pointing us to Christ and to the reality of life in Christ. He had written about the miracles of Christ highlighting seven particular miracles as illustrations of the broader power of Christ. He had spoken about Christ in the Upper Room and recorded his words for us. He recorded the crucifixion for us, the resurrection, and in John 20:28, our Lord Jesus Christ manifested himself to the doubting Apostle Thomas. He said, "Put your hands and reach here and put it into My side and do not be unbelieving but believing." And Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" That is the essence of saving faith what Thomas said there, seeing Christ resurrected and acknowledging him as your Lord and as your God, believing that he died and rose again and that the spiritual purpose of that death and resurrection was for your redemption from sin, and Thomas seeing Christ, acknowledged him with that singular great statement of faith.

Jesus said to him in verse 29 and pronounced a blessing that applies to us today, those of us that are in Christ. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." There is a particular blessing for us in the church age to have believed in Christ without seeing him and what John goes on to say in verse 30, he summarizes the reason that he said everything in the prior 20 chapters. He says in verse 30, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." So for everyone in this room, everyone watching on the video link or however else you hear this message in the future, the whole purpose of this critical Gospel of John was so that you would believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by believing you would find eternal life in his name, forgiveness from sin, rescue from Satan, rescue from the world, and to be secure in Christ.

So my friend, as we've gathered here today, so many of you that I don't know and haven't met, all I can do is ask you have you believed in Christ for your salvation like that because that is the purpose of Scripture, the Bible in a sense is a book about Jesus Christ and it is a book to proclaim him and to make him known to people just like you, to convince you of your sin against God and to invite you to come to Christ for salvation, for forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. What a wonderful wonderful book this is for there is no other book that reveals Christ to us like that. There is no other book that stands

between you and eternity like the Bible, like the 66 books of the Bible. And so I invite you to Christ as we gather together here at the start of this message, and I invite you to continue to hear what Scripture says is the marks of the one who has truly believed. John said he wrote his Gospel so that you would believe, now in 1 John he tells us he's written so that you would know that you have believed, that you would know that you have eternal life, and that is the purpose of his letter.

He is ending on this note of assurance and I think I've compared it in the past, you know, we said that John was approaching the age of 90 when he wrote this letter, he had very little time left to live, it's his parting words to the people that looked to him as apostle, as a pastor, as one to give them spiritual guidance, and you see what's uppermost on his mind. It's not the political turmoil that would have existed in the Roman empire at that time. It wasn't their socioeconomic status. It wasn't the oppression that lived in days when slavery was still allowed. He wasn't concerned about any of those things and it's wrong for us as a church and it is wrong for the confessing Christian church to become preoccupied with those issues in our days when we see what the core issue is in the plainness of language in Scripture. In the plainness language of Scripture, you need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation and in the plainness of language of Scripture, it is offered to you an assurance that you might know that you have truly believed in Christ. So we need to be Christians and we need to know that we are Christians. Ultimately nothing else really matters despite the loud voices shouting to us to the contrary in the day in which we live.

Now let's talk for just a moment about assurance and what the reality of it is here in a room with, you know, a couple hundred people gathered and others watching over the live stream, there is a broad range, a very very broad range of unique spiritual experience that's represented just within this room. There are some that are Christians and have been for a long time and they are confident that they belong to Christ and they know that they belong to him and they live in the joy and the reality of that, and that would be the goal that God would have all of you move toward is to be saved and to know that you are saved. It's part of his gracious loving intention for us that we would live with a settled peace of soul knowing that we have an objective peace with him purchased at the cost of Christ. But you know, that's not where everybody's at, is it? That's not where some of you are at and I want to say this, it is possible for a person to be a Christian and have a very weak sense of assurance; to be plagued by doubts either through many different reasons that could contribute to that sad state of a lack of assurance. Perhaps you're a new Christian out of a legalistic background and you need to be taught about the grace of Christ and the sufficiency of Christ and that your salvation rests on what he has done for you, not on what you do for yourself. Others perhaps many here this morning, find themselves to be in a weakened state of assurance because, let's be honest, you've neglected the word of God in your life. You've put it aside and you've neglected the word, you've neglected prayer and in days like what we've just come out of, the absence of fellowship can contribute to that as well. So perhaps there's just a neglect of the means of grace in your own life that if you were honest you would look at and say, "Do you know what? I've strayed from God's word. I filled my mind with all kinds of worldly things and worldly news and worldly enjoyments but I've neglected, I've lost my first

love. I need to repent and come back to Christ." Perhaps you've been, you know, overly just enjoying the world so much that you've lost sight of where true joy is found. Others, I fear, perhaps have fallen into serious sin and are unrepentant of that. You know, David lived a miserable 18 months after his sin with Bathsheba, after his murder of Uriah her husband, and he lived without joy and so he had to pray in Psalm 51, "God, I repent. Restore to me the joy of my salvation as I confess my sin to You." But my friend, if you're a Christian in conscious sin, I want to tell you that your assurance is going to flee from you because assurance is not given to those who are consciously disobedient to a holy God. For others, some of you are suffering through grief, loss of health. Certainly those things will cloud your joy. There's some kind of connection that I don't pretend to be able to explain between our physical condition and the spiritual state of our soul. Those things will cloud your joy, perhaps weaken your assurance. Still others might be living without assurance and not be able to trace the cause of it. You simply find yourself spiritually cold and it's been that way for a while even without conscious sin in your life. For all of those, it's possible to be a Christian in any of those realms, we want to offer help to you from God's word here today, but there's more to the issue of assurance than just what we've said so far. There's an element of complication to it. There is an element of complication to it because you can be on the other side of the spectrum, you could have assurance, you could think that you have assurance, you can think that you belong to Christ but it's not real. There is such a thing as false assurance. Jesus said there will be many on the final day that he'll send away saying, "I never knew you." So many live in a presumptuous realm of assumption that they know Christ when they really don't. They are smug, they are self-righteous and they think that they are safe when actually they are lost and in eternal danger, or in danger of eternal judgment. That's a bad, that's a very bad place to be. That's a very bad place to be. I won't expound on that any further. But then there are others, still others that in terms of what makes this difficult is that there are Christian groups that deny that assurance is even possible; that assurance is even desirable. You know, if you think you're confident in Christ and know that you belong to him, then they think that that's going to lead you into godless living because you think you can sin without consequence. They don't understand the first thing about what true salvation is to say things like that.

Well beloved, what I want you to see here today and I hope that somehow I've cast the net broad enough that every one of you can see that you have a vested interest in the issues that are before us here this morning, I would want you to see this, it is the declared purpose of God, it is the declared invitation of God that all sinners would come to Christ and find salvation in him. There is no unwillingness in God to save that prevents anybody from coming to Christ. God is willing, God calls all men to come to him. Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will never cast out." And so for someone to be without Christ is a matter of their own consequence, their own responsibility. It's not any guilt on Christ's part because he calls you to come. Stated further and going another step further in it we could say this, is that for those of us that are Christians, I can tell you that the purpose of God for your life is that you would have this assurance of salvation, that you would be confident in his love and grace, and that you are secure for all of eternity from the wrath of God that your sins otherwise would deserve. So we ask the question: are you a true Christian? And the next question: how can you know? How can you know if you are a

true Christian? This is exactly why John wrote to us. Look at chapter 5, verse 13 with me again as we keep the text fresh in our minds. He says in verse 13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

What is assurance? Let me give you a definition of it before we go into the grounds of assurance. What is assurance? We could state it like this: assurance is the Christian's confidence that he or she possesses salvation now through faith in Christ, and that in the future he is bound for heaven. Assurance is the confidence that you truly possess salvation in Christ by faith in him, and that you are going to heaven without a doubt. "Saved Without a Doubt" is the title of one of John MacArthur's books. It's well stated. It's a book about assurance and this is the content, this is the reason that John wrote this entire letter was so that people would have a sense of assurance.

Well, what I want to do today is I want to give you two contrasting realms that help you understand assurance and help you evaluate your life to know if you are really in Christ or not. There are objective grounds and there are subjective grounds. Objective grounds in the sense that true salvation is rooted in things outside of you. Objective in the sense that true salvation is rooted in things outside of you, in Christ most specifically. And secondly, the subjective grounds of assurance, that is, the things that you look for in your life in response to Christ to see whether you are truly in him. And you always always always, I think I said it four times, one for each section, I could add an always for those watching over the live stream, my friends, this is where it's so easy to get confused and mixed up but you must always start with the objective grounds first. The temptation, the pit that many Christians have fallen into is starting and exclusively looking at their own personal experience as the test by which they try to determine whether they are really saved or not. And so they are looking inside so much and wearing themselves out and wearing the people around them out with questions like, "Have I repented enough? I'm not sure I'm sorry enough. Is my faith strong enough? Have I believed enough?" And as I like to say when those conversations come up, the answer to all of those questions is no. You have not repented enough. You have not believed enough. You have not obeyed enough to find any assurance of salvation in the nature of who you are and what you have done. That is not where you start in evaluating your salvation. It's never a question of whether you've done enough because the answer to that is always no, you haven't. And you might say, "Well, then what hope is there of salvation? What hope is there of having assurance if I haven't done enough?" Well, the whole point of the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this, is that Christ has done enough. Christ lived the perfect righteous life. Christ paid the penalty for sin in full at the cross. And so Christ is the one who has done enough. Jesus, as we sing, has paid it all. And so you start with that, you start with Christ and then you reason from there. You don't bypass Christ and start evaluating your life because, my friends, you will never if you're evaluating it rightly, you'll never find enough to think that you are truly truly saved, but when you look to Christ, the whole equation is changed.

So we start with the objective grounds of assurance, looking at, and I'm going to give you three sub points under each of these two main points. The objective grounds for

assurance. Let's look at the text and start to walk through it little bit here where he says once more, we'll read it again, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." He says, "These things I have written." Well, what are "these things" that he's talking about? My friend, it's wonderful. It just expands everything to understand this basic point of context. John is summarizing here everything that he said in the entire letter going back to chapter 1, verse 1 where he laid out the Incarnation of Christ. He's summarizing everything that he has said in the letter. All of those things that we have looked at about the true doctrine of Christ and what he has done and the doctrinal tests of assurance and the social tests and the moral tests, he's summarizing everything that he has said in this letter at this point. The fact that said in chapter 2, verse 1, that Christ is our advocate. Chapter 2, verse 2, that Christ is our propitiation, which he repeats in chapter 4, verse 10. The love of God in the Gospel. He's bringing all of this together and saying, "Everything that I have said is designed to produce in you the knowledge that you truly belong to Jesus Christ." It is a collective impact of everything that he has said to bring you to a sense of assurance in your salvation. So you know, he is saying to put it in colloquial terms, "Everything I've said up to this point is designed to accomplish this goal, I want you to know that you have eternal life."

Now let's just step back for a moment and realize and remember the nature of what Scripture is because we speak about it in terms of John, the human writer, and that's good and appropriate that we do that, but understand this, John was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What we are reading here is the word of God to his people. This is what God has said to his church. It's what he has said to his people and in this we get this wonderful revelation of the nature of God and what it is that he wants for us. God himself, our Lord Jesus Christ himself would have you secure in the knowledge that you belong to him. It is not the will of God for you to live in weak, doubting, questionings of faith. God loves you so much in Christ he would have you know and be secure and be confident. Those of you that grew up under demanding, critical, unloving parents know the sense of insecurity that that brings, don't you? It's kind of painful to remember that for some of you. Well, understand that God is not like that. God is not looking to produce that effect. The Gospel of John is written so that you would believe and have eternal life. The letter of 1 John is written so that you would know that you belong to him. There is this sense in the purpose of God that you would be secure and know that you belong to him.

Look over at chapter 3, verse 1, in case you question this. We're not speaking in platitudes here or in generalities that we wish were true about God. No, we are simply declaring what God himself first said long before any of us were born. In chapter 3, verse 1, John said, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and we are." He says, "This is a manifestation of the love of God, His care for us is that He has made us children of God and He wants us to know that we are children of God." Verse 2, "Beloved, now we are children of God." And so God would have you know if you are in Christ, God would have you know that you are in his family, that you are secure in him, and that everything is well with your soul. Assurance is the reason that we can sing hymns like that, "It is well with my soul." Assurance is the

only reason you can sing a song like that is because it's real and you know that it's real, and this is the revealed purpose of God that you would enter into that realm of spiritual experience.

So go back to chapter 5, verse 13 with me, who is it that he's writing to? He's writing to true Christians. He says, "I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God," in other words, that you have true faith in Christ as he is revealed in Scripture. You have repented of sin. You have trusted Christ alone by faith to save you from the judgment that you deserve. My friend, have you believed in Christ like that? I mean, the questions are plain and they're simple right on the surface of the text there, aren't they? My friend, do you believe in the name of the Son of God? This is the objective ground of assurance. You look outside of yourself, you ask yourself who is Christ revealed to be in Scripture? He is God in human flesh. What did he do? He lived a perfectly righteous life and he offered that life on the cross of Calvary as a sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God against his people. He died as a substitute. He took the curse that was on us, he took it on himself. He bore the penalty of our sins. He bore our sins in his body. He was buried and God raised him on the third day to show that the sacrifice was accepted. My friends, you start there. Do you believe that about Christ? Have you believed in him like that? You see, we enter into this realm where we understand that there is a Christian message that is proclaimed, there is a Christian faith that we announce, that Christ is central to. Who Christ is and what he has done, that is the Christian faith and the question for you today is is that what you believe about Jesus? Do you understand what the Bible says about him? Do you believe the Christian faith which existed before you were born and will be true long after you are gone? Do you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I'm getting ahead of my notes here but that's okay. That's kind of the summary message.

Well, let's break it down into these three sub points here that we have and we'll just present it in question form, understanding this, my friends, you must understand the spirit in which all of this is said to you this morning and the spirit in which John says it. I'm saying these things to you in a constructive spirit to help you to build assurance into true believers, not to shake your confidence in Christ but to build it up and you must understand the spirit in which these things therefore are being said to you. This is to help you as a true Christian to grow in assurance, not to shake your faith, and trusting God that for those of you that are not in Christ, that the Spirit of God would use this to show that these realities are not real in your own heart.

So we start with this question: do you believe the Bible? Do you believe the Bible? Is the Bible the word of God in your estimation? Is it the trustworthy, reliable, inerrant word that God has given to the human race to make himself known? Do you believe that about this book that many of you are holding on your lap? The 66 books of the Bible, do you look at this and with a clear mind say, "This is the word of God"? Because beloved, it is this trustworthy word that makes the Savior known to us. How could someone have true salvation if they deny the truthfulness and the reliability of the very word that makes him known? That would be nonsense and John has made this point earlier in his letter. We've pointed this out several times. I'll be brief here. Chapter 4, verse 6 where John speaking about the apostolic circle, he says we are from God. He's speaking as a representative of

the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ plus Paul. We read about those 12 apostles in our Scripture reading from Matthew 10 just a little bit earlier. They were the appointed representatives of Christ to declare his revelation and John says in verse 6, "we are from God; he who knows God listens to us." In other words, the people who truly know God through faith in Jesus Christ, they pay heed to the apostles that Christ appointed to be the ambassadors of his truth, to be the ones who declared him to be the Savior of the world. The apostles explain the resurrected Christ to us. They interpret the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ to us, and John says, what John says here in verse 6 is the one who knows God listens us. They heed what we say. They believe what the apostles say. The false teachers that he was writing to refute, they deny the authority of the apostles. They set themselves up as having new revelation of their own like charismatics do today so often, new prophets, new apostles. No. No. No. No. Out on the suggestion. Out on the suggestion. The question is do you listen to the apostles? It is a black and white yes or no issue.

Look at verse 6 with me again in chapter 4, "he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." This is how you know, do you heed the apostles? Do you believe what they said about Christ? Do you believe the New Testament? Do you believe the Old Testament? Do you believe the word of God or not? That is one of the things that John had written so that we would know if we have eternal life. You see, we don't believe in a God of our own making, rather we believe in a God that's been revealed to us in this book and it is the book alone that makes the only Savior known, and so you have to receive this book as authority or there are grounds to question the reality of your salvation. My friend, one of the things that the Spirit of God does when he truly saves a person is this, he gives them the gift of believing in the word of God. The Spirit of God is given to you so that you would believe and accept the Bible.

Look over at 1 Corinthians 2 with me. 1 Corinthians 2. If you understand something about the purposes of God in salvation, then you know what to look for in your own life and in your own heart to see if what's happening inside the core of your heart, what you believe about God is consistent with what God has said he does in the lives of those that he redeems. In 1 Corinthians 2:12 the Apostle Paul is making this very same point. He says, "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God," and why did God give us his Spirit? In part it was this, "So that," there's the purpose statement, "So that we may know the things freely given to us by God." The Spirit is given to you as a Christian so that you would know, so that you would believe the things that God has made known in his word and the one who has the Spirit will believe the things of the Spirit and the things of the Spirit are found in the word of the Spirit which is the word of the 66 books of the Bible as we have them here today.

Verse 14 by contrast, "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." My friends, the question is simple: do you believe the Bible? You could vary the question a little bit, do you understand the Bible? Can you read it with understanding or is it a dark closed book of secrets that has never made sense to you and you've gathered in a church building for years on end but the Bible as never been a living book



to your own soul? You see, God gives the Spirit so that the Bible would become alive to you and change and transform your mind and the question is do you believe the Bible? Has the Bible started to impact you like that? Has it had an enduring impact like that to you? I feel a particular sympathy for those of you that grew up in Christian homes and you've never really believed and the Bible has just become an irksome kind of thing to you that's always been around but it's just something that you in reality you could just take it or leave it and put it aside, if only you could get out from under it, you would. You see, it's possible to be so confused about the reality of salvation that this first step is missed and you don't understand what the first step of it is. Do you believe the Bible? The one that God saves, he instills within them by his Spirit a reverent trust and a reverent belief in the word of God. Is that true of what's in your heart or not? It's really not that difficult of a question to understand, is it?

Well secondly, another objective ground of salvation is this: do you confess that you are a sinner? Do you confess that you are a sinner? Is it the open acknowledgment of your life that you have sinned against God, that you are a guilty sinner in his sight apart from Christ and without Christ you deserve eternal damnation for all of the guilt and rebellion of your life against a holy God? Is that the confession, is that your fundamental confession about who you are, I am a sinner like that?

John made it plain. Look at 1 John 1. This is part of the things that he wrote so that we would know if we are the children of God. 1 John 1 beginning in verse 8. I love the clarity of God's word and the wonder of it is, you know, God makes his word clear. You can understand it as the newest of believers and you spend a lifetime reading it and studying it and it becomes all the more clear the more you go along. Chapter 1, verse 8 John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins," if we make an ongoing acknowledgment of our sinfulness, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." It's black, it's white, it's black again. You deny your sinfulness, you're obviously not a Christian. You confess it as the open transparent acknowledgment of the reality of your existence, that's consistent with being a true Christian. True Christians believe and openly acknowledge that they have sinned against God.

Now look, we need to be a little bit more precise here because the nature of the spiritual battle that we fight against the devil and all of his minions is this, is that the devil will confuse us and let us think that fudging the truth is the same as embracing it so that we're saying something more than you simply saying, "Well, yeah, I'm not perfect. I'm not perfect." You know, that kind of lukewarm acknowledgment is nauseating in light of what Scripture is actually calling you to confess. You can say that you can say, "I'm not perfect," in a spirit of utter self-righteousness because what's the next thing that comes out of your mouth? "I'm not perfect but," yeah you know, and you immediately start to qualify and restrict what your confession of your imperfection is, "But I've never killed anybody. I've never committed adultery with anybody. You know, it's not like I've you know, it's not like I'm a racist cop or something like that," just to speak in the parlance of our wicked days, you know, and you immediately start comparing yourself horizontally

to other humans and say, "I'm utter than the person next to me. I'll pull up a really bad example and you'll see that I exceed them in righteousness and therefore, yeah, I'm not perfect but I'm not so bad." That is not the Christian confession. The Christian confession is like that of the tax collector in Luke 18 who said, "God, be merciful to me the sinner." The Christian confession is the confession of the Apostle Paul, "Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners among whom I am foremost. I am the guilty one. I am the unrighteous one. I am the one who has violated the holiness of God. I am the one who deserves eternal damnation in hell, so bad is my guilt against this holy God."

What I would ask you this morning, then, my friend, is whether you confess your sin like that because the Gospel does not come to congratulate men on their self-righteousness. Jesus could not have been more explicit and plain about this than he was in his own language. Look at Luke 5. I want you to see this in this context. Luke 5 in verse 31. Luke 5:31, understand this, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'" Jesus calls sinners to himself, hell-bound, guilty sinners who know they need forgiveness and have nothing to offer in their spiritual bankruptcy to a holy God. The question is do you confess your sin like that, my friends? You don't have to be a flagrant sinner by external observation to be a very guilty sinner against God. You don't have to do any of the external sins to be guilty and judged by God. If you're cold and indifferent to Christ, if you live in self-righteousness, then you're among the chief of sinners because your very life and your very confession is a denial of what God says to be true. Your life is calling God a liar, how can that not be the greatest of sins? Let's not talk about external morality amongst ourselves. Scripture says we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the only issue is whether you agree with what Scripture says to be true or not because there is none righteous, not even one. We are in this room together collectively and individually as a group of people that have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and have no righteousness of our own. The only question is whether you believe that in your heart about yourself and whether you openly confess it before men or not. If you don't, you're not a Christian no matter what your religious practice may be.

So do you believe the Bible? Do you confess your sin? Thirdly, do you believe the Gospel? And I've already covered this for the sake of time. What a thing to brush over but we've already spoken about this today. Do you believe the Gospel? At the risk of repeating myself, let me just say this: the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not about you being a good person or about you trying harder to be more righteous in and of yourself. The Gospel is not a message about social injustice. It's not about that. And yeah, I'm emphatic because we need to emphasize that today. That is not the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ about trying to make society better. The question is about you being a guilty sinner before God. And so do you believe that Christ lived a perfect life for a sinner like you? Do you believe that he offered his life as a sacrifice on the cross for a sinner like you to atone for the sins of his people? Do you believe that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and was raised on the third day? 1 Corinthians 15 in all of its simplicity, this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and John has been writing about this and declaring this in this letter.

Look at 1 John 4. You could go to chapter 2, the first two verses but we're just for the sake of time going to look at a couple of quick texts here in chapter 4. Do you believe this? Do you know what we're about to read here? Chapter 4, verse 9, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Stop there for just a moment. You know, we want to stop here and just emphasize that the whole reason that we can have this conversation about what the Gospel is, about whether you are in Christ or not, it is a manifestation of the love of God and his care for guilty sinners. God in love sent Christ. It is because God sent Christ to be the Savior of the world that we can have this discussion. The Gospel is a revelation of the love of God for sinners just like you and somewhere in true saving faith there is this belief not only in these facts of the Gospel but somewhere a persuasion that there is a love of God on your soul and that that's manifested in Christ. Do you believe the Gospel? Do you believe in Christ like this?

Look at verse 13 of chapter 4, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." My friends, as you ask yourself am I a true Christian, as you look for assurance in your salvation, you ask yourself that question do you believe in Christ like that, do you believe that Christ is the one that God the Father himself sent to be the one and only Savior of the world? Do you believe in Christ like that? If you do, my friends, that's the mark of true saving faith. The world doesn't believe that. That's not what Satan leads men to believe and so if you believe the Gospel, if you believe the Bible, all of these things, by the way, these things all run together. This isn't as I've said in the past, this isn't a cafeteria style spirituality that you take the whole meal here. This is true of every Christian, every true Christian. "Yes, I believe the Bible. Yes, I am a guilty sinner before a holy God. And yes, I believe the Gospel. I believe that Christ came to save sinners just like me. That's what I believe in the depths of my heart." Friends, that's the objective grounds of assurance, you're believing in that which is outside of yourself, and if you believe those things, you have a good foundation upon which to believe that you are a true believer in Christ, and if you are a true believer in Christ, my friend, your sins are forgiven. What happens in this life happens but at the end of life you will be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. That's what assurance is designed to cultivate in you. As you believe that, as you cultivate that, it develops within you an ability to overcome whatever is happening in life, happening in the world because you realize there is something of greater value, something of transcendent reality that belongs to you that no one can take away. You have Christ and therefore you have all.

Well, let's just secondly look quickly at the subjective grounds of assurance. I can cover this quickly because we've been talking about this over the past several weeks. We're just kind of summarizing here because that's what John is doing, he's summarizing. The subjective grounds of assurance. Here we're looking at the way that your profession of faith has impacted your life because if your faith is real, it shows in the way that you live. If you have, to put it in theological language, if you have been truly justified, what will follow is sanctification. Justification is rested on Christ alone and it is apart from your

works but if you've been truly justified there will be a change in your life because God in salvation gives you a new nature.

So let's just ask and answer three questions very quickly here. Firstly, do you obey God's word? Do you obey God's word? The true Christian has heart affections, has a heart desire to live obediently to Scripture. That's what's in his heart. That's what he wants is to have his life conform to the word of God. Look at 1 John 2:3, and there are multiple texts within this letter that support these things, we're only highlighting things that we've said in the recent past. 1 John 2:3, "By this we know," you see that knowledge, that certainty is woven throughout John's letter, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." You see, it's possible to confess a knowledge of God and yet have it be separated from any life application. To live in unbroken sin, to live in disregard to the holiness of God and in disregard for any kind of life obedience, that's not Christianity. You're not a Christian if you think and live like that.

Now this does not mean that you obey perfectly. We've covered this so many times but, beloved, the point is this, obedience is your desire. You want to obey God. That matters to you. You order your life around that somehow. And obedience is the direction of your life even if it is not the perfection of your life. Is there an inclination in your heart and in your life to obey the God of the Bible? That's part of the subjective grounds of assurance. God puts a new nature, a new spirit in you that is inclined to follow after him in his revealed moral law. Does that matter to you in life is the question? And when you sin, do you repent of it? Do you confess it? Look, we all fall short. Even as Christians, we're all very imperfect in our sanctification. That's not the issue, the issue is your attitude toward obedience and does something manifest in your life that you're following after Christ because the cold, flippant, indifferent attitude is not the mark of a true believer.

Secondly, do you love other Christians? Do you love other Christians? True Christians love one another. Chapter 4, verses 7 and 8. You just see how this word "know" is just woven throughout everything that we're saying here. Chapter 4, verses 7 and 8, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." Look, God didn't just save you, he saved a lot of other people as well and he saved you to be part of a family, not an individual alone walking alone, worshiping God out of your deer box in hunting season and pretending that that's some kind of worship. No, the true believer has an affection, has a desire to love, to serve, to be with other believers and is that somewhere in your heart? I'm optimistic. You know, for you guys, you're here, right? That's good. But we answer that question, if your conversion is real, you will love other true Christians.

Thirdly and finally, does the Holy Spirit affirm you? Does the Holy Spirit affirm you? For a true Christian as he grows in the word of God, the Holy Spirit affirms to his heart that he belongs to Christ. Look at chapter 4, verse 13. Chapter 4, verse 13, "By this we know," there's that word again, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us,

because He has given us of His Spirit." The Spirit testifies within the heart of a true believer, affirms that claim to know Christ. The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Romans 8:16, the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. There is this – watch this – there is this inner affirmation in conjunction with the objective and other subjective grounds of assurance in which the Spirit of God testifies to your heart, communicates with your heart, agrees with your heart that you are a true Christian.

Now let me illustrate this from something from my pre-conversion days. I've probably mentioned this but it doesn't matter if I have or haven't. I was in the position of false assurance as a teenager and in my early twenties, and I claimed to be a Christian if someone would ask me. A few people did, I said that I was, they took it at face value. Bless their hearts, they didn't know I was deceiving them. But as I said that, as I made that testimony to my college friends at the time, said, "Yes, I'm a Christian. Yes, I've believed in Christ," there was this most painful disconnect inside my heart as I said those things. I knew what I was saying, I knew in my heart that it wasn't true. I was saying the words and people were believing it but in my heart there was this resounding, "No! No! No! That's not true! Stop saying that!" Now, you know, I never let it out apparently until now, you know, but what I was saying with my lips was contradicted by the testimony within my own heart. After I became a Christian truly, after God truly saved me, that went away and now I can stand before all of you and say I belong to Christ and everything within me is in harmony with that. The Spirit bears witness with that testimony, "Yes, that's true. You undeserving wretch, that's true. You have a gift that you do not deserve. You belong to Christ. God has made you His child and you are safe in Him." That's the testimony, that's the kind of testimony that the Spirit gives to our hearts.

Now not only that, just write down the reference. As the Spirit, as the Spirit is at work in you, he sanctifies your character and brings the fruit of the Spirit to pass in your life, Galatians 5:22 and 23, but we'll pass over that for the sake of time. But here's the point, my friends, you take these objective grounds, do you believe the Bible, do you confess that you're a sinner, do you believe the Gospel, the objective grounds, they're perfect. They're utterly reliable. They're pristine. The subjective grounds are going to be imperfect, manifested imperfectly in your life but do you obey the word of God? Does the Holy Spirit affirm you? Do you love other Christians? All of this is designed to give you a sense of confidence and because if you have salvation God will preserve you in the end, and what is the goal of that salvation? Look at John 17. Bear with me just a few more minutes here, please. John 17:24. Jesus Christ is praying to his Father on the eve of his crucifixion and what is his desire for those that he saved? It astonishes me that we have recorded for us the sacred words off the lips of Christ as he prayed to his Father. Can you imagine we're entering into the prayer life of the eternal Son of God and he said, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Jesus said, "Father, I pray for these people for whom I am about to die. My desire is that they would be with Me in glory and that they would be able to behold the Shekinah glory that is Mine and was Mine before the foundation of the world. Father, that's what I want for them. I pray that You would bring it to pass."

Do you realize, my friends, in the midst of this awful world in which we live, that that's the destination that God has appointed for you? As you walk through the deepest of trials and swim through the deepest of waters that would overflow you, that in love Christ has saved you and that in love Christ desires this glorious end for your existence, this glorious goal, this glorious purpose that you would be with him in glory and that you would see that which no human eye has seen, that you would see the glory of Christ revealed not in a spirit of fear but in a spirit that, "I am His and He is mine." That is what Christ has saved you for and if you are saved, you can have an assurance that that is going to be the outcome come what may in this awful life.

That is why we exist, my friends, that one day as Christians we would see Christ unhindered. You see, God has saved you, I'm closing up now here, God has saved you for eternal purposes, for things that far transcend this world, that in one sense have nothing to do with this world because this world will pass away. The purposes for which we've been saved, they will endure. They will not be taken away. God did not save us for material prosperity. God did not save us for political security in the American constitutional system. That's not why we were saved. Christ died for sinners long before 1776, right? No, Christ saved us from sin so that we would belong to him and that we would know his love and so that we would see him in glory. And my friend, if you long for the fulfillment of that, if that is the greatest highest ideal of glory to you, the highest aspiration, "One day I'm going to see the face of Christ. No matter what happens in this world, nothing can take away that transcendent goal from me." If that's somewhere in your heart, beloved, take joy because Christ has saved you and what he has begun he will certainly complete. He will keep you all the way to the end. May God give you grace and wisdom to discern your own heart and lead you in the knowledge of Christ.

Let's pray together.

*Dear Father, we simply ask You to by Your Holy Spirit to apply this rightly to each heart. Father, for those that are in Christ, may they be strong in assurance as a result of what we have seen in Your word. For those who are not in Christ, Father, may You convict them and in love draw them to Yourself by the working of Your Holy Spirit. We pray and ask, Father, that perhaps You would use what's been said here to open eyes for the first time. Many of us were blind men walking on the road to Damascus, Father, and You stopped us and revealed Yourself to us. For those that are in the room that are like that, Father, as it were, bring Damascus to them, bring Christ to them that they would fall before Him in faith and say, "Lord, save me. Lord, what would You have me do? Lord, make me Your own throughout all of eternity." We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com). This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.