

## Topic 3: Assurance of Salvation

### Being Sure that you are Right with God

*This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is the Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”* <sup>1</sup> John 5:11-13

#### **If you were to die today, are you sure that you would go to Heaven?**

As followers of Jesus, one of our greatest needs is the confident assurance that we are right with God, that our sins are forgiven, that we are children of God. It's essential for every child of God to understand who you are in Christ as a child of God, so that you can help explain this truth to other confused believers and that you can walk in confidence.

#### **Five Common Reasons Christians Doubt their Salvation**

- #1: Fluctuating feelings** - Many people experience a joyful sense of freedom and closeness with God when first understanding and embracing the good news of Jesus. Typically, however, this fire fades. And for many that sense of God's nearness also fades away. Without these feelings to assure them, they question if anything happened at all. *Following Christ involves learning to live by what God says is true (faith), not by what seems to be true (our feelings).* See Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; and Galatians 2:20
- #2: Struggles in life** - Some new Christians mistakenly assume that receiving Christ will bring an end to their worldly troubles (e.g., medical, financial, occupational, emotional struggles, temptations etc.). When their issues don't go away, they wonder if their salvation is real. *Nowhere does the Bible guarantee as easy life for God's people. In fact, it suggest just the opposite is true.*
- #3: Falling back into sin or old habits** - Salvation (i.e., the new birth — John 3) means we receive new life, new standing with God, a new nature, a new identity, new desires, and new power. We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17)! And yet we still have an unredeemed human nature, we live in a fallen world filled with temptation, and our minds are not yet fully renewed. We remain vulnerable to sinful impulses. And when we yield to them, we doubt that we have become “new” at all. *Our failures don't suggest we're not believers; they indicate our continuing need for Jesus. Regret over sin and the desire to change show that you are God's child. We won't be perfect in this life (Philippians 1:6), but we can expect to make progress as we walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).*
- #4: Attacks by Satan** - When we stumble and fall, we hear a voice in our head that tells us “A true child of God would never do such a thing,” “See there, your heart isn't really changed!” or similarly condemning statements. *That condemning voice we hear is not God's voice – it's the voice of the enemy, Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan seizes every opportunity to attack us (Ephesians 6:16).*
- #5: Losing sight of grace** - Legalism is the devilish lie that we are responsible to live good lives and thereby “maintain our salvation.” This system of “works righteousness” denies God's grace and asserts that we can earn salvation through our good deeds. When we know we haven't been good enough, we doubt our standing with God. *The gospel of grace says that we didn't do anything to earn or deserve salvation and we can't do anything to preserve right standing with God. (Galatians 3:2–3). Instead, we trust in a grace that is freely given (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

# Looking At the Text

1. What are some typical responses when people are asked if they know *for sure* that they are right with God and destined to spend eternity with him?

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2. Consider these verses:

*“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”* (1 John 5:11).

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 6:23).

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

a. What do they say about salvation and eternal life?

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b. These verses contrast the idea of a *gift* with that of a *wage* you earn. How would you explain the difference between these two concepts?

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c. Have you ever tried to “earn” God’s grace? Explain.

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3. Examine these verses:

◆ Jesus is speaking about Himself: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

◆ Jesus, while praying: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

◆ The apostle Peter, in preaching about Jesus: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

◆ The apostle John, in writing about Jesus, the Son of God: “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (John 5:12)?

a. What do these verses say about the source of eternal life?

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b. In light of these passages, how do you respond to commonly heard statements like: “I believe there are many ways to God” or “it doesn't really matter what you believe as long as you are sincere” or “Is it a narrow and arrogant for Christians to claim that Jesus is the only way to God”?

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c. Why do you think people have a hard time understanding and accepting that salvation cannot be earned through good works, but is found only in Jesus?

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4. Examine these verses:

♦ “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

♦ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

a. What does it mean to believe in Christ?

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b. What does John 5:24 mean when it says that we will have “crossed over from death to life”?  
What kind of life transformation might we see?

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c. If we put our trust in Christ, what can we be absolutely sure about? ( see 1 John 5:13)

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c. If you were to die, and God were to say to you, “Why should I let you in to Heaven?” what would be a good biblical response based on this study?

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