

Lesson 2: Faith that Knows for Sure

Purpose: to show the disciple how he can be certain that he is a Christian and that his salvation is eternally secure, thereby freeing him to go on to maturity in Christ

Objectives:

1. to discover and define the disciple's view of salvation
2. to show the disciple that salvation gives eternal life
3. to show that security of salvation rests in God's immutability
4. to show God's faithfulness in keeping us in Christ after salvation
5. to list some of the evidences of salvation in our lives

Introduction: Last time we discussed God's love, mercy, and grace. We saw that His goodness led Him to send His Son to bring us forgiveness. This time we're going to discuss how we can know we have salvation and how we can be certain we cannot lose this salvation. And once again, we'll see that our security rests not in our goodness, but in God's goodness, in his attributes of eternalness and immutability.

Q. On the basis of what we have talked about so far, what are some truths that a person ought to understand in order to become a Christian? [This should be a good opportunity for your group to review.]

A. A person should understand:

1. ...who God is.
2. ...what sin is.
3. ...that he is a sinner.
4. ...that because he is a sinner, he deserves God's judgment.
5. ...that Christ took God's judgment in his place.
6. ...that he must turn from his sin to Christ, thus accepting God's provision for our sins.
7. ...that he must believe that God has done what He promised.

Read John 17:1-3

Q. Once you have become a Christian, what does the Bible say that you have?

A. Eternal life

Q. What is eternal life?

A. To know the only true God and His Son Jesus Christ. "To know" here indicates an intimate personal relationship with God, in which we actually come to share His quality of life. This relationship will last forever.

Q. When do we begin to experience eternal life?

A. When we come to know Christ personally and, through Him to know God.

Q. Have you personally received eternal life?

A. [Answer should be yes. Read John 5:24 to confirm his or her answer. If the person has not received Christ as yet, review the truths listed at the first of this lesson.]

In our past discussions we saw how the attributes of God's holiness, love, mercy, and grace affect our relationship with Him. Now we see how another of His attributes affects our lives. God is eternal; and since He is eternal and He has shared His life with us through His Son, we have the opportunity to experience eternal life.

Read Exodus 3:4

Q. What does God's name "I AM that I AM" tell us about God?

A. It tells us that He is in a constant state of being, with no beginning and no end (see also Psalm 90:2).

Read John 3:16

Q. How do you know you can trust God's promise to forgive you, save you, and give you eternal life?

A. God is true to His word (cf. Hebrews 6:13-20).

Read Acts 2:38-39

Q. How do we come to God according to verse 39?

A. By God's calling.

Read Romans 11:29

Q. Can God change His mind about your calling?

A. No.

Here we see one of the main reasons the believer is secure in His relationship with God. God is immutable (see Malachi 3:6); that is, He does not change. Change implies inconsistency for whatever reason. God is immutable in that He always acts in accordance with His unchanging and perfect character (Jeremiah 18:7-10). This means that He will never change His mind concerning whom He calls.

Read Ephesians 1:13

Q. What has God done for us by giving us the Holy Spirit?

A. He has sealed us in Him.

Q. What does Paul mean when he says we are Sealed?

A. When a king's seal was placed upon something in Christ's time, the contract or promise was final and could not be changed. Thus, when God sealed us in Christ, the relationship between Him and us was finalized and could never be broken.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; and 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Q. What word is used in each passage to describe God's promise to keep us in His Son?

A. His faithfulness.

God does not stop working in our lives when He saves us; in fact, His work in us has just begun. And because God is faithful to work in our lives, He will protect us and keep us in a relationship with Him forever. If it were up to us to keep ourselves there, we would be in real trouble.

But how can we be sure we were really saved? That we really entered that relationship in the first place? Let's look at two ways we can know we have entered a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Read Romans 8:14-16

Q. How does this verse say the Holy Spirit lets us know we're God's children (vs. 16)?

A. By bearing witness with our spirit. This witness is eternal. Through the Spirit's continual, internal confirmation you can know that God has saved you.

Q. What does this mean?

A. It means that you will have a deep down sense that you are a child of God, but it does not mean you will have an emotional "lightning bolt" experience or feeling.

Thus, the first way to know if we are believers is the internal confirmation of the Spirit. The second is the external changes produced by the Holy Spirit. The first epistle of John describes some of the changes we can look for in our lives if we have truly come to know Christ personally.

Read 1 John 5:11-13

Q. What does God want us to know for certain?

A. That we have eternal life. He wants us to "know so" and not "hope so."

Read 1 John 2:3-6

Q. What evidence does John give to indicated we have come to know Christ?

A. Obedience to Christ. If we have come to know Him, we should have a new desire to know God's will and to obey it.

Q. Have you experienced a new desire to know and follow God's will since you became a Christian? how has this expressed itself?

A. [Let them respond.]

Read 1 John 3:19-21

Q. What is another evidence that we have begun a relationship with Christ?

A. Love for God and for each other.

Q. Have you experienced a new love for others and for God since trusting in Christ for salvation? Give some examples from your life.

A. [Let them answer.]

Read 1 John 2:15-17

Q. What additional result will love for God have in our lives?

A. A separation from the world and the things of the world which stand in opposition to God. Love for God and love for worldly things are mutually exclusive.

Q. Have you experienced a lessening of your love for worldly things and a deepening of your love for God since you accepted Christ? What has this looked like in your life?

A. [Let them respond.]

Read 1 John 5:1,5

Q. What other evidence is listed in these verses which indicates we have been born again?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ.

Q. Have you found yourself praying more in your struggles since turning from sin to Christ? Or

have you noticed any other signs of faith and trust in Him? Give some examples.

A. [Let them respond.]

A person whose life has begun to be changed by Christ in these ways can be certain that he or she has come to know God. Scripture also lists many other evidences of lives renewed by the Holy Spirit. The true believer will begin to love God and others. He will have a new desire to obey God. He will demonstrate faith in Jesus Christ.

Read Philippians 1:6

Q. What has God promised to do?

A. Finish the work He has begun in us.

All these qualities of faith, love, and obedience may not be perfect in us at this moment, but God has promised to perfect these qualities which He has begun to work in us. What is important to determine is whether or not this process has begun. Only when a person does not see any of these changes beginning should he consider reevaluating if he has ever truly repented from sin and trusted Christ for salvation. But if we just begin to see our attitudes improving, we have a basis for knowing that we are Christians and thus eternally secure in Christ.

Q. Do you have any doubts concerning whether or not you are a Christian or whether or not you can lose your salvation?

A. [Let them answer. If they do have doubts, go back to the Scriptures listed in this lesson and remind them of what God has promised. Explain that assurance of one's salvation comes only from trusting God's faithfulness; it never comes from conjuring up an emotional feeling. If he knows that he has repented of his sin and is trusting Christ alone for his salvation; he is saved. He can base that knowledge on God's word and God's character.]

Assignment: Write down what you learn about God and yourself from Romans 8.

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