

DO YOU REALLY KNOW?

(Romans 8:1)

INTRODUCTION:

We live in a world filled with doubt, uncertainty and lack of assurance of a good future. ABC headlines September 30, 2009 "Poor consumer confidence hurts Wall Street." We have doubts about the future, doubt about the economy, doubt about jobs, etc. We have doubts about ourselves. I was reading where

.... a man who went to a psychiatrist and complained about an inferiority complex. The doctor listened to him for a while, then gave him a good news/bad news diagnosis: "The good news," said the doctor, "is that you don't have a complex. The bad news is that you really are inferior!"

But this morning I want to talk about doubts about your salvation. Do you ever have doubts about your salvation? Can you know for sure that you will be saved when you stand before God's bar of judgment?

I believe that we can know ahead of time what God's verdict against us will be when we stand before His judgment bar. Here is God's verdict:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... (Romans 8:1)

Romans 8:34 adds

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

There is NO CONDEMNATION to those who are in Christ Jesus. What a great promise. This should be enough to give a believer assurance of their salvation. But I have met some Christians who do not have assurance. Do you?

Sometime when you're in an airport, observe the difference between passengers who hold confirmed tickets and those who are on standby. The ones with confirmed tickets read newspapers, chat with their friends or sleep. The ones on standby hang around the ticket counter, pace and smoke, smoke and pace.

The difference is caused by the confidence factor. If you knew that in fifteen minutes you would have to stand in judgment before the Holy God and learn your eternal destiny, what would your reaction be? Would you smoke and pace? Or would you be at peace?

How does a person gain assurance of salvation? Let's talk about it.

REST IN CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS

The starting point for me in gaining assurance of salvation is to learn to rest on God's foundation of salvation. What is that foundation? It is the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His work for me on the Cross. Ultimately salvation is a matter of God's gift, not of works. Salvation is something that God gives us, we do not earn it. It is by grace. And it is based on the sufficiency of Christ.

Salvation is very costly to God. It cost the precious Blood of Christ our Lord. So the certainty of our salvation rests upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for us. The question becomes, not how perfectly we can keep the law or how good we try to live our lives. The question is, "Is Christ's sacrifice for your sins sufficient for your salvation?"

The book of Hebrews is very clear on the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ for your sins:

Hebrews 9:14 **How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

The basis of our salvation rests totally upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for us. God has accepted that sacrifice for us. Assurance of salvation comes when we accept the sufficiency of Christ's death for us. Do you?

In about 1100 A.D. Anselm the archbishop of Canterbury, a great Christian leader of his day, wrote a tract to console the dying. He first asked a series of questions designed to help the sinner realize that his own works could never save him. He then addressed the dying person with these words: "Come, then, while life remaineth in thee; in Christ's death place thy whole trust. Let His sacrifice alone cover thy sin. Then, when thou standest for judgment, say, 'Lord, between Thy wrath and me I plead the death of Jesus Christ. I put it between my sins and Thee. His merits I offer for those which I ought to have, but have not.'"

When we begin to doubt our salvation, we need to ask ourselves what is the object of my faith and comfort – Is it Christ or something else, our efforts or Christ's efforts. We must keep the eyes of our faith on Jesus Christ and believe that God has accepted Christ's atonement for all our sins and that there is not no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..

For assurance of salvation, let your heart rest in Christ's Work for you, not your work for Him. This is the starting point and the essential foundation for assurance of salvation.

REST IN GOD'S WORD OF PROMISE

Secondly, assurance of salvation comes from resting in God's Word. It is believing that God will do what He promises to do and living your life accordingly.

One of the strongest promises on the assurance of salvation comes from the mouth of Jesus Christ in John 5:24:

Verily, verily, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Look at what Jesus promises here to those who hears God's Word and believe in the God who sent Jesus as the Messiah. They

have everlasting life (Present perfect)
shall not come into judgment (condemnation) (future)
has passed from death into life (past)

We do not have to doubt whether we have everlasting life. Jesus said that we do. We do not have to fear coming into condemnation at God's judgment. Jesus says that we will not. This is the meaning of faith – believing what God says that He will do He will do and responding in life to that.

Even Martin Luther in one of his moods of depression felt as if Satan himself was closing in upon him. It seemed as if he was whispering in his ear, "Martin, do you feel your sins are forgiven?" Suddenly Luther rose to his feet and shouted aloud, "No, I don't, but I know they are because God says so in His Word!"

But as for our salvation, that question has been settled long ago. We shall not come into condemnation. "There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

To gain assurance of our salvation is a matter of resting in God's Word, i.e. to believe that God will do what He says that He will do. Assurance is a matter of resting in the sufficiency of Christ and resting in God's Word.

REST IN THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN YOUR HEART

A third source of assurance of your salvation is to rest in the Spirit's work in your heart. Later in Romans 8 it mentions that the true believer has the Spirit of God indwelling him.

(Rom 8:9 NKJV) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

What are some of the evidences of God's Spirit at work in a person's heart?

The Bible give us several. They could be a sermon in themselves. I will only mention only a couple.

First there is the spiritual hunger for God's Word. To me this is the first and easiest to recognize in your life. Peter tells us:

(1 Pet 2:2-3 NKJV) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, {3} if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Have you ever seen a baby never get hungry for milk? No, unless there's something wrong with the baby. Have you ever seen a Christians never get hungry for God's Word? No, unless there's something wrong with the Christian or the person does not have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them. Hunger for God's Word – to hear God's promises – to understand God's plan for your life – these are essential marks of salvation. With them you can have some empirical evidence that you are a child of God. Without them you need to re-evaluate your faith and whether God's Spirit is at work in you.

Next is the motivation to "work out" your salvation with fear and trembling. This is what Philippians 2:12-13 says:

(Phil 2:12-13 NKJV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; {13} for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Paul does not say in this verse "work for" your salvation. Salvation is by grace through faith. It is a gift of God. But an evidence of God's Spirit at work in you is that you are motivated to "work out" your salvation, i.e. to put your salvation to work always on the alert of how you can be involved in God's work. It follows from the fact that if a person has a hunger for God's Word to learn about Him and His plan for you, that you will want to be actively doing that plan and will. This is working out your salvation. The Christian life is not a passive, inactive life. It is a life very actively involved in working out God's will for you.

If you see this motivation in your heart – to work out your salvation – then you have another empirical evidence of God's Spirit at work in you. "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

Looking for signs of spiritual life can add assurance of salvation, not that we are earning salvation. Unless God has given us eternal life, we would not have these desires in our life.

CONCLUSION

There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

If you are resting for your salvation on the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for you,

If you are resting in God's promises

If you are resting in the Spirit's work in your heart, especially in giving you a hunger for His Word and a desire to work out his will in your life,

Then you have a right to full assurance of our salvation.

If you are lacking in these then you can this morning place your faith in Christ, you can start believing that God will do all his says that he will do and you can ask God to give you the hunger for his word and desire for his work that is consistent with salvation.

What about it? Do you have assurance or not? Do you want to settle the issue this morning?

Amen? Amen!

Introduction to World Communion Sunday:

“This morning we join Christians all over the world celebrating the reconciliation that we can have with God and with one another as we celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday. Ours is a world broken by sin. Signaling this brokenness are war, unrest, divorce, injustice, racism, poverty, sorrow. The world groans with its burdens. Peoples' lives are cursed with hatreds, injustices, and disillusionments. Our broken world is a reflection of humankind's broken relationship with God. At this table today we are reminded that reconciliation is possible. The bread and the cup remind us that reconciliation is possible. This meal speaks of the wholeness that is available to us as we are in relationship with God through Christ, and in turn, one another.”