

HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN?

1 John 5:9-13

Intro: For the past few Sunday nights I have been concerned with three truths which form the foundation for a stable, growing, joyful Christian life. They are:

- 1) Belief in the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures--that the Bible is the Word of God.
- 2) The assurance of salvation.
- 3) The knowledge of God--what He is as a Person.

The basis upon which we are to understand these three great truths is the Word of God itself.

Tonight I want to take the second of these: the assurance of salvation! How can I KNOW that I am a Christian?

My point is that we must not only be saved, but we must know that we are saved.

Therefore, I want to be clear as to what I mean when I use the word, Christian. I am not using it as many people use it today--as a synonym for a church member, or of one who tries to live according to the Bible, or merely of one who believes in the existence of God and Christ. I AM TALKING ABOUT A PERSON WHO BY FAITH HAS RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS HIS PERSONAL SAVIOR, ONE WHO IS BORN AGAIN, ONE WHO IS A CHILD OF GOD, ONE WHO HAS BEEN FORGIVEN OF HIS SINS AND DECLARED RIGHTEOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

If you ask some people, "Are you a Christian?"--using it as I have indicated above, they will say, "Yes." But, if you ask them, "Are you sure, and will you always be a Christian?", they may say, "I do not know."

Some even feel that it is presumptuous to say that you know you are eternally saved. That is because they still need to understand what salvation really is!

Let me say this tonight: One of the most essential parts of the foundation of a growing, stable, joyful Christian life is the assurance of your salvation. It is necessary to be a Christian, but it is also just as important to know that you are a Christian, AND THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS BE A CHRISTIAN!

Before I show from our text HOW this can be, let me give one further word of explanation. It is this: Our big problem about salvation is increased when we look at the experience of certain people, i.e., a person who at one time claimed to be a Christian, but later turned away from

the Lord and has had nothing more to do with Him. There are two things about such a case that we need to recognize:

- 1) We do not know that that person every really trusted Christ. No one even suspected that Judas was not a child of God.
- 2) If the person is still living, the story is not completed. And even if the person is no longer living, we still do not know the heart.

Let us look at what John says, and I want to begin with verse 13 first to show that he taught

I. THE DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE. Cf. 1 John 5:13.

To "have eternal life" is to have life eternally. If you are inclined to doubt this, just open your heart tonight to what the Word of God says.

Cf. Paul in 2 Tim. 1:12b, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Cf. Peter in 1 Pet. 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy . . ."

Cf. our Lord in John 10:27, 28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

We could add others, but this is enough to establish the truth. Actually, only once would be enough!

II. HOW CAN THIS ASSURANCE BE MINE?

For John to write as he does in v. 13 of ch. 5 would mean that the answer is not far away. WHAT THINGS is he talking about?

In vv. 9-11 we have two words in the English which are translations of the same word in the Greek. They are "witness" and "record." This is a testimony, an official declaration of truth, and all the more official because it is "the witness of God." It is like calling God to the witness stand in a court of law and asking Him, under oath, to tell us the truth about salvation.

We could just as easily and rightly accept it if John had said it on his own (because he writes under the

direction of the Spirit of God), BUT THIS IS A MATTER OF SUCH TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE THAT HE GIVES US THIS TRUTH REGARDING SALVATION AS FROM GOD HIMSELF.

We are on the way to assurance now! What does John record as "the witness of God"?

- A. The first step to assurance is in understanding that salvation is a work of God, not a human work. "God hath given to us eternal life."

This is a truth which I love to hear, but we say far too little about it. Most of our Gospel preaching today, and most of our evangelism is so man-centered that we have all but lost sight of the great truth of salvation: IT IS A WORK OF GOD.

Cf. Paul in Gal. 1:11-17. See also Eph. 2:8-10a. Then, Tit. 3:5. And, 2 Tim. 1:8, 9,

"Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Therefore, the assurance of salvation begins with an understanding that we do not save ourselves, and we do not keep ourselves saved. SALVATION IS A WORK OF GOD FROM START TO FINISH!

- B. Secondly, we must understand that this salvation is always and only in Christ: "This life is in His Son."

Note how John combines both of these first two points in 1 John 4:9, 10, 14.

Generally you will find that the lack of assurance of salvation is due to:

- 1) A failure to comprehend fully that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, i.e., His Deity--His virgin birth, His perfect life as evidence.
- 2) A failure to comprehend His work for us on the Cross, and His resurrection which followed.

Did He leave something undone, or was there something which He failed to do, or could not do?

When we tell people that they need to trust Christ to be saved, do we tell them WHY it must be Christ? This is often where we fail. OUR CASE WAS SO HOPELESS THAT GOD SENT HIS SON--and this is where the Word of God gets very, very narrow. Cf. v. 12. Also, John 14:6; Acts 4:12; John 3:18.

The more you and I know about Christ, and the more we know of His work on the Cross AND His work now on the right hand of the Father, THE GREATER OUR ASSURANCE WILL BE.

But there is one more point. John does not say that just the knowledge of these two truths makes a person a Christian. No, he adds this:

- C. We must know that we have trusted the Lord Jesus as our Savior so that we have Him! Cf. 1 John 5:12.

John does not specify any kind of feeling.

Nor does John indicate that everyone will have the same kind of experience.

John was saved through the ministry of John the Baptist. Andrew brought his brother Peter to the Lord. Paul's salvation was a most amazing experience, but he never preached his experience. He encouraged people to put their faith, their trust in the Lord.

They did not even say that you have to know WHEN exactly you were saved. The question is, Do you know Him now as your Savior?

(Conclude with John 3:16--emphasizing, "that whosoever believeth in him (Christ) should not perish, but have everlasting life.")

Concl: Are you not amazed with the simplicity of the Gospel? And is it not far too wonderful ever to have been designed by man? It is a gift--a gift which God never takes back. And the assurance comes when we turn from ourselves and all of the sin and weakness you can see to look at the Word of God and all that it teaches us of a Savior who saves us, and keeps us, forever!