

## Assurance of Salvation

I recently have been reading a book by a well-known Amish author, and he was lamenting the rise of an Amish faction in the late 1940's, of people who had gotten hold of some verses in 1 John, that we can know that we are saved. This is apparently at odds with conventional Amish belief, that we can fall at any time and so cannot really know we are saved until we are in heaven. According to the author, the "erring" members eventually went Mennonite, and even Baptist, where they came to believe "once saved, always saved". He believes that the Biblical warnings to endure, bear fruit, not fall away, etc. preclude us from stating categorically in this life that we "are saved". Apparently we are to believe the gospel, do our best to obey it, and hope we make it in the end. I suppose they see salvation as meaning entrance into heaven, not a definitive experience in this life.

In last week's lesson, "Preservation and Perseverance", I attempted to resolve the seeming conflict between passages that show the security of the believer (mostly from the gospel of John):

- God gives certain specific people to Christ
- Only those whom the Father draws will actually come to Christ
- Christ receives all who come to him, gives them eternal life, and will raise them up at the last day
- Of those who come to Christ and receive life, none will be lost
- No one, and nothing, can take us out of the Father's hand, or the hand of Christ

with other scriptures that warn us of our responsibility to endure. We also recognized that the falling away of many is not only predicted but has occurred from the beginning, and in the last days we can expect a "great falling away". That is, many people will confess Christ temporarily but then go back to their old ways.

It was my contention that while "Once saved, always saved" is quite an obnoxious phrase because of the way it has been used to excuse ungodly living, yet it is true, if we define what it means, really to be saved. Just because someone goes through the "sinner's prayer" does not necessarily mean they have genuinely been saved. Someone can outwardly appear to be saved, at least temporarily, but the truth will eventually be seen.

I also made the point that as we are not God, we cannot always tell the difference between the wheat and the tares, between those who are fallen away because they were never in Christ, and those who really are saved but temporarily weakened or even backslidden. We need to pray for them, either to get saved, or to return to the faith with genuine repentance.

Many people think they are saved when they are not, and many people who really are saved, are laboring under doubts, confusion, and fears that they are lost. We hope to bring the first under genuine conviction to experience real salvation, and to encourage the last to have confidence in Christ alone, and not their own human efforts to please him.

### Can We Really Know We are Saved, Now?

1. Scriptures say that we ARE saved, not that we are going to be  
Eph. 2:5 – "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)"
2. Believers have spiritual life now, already.  
Eph. 2:5, above – To be quickened is to be made alive.  
1 Jn. 5:11-12 – "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son hath not life."
3. We are now the sons of God, not just "going to be"  
1 Jn. 3:1-2 – "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

4. The book of 1 John was written so we could know we are saved.

1 John 5:13 – “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

5. But none of this is to deny that there is a future, more complete, salvation at death and especially the resurrection, when we actually see our Saviour.

Rom. 13:11 – “For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

### **How can we know we are really saved?**

Since there are many people who eventually fall away, how can we really know we “have the real thing”? How can we know that we really know Christ and that he has given us eternal life?

1. By faith, believing on Christ and receiving him

Jn. 1:12-13 – “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

1 Jn. 5:1 – “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...” (but Jas. 2:19)

2. Walking in the light, not darkness – 1 Jn. 1:6-7

3. Faithful, obedient, holy living

1 Jn. 2:3-4 – “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

1 Jn. 3:3 – “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

1 Jn. 3:9 – “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ...” (habitual, unconfessed, unrepented of)

4. Loving one another

1 Jn. 3:14 – “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. ...”

1 Jn. 4:7-8 – “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

5. Overcoming the world

1 Jn. 5:4 – “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

6. Our heart does not condemn us (our conscience is clear before God)

1 Jn. 3:21 – “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (see 1 Jn. 1:9 and 2:1)

7. We have a real, personal relationship with Christ

1 Jn. 2:12-14 – “... ye have known him that is from the beginning ...”

8. The witness of the Spirit

1 Jn. 3:24 – “... And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

1 Jn. 4:13 – “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

Rom. 8:16 – “The Spirit itself [*himself*] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”

Phl. 1:6 – “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”

Notes and audio for this and other lessons are available at <https://hnslack.wixsite.com/mysite>.