

**Standing Firm: Knowing the Resources Given – Part 5**  
Ephesians 6:17a

*“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a **helmet the hope of salvation.**”*

1 Thess. 5:8

**Introduction:** Part of the human condition is to experience **insecurity**. Some people mask this better than others through bravado or acting like they do not care at all, but insecurity based on some level of fear grips everyone. In fact, the ones that can actually *recognize this* are the ones who can truly work through it and live life with proper confidence. Our insecurities keep us from being honest with each other (including our spouse), from willingly confessing our sin (the fear of being “found out” is paramount), and from living out who we truly are in a world that will mock, cancel, reject, and persecute those who believe in truth. Insecurities are especially detrimental during wartime when readiness and confidence are of utmost importance.

In the book/miniseries called “*Band of Brothers*” which follows Easy Company of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne during WWII from training to the surrender of the Germans, the story of Private Albert Blithe is told. Private Blithe was gripped with insecurity and fear, so much so that at the Battle of the Bulge he was frozen in place, unwilling to engage the enemy or fire his weapon until his superior, Captain Winters, came over to motivate him. Later in his foxhole Blithe got a visit from Lieutenant Speirs during a respite from the fire fight. There Blithe opened up about his struggles:

Blithe: *“**Lieutenant**, Sir when I landed on D-day I found myself in a ditch all by myself and...I fell asleep. I think it was the airsickness pills they had given us. When I woke up, I didn’t really try to find my unit...to fight...I just...I just kind of stayed put.*

Speirs: *“What’s your name, trooper?”*

Blithe: *“Blithe, sir, Albert Blithe sir.”*

Speirs: *“Do you know why you hit in that ditch, Blithe?”*

Blithe: *“I was SCARED”*

Speirs: *“We’re all scared. You hid in that ditch because you think there’s still hope. But Blithe, the only hope you have is to accept the fact that you are **already dead**. The sooner you accept that, the sooner you’ll be able the function as a soldier’s supposed to function...without mercy, compassion, without remorse. All war depends on it.”*

Soldiers in war know that if they allow fear to grip and insecurity rule, they will be ineffective against the enemy. But a soldier also can only counter this with the reality of **death, not life**. In the life we live in Christ, we have a **far greater assurance** given to us that not only keeps us away from doubt and insecurity, but fills us with confident motivation to engage. The Bible speaks clearly about these things:

- **We are dead to ourselves and alive in Christ** – Galatians 2:20 - *I have been **crucified with Christ**. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. **And the life I now live in the flesh I live by***

*faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” We once were dead in our sin, but now we are alive in Christ and dead to self*

- **Full Assurance is something that CAN be reached** – Colossians 2:2 – *“that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* It comes through a knowledge and understanding of Christ
- **We can CONFIDENTLY enter the Holy Place of God** – Hebrews 10:19-23 – *“Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence to enter the holy places** by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us **draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for he who promised is faithful***

So in Christ we can know that we are raised with Christ, that when we KNOW CHRIST we can have full assurance, and we can draw near to God through the blood of Christ, since it is based on Christ’s faithfulness, not our own. All of this speaks to the next piece of armor, that which protects a vital piece of our bodies, our head.

#### **The Picture Explained:***“and take the helmet of salvation”*

Paul already covered the fact that we daily need to take up the armor of truth, righteousness, the gospel, and faith. Each of these countered specific attacks that the devil unleashes on God’s people. Here, there is not a specific attack mentioned, but an explanation of what the helmet actually does. *How does Satan attack our salvation?* We’ve looked at the fact that he seeks to **blind** the eyes/hearts of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4), doing all he can to keep people away from the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He can show a wide and easy path of life, showing people that they can have all they want AND still go to heaven (Matt. 7:13). However, we know that path only leads to destruction. But we know with believers, he cannot take away our salvation, so he is left with trying to get us to question or doubt our salvation. If he can help us question the goodness of God, the power of redemption, or the security of the Spirit, he will make us **ineffective, scared, and debilitated soldiers** who lack joy and motivation and settle for quiet anonymity.

So this morning we want to look at what the Bible offers in terms of **the security of our salvation, the assurance of our salvation, and the benefits that come from that security and assurance**. The goal is that all who know Christ would be sure, and in that surety we would have a confident, fearless, passionate pursuit of God and all His promises.

#### **The Problem Posed by False Assurance**

Anything that is pure, holy, and true given by God will be counterfeited by our enemy. If confident assurance of our salvation is a gracious gift from God, Satan will try to present a partial truth and pseudo reality of false assurance. Though occasional doubts are normal, and certain doubts about salvation do NOT equal unbelief, we should *“examine ourselves to see where we are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? ---- unless indeed you fail the test! (2*

Cor. 13:5). This examination is to prove, to come out the other side of doubt with confidence. But what are areas that people often trust in for salvation that DO NOT YIELD assurance, but cling to things the Bible never talks about. Let's unpack a few common ones:

1. **I'm saved because I'm part of the church/Bible Study/ministry for a long time** – This is a far too common issue. When we have people who “grow up” in churches or who have attended for a long time (years, decades), they acquire a certain lingo, learn the culture, and can even recite some of the sayings. But one of the dead giveaways of this false assurance that looks at *attendance or serving as means of salvation* is this person rarely talks about their relationship with Christ, and if they do, it will be in vague generalities and not personal understanding and knowledge. Folks, if you have been here a long time and you know Christ, you should be MATURE, meaning you have dealt regularly with your sin, are known for your Biblical wisdom and passion for obedience.
2. **I'm saved because I did something in the past** – Praying a prayer, making a decision, or walking an aisle cannot save anyone. Now, none of these are necessarily wrong in themselves, but again, far too often people point to something they've done IN THE PAST as reason to be assured. Make no mistake, there is a point in time that we are justified by our faith, even though many cannot point to that exact moment (this pastor included), however, the Bible NEVER gives assurance of faith to us based on something in the past, but rather who we are in the present. It's a little like if I asked you *how your marriage is going* and you told me about *your wedding day*. Maybe you're a romantic and it was a exceptional day, but to understand how a marriage is going we need to examine the present, NOT a day in the past.
3. **I'm saved but I just practice in my own way** – We'll examine this in a few minutes on the positive assurance side, but when people say they love Jesus but not His church, or love Jesus but never read His Word, or love Jesus but never fellowship with other believers, serve, disciple, evangelize, pray, or many other commands Scripture gives to every believer, there can be no ongoing assurance of salvation.
4. **I'm saved because I'm a good person** – This is tied with the first one above, but many believe that because they are good (or better than most), that secures their salvation. This person does NOT understand their sin, thus they do NOT understand their desperate need of a Savior. This person will point to all the things they've done (Matt. 7:21-23) for the Lord as means of salvation, but there will never be enough to save, and especially not enough to know you're saved.

### The Power Base of our Security

But where does security come from, and how does assurance flow from it? First, there is a slight but important difference between security and assurance. The first is based on the work of God in Christ through the Spirit alone, and the second is the *internal sense we may have based on certain evidences in our lives that we are actually born again and will persevere as Christians until the end of our lives*. I just watched a documentary about *Boeing* airplanes, and the amazing track record of safety that they have. **Security** is based on the fact that the planes are built right, and **assurance** comes when you have confidence to fly in them. The Apostle John differentiated these in a slight way in his writing of the **gospel of John and the epistle of 1 John**. The gospel of John gives this as a purpose statement: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these*

*are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:30-31) This is security. If we believe in Jesus, in all the ways He is presented, to the point that we entrust ourselves to Him, turning from our sin, we will have eternal life. The epistle of 1 John has a slightly different **purpose statement**: *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”* (1 John 5:13). Notice this is written to those who ALREADY believe and have eternal life, but the emphasis on the FIRM, EXPERIENTIAL knowledge of salvation, which will breed confidence

So what is the basis of SECURITY:

- 1) **The FINISHED WORK and POWER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST** - Jesus died once for all (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12; 10:10), meaning He did not have to die continually nor does anything else have to die like the OT sacrifices. His blood “opened the curtain” that separated us from God and it was not to be shut again (Heb. 10:19-22). God was SATISFIED with the payment for sin, which was sufficient to cover the sin of EVERYONE who would believe. This is security, knowing that God did not require MORE than this nor do we have to wonder if we have certain sin that slipped through the cracks. Jesus also said ALL that the Father gave to Him He will not cast out, and He would LOSE none of whom were given to Him (John 6:37-39). Not only that, but Jesus said that He gives His sheep eternal life, they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of His hand or the Father's hand (John 10:28-30). This is why Paul could confidently write Romans 8:38-39, which says that NOTHING can separate a believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 2) **The ETERNAL LOVE AND PURPOSE OF GOD THE FATHER** – We started the letter of Ephesians with the understanding that it is God the Father who loves us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), who chose us in Him (1:4) and predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will (Eph. 1:5-6). Saving humanity was God's plan, choice, and purpose, and He will not only lose none, but promises that since HE is the One who started the work in the first place will be the One who faithfully completes it at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).
- 3) **The SEALING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** – When we come by faith through grace to Jesus Christ, we are **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). Our eternal state is sure (1 Pet. 1:3-5) since it is guarded by the power of God Himself, but the Holy Spirit is our assurance that we are His.

So our security has EVERYTHING to do with the work of God, His promises, and His ability to fulfill them. Assurance comes through the EVIDENCES that salvation is true and real, but NOTHING we can do will bring us security (this is imperative to understand). We do “work out our salvation”, meaning we respond obediently to the work God is doing, but it is all because “He is at work to will and to do according to His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

### The Pleasure of Full Assurance

There is a certain type of doubt that every believer goes through. Charles Spurgeon, known as the Prince of Preachers, filled tomes of sermons assuring people of the work of Christ and security through faith. But, even he struggled with an inability to sense and feel the surety of God's love for him. He could have seasons of despondency and depression of spirit, and could doubt his interest in Christ, the calling of his election, his perseverance, and even God's love. *Have you ever felt that way?* This makes sense since we live in the flesh, are slow to mature, wrongly compare ourselves to others, still deal with

our sin, and have an enemy who is ready to pounce on our doubts. Here is what Spurgeon believed and spoke about these doubts:

*“I find it very convenient to come every day to Christ as a sinner --- as I came at first. ‘You are no saint’ says the devil. Well, if I am not, I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Sink or swim, there I go --- other hope I have none”*

*“If you are really saved, brethren, not a hair of your heads belongs to yourselves: Christ’s blood has either bought you or it has not, and if it has, then you are altogether Christ’s, every bit of you, and you are neither to eat nor drink, nor sleep, but for Christ. Our ground of trust is NOT found in our experience, but in the person and work of our Lord Jesus.”*

If sometimes we doubt, how do we have true, ongoing, confidence building assurance? There are **evidences** that will be true of every believer, that when we see these growing, our assurance will be sure. **1 John** gives us several categories that summarize these:

1. **We will walk in the light and not the darkness** (1:5-7) – Talk is cheap, but if we SAY or profess to know Christ, we will walk consistently in the light. To say you are a believer and continue on in a habit of sin makes us a liar, and the truth is not in us
2. **We will willingly confess our sin** (1:8-10) – Again, confession is an important part of repentance, which means we turn away, hate, and desire to get as far away from our sin as we can. When we are ever *comfortable with sin*, our assurance of salvation will be negligible.
3. **We will be obedient to all that God calls us to** (2:3-4) – Salvation is NOT forged out of our obedience, but will breed it. A new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) will have a new desire to obey, since His commands are for our good, not a burden.
4. **We will have a genuine love for other believers** (2:9-11) – This means it will primarily happen in God’s church with other born again believers. NOT being involved in a church (fellowship, serving, building up, etc) will mean a low sense of assurance.
5. **We will hate this world** (2:15-17) – This world has nothing for us, and this world has everything. We no longer love the creation more than the Creator
6. **We will have discernment of TRUTH, including doctrine** (2:24-25) – This is part of the armor of God, that we will be bound in truth and not delivered over to the lie
7. **We will practice righteousness** (3:10) – Since we will BE righteous
8. **We have the Holy Spirit’s ongoing testimony** (4:13; Rom. 8:14-16) – The Holy Spirit guides us in truth, convicts us of sin, and points us to Jesus.

This is *how we know*. But one of the greatest assurances of our salvation is the fact that we have **faith at all**, since faith is NOT something we could conjure up but is itself a gift of grace. If you believe that you are a sinner deserving of wrath, if you trust in Jesus alone, and if you ask for forgiveness, these are evidences of salvation. This means that Jesus will be in the spotlight of your life, you will want to not only treasure Him, but make Him known. It also means you will see discipline by Him as a good and necessary thing (Heb. 12:5-8), even an assuring thing.

Assurance is no small matter but something God WANTS for us. Assurance in a marriage breeds trust, and trust breeds depth of relationship. The same is true in our life with God in Christ. The more we have active assurance based on sure security the more **confident we’ll be in His love, willing to be known by others, the less fearful of others** (either being found out or what they’ll think), **the more bold and courageous we’ll be with the gospel, and more quickly we’ll run to the throne of grace on our best**

**and worst days** (Heb. 4:16). Can you answer the question of assurance? Do you know that you are a believer without a doubt, not based on something in your past but where you are at right now? If not, what is getting in your way? What is keeping you insecure rather than confident?

Private Blithe overcame his fear and found confidence. As Major Dick Winters recounts, he volunteered for a patrol during WW2, was shot in the neck (purple heart), recovered, and volunteered for the Korean War as a paratrooper where he dropped in behind enemy lines and won a bronze and silver star. Blithe went from frozen in place, paralyzed by fear, to a hero who confidently fought for his country and the brothers next to him. This is what confident assurance can do...it's what God has given us in the security of the finished work of Christ, his faithful love, and the indwelling of His Spirit. May we walk in dependant confidence today.