

“I Hope So? Or I Know!”

1 Thessalonians 1:2 – 10

To ask a person the question, “Are you certain of eternal life”, you would most likely get one of three responses: “No”; “No one can know for sure”; or “Yes, I sure am”. Anyone of these responses can be true depending on the individual and their understanding of the Biblical truths concerning salvation. A person who says “no” has probably never made the effort to learn the way of salvation. The person who is unsure will often spend their time “doing things” to try to get good enough to get to heaven. The person who is sure of heaven will be involved in serving God and endeavoring to bring others to him. As the Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians, according to (vs. 4) of the scripture text, he is confident of their salvation. How can we know? Paul gives three assurances of salvation.

1. The Source of Salvation.
 - A. Beloved of God. “For God so loved the world”. Genuine love is complete and unreserved, “for better or worse”. Marital love is the earthly pattern of God’s love. Our salvation is secure because it rests on the eternal love of God. We are reminded in (Romans 8: 39) how great is this love of God: “neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.
 - B. Grounded in the Word. The word is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit as seen in (vs. 5). H. A. Ironside said, “Faith rests on the naked word of God; that word believed gives full assurance.” As we read the word of God, the Holy Spirit uses that word to convict of sin, judgment and righteousness of Christ. We can be sure of our salvation because the source is the love of God, communicated by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, leaving us with the full assurance if we have done what is required.
2. Response to Salvation. Paul’s confidence in the Thessalonians relationship with God was based on the fact that they had “welcomed the message”, (vs. 6). Two elements are involved in that response.
 - A. Repentance. (vs. 9), “turned to God from idols”. Repentance means to turn in a new direction. The Thessalonians renounced dead idols and turned to the living God. Authentic conversion is a change of loyalty and lifestyle.
 - B. Faith. Repentance turns us away from sins and faith turns us to God. Faith is the individual’s response to God’s love according to (John 1:12), “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God”.
3. Results of Salvation. Jesus said in (Matthew 7:16), “by their fruit you will recognize them”. Paul notices three results of salvation in the lives of the believers in Thessalonica.
 - A. Example. They followed a good example (vs. 6) and then became a good example for others (vs. 7). What they did backed up what they said.
 - B. Witness. The word of the Lord rang out from them (vs. 8). The phrase uses the illustration of a trumpet blast or roll of thunder. They had a bold, excited,

confident witness. How different from the mild, timid witness given by many others.

- C. Anticipation. "To wait for his son from heaven" (vs. 10). They had no dread or fear as they faced a future of uncertainty. The song writer has expressed the Christian's confidence as he wrote, "Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand, but I know who holds tomorrow and I know who holds my hand".

Five days before Pulitzer Prize writer William Saroyan died, he wrote, "Everybody has got to die, but I have always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what"? The confident Christian knows what his or her standing is before Jesus Christ based on the facts of God's word and their response to it. The confident Christian has faith in what is beyond death. Accept the truth of (1 John 5:13), "I write these things unto you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life". That beloved, is why we have the Word of God.

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