

“Forgiven to be Sure!”

Hebrews 10:19-31

Intro. – Many of the hymns I learned while growing up spoke of assurance and the expectation of eternal life in God’s presence. Have you noticed how many of the songs we sing today speak of this same assurance?

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!” “I’m forgiven because You were rejected. I’m accepted. You were condemned. I’m alive and well, Your Spirit lives within me because you died and rose again.” “When the role is called up yonder, I’ll be there.” “Onward to the prize before us! Soon His beauty we’ll behold. Soon the pearly gates will open; we shall tread the streets of gold.” “We believe in the blood of Jesus. We believe in eternal life. We believe in the blood that frees us, to become the Bride of Christ.”

We sing these and others Sunday after Sunday. Do we mean them? Do we really consider ourselves “ready for the Judgment Day”? There is a great deal of confusion concerning this “blessed assurance” of which we sing. Some go to an unbiblical extreme asserting that once a person is “saved” they will always be saved. To the other extreme, many sincere Christians deny the possibility of any assurance. They think and even talk a false humility – e.g. “I sure hope to make it to heaven” or “If I make it and I emphasize the if”. Doubt and uncertainty reign in so many lives. Why? Is heaven nothing more than wishful thought? Is it true that none of us can “be sure” of heaven? Remember the commercials for this product? Why do we talk as though heaven is a pipe dream and something so “off in the distance”? Let me ask this morning, how many of you are sure you are headed to heaven? If there is any hesitancy on your part it is because you have a false *basis* for such assurance!

Purpose: by exposing false ideas of assurance we can be sure of heaven through forgiveness

Through this message, I want to expose false ideas of assurance. In summary I want to review the only foundation for any assurance – that of being saved by grace, through faith, at baptism for good works!

I ASSURANCE AND PREDESTINATION

- known as the doctrine of “eternal security” or “once saved always saved”...

A. It’s History

1. Once saved always saved began North African church leader by name Augustine (died A.D. 430)
2. Part of Augustine’s theology or system is known today as Calvinism

B. It’s Summary (T.U.L.I.P.)

1. *Total Depravity* (born in sin, born bad, incapable of any good...)
2. *Unconditional Election* (God chooses His... nothing you can or will do change God’s choice...)
3. *Limited Atonement* (Christ died only for “the elect” or those whom God predestined to be His...)
4. *Irresistible Grace* (forgiven and saved even if you don’t choose or want to be a Christian...)
5. *Perseverance of the Saints* (once saved always saved...)

C. Its Fallacy

1. God doesn’t override man’s will to bring him to salvation...
2. Likewise, God doesn’t override our will to keep us faithful and saved...
3. Bible makes plain that a believer will be saved only by grace through faith at baptism – through faith one remains under grace (Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:6-14; 10:29)...

Bible teaches assurance, but not unconditional assurance that ignores your will/responsibility of choice.

II ASSURANCE AND EXPERIENCE (Feelings)

A. Common Belief Today

1. You can know you are saved IF you have had a certain feeling and/or experience.
2. The experience/feeling may vary – e.g.:
 - a. some it will be a tingly, warm kind of feeling while praying etc.
 - b. others = the ability to “speak in tongues”...
 - c. still with others = may be a “vision” or extra revelation from God = “God told me...”

3. Whatever the experience, the idea is the same = if you've had it, felt it or done it = saved!
4. Opposite conclusion same = if haven't had, felt, or done it, then you're not saved...

B. Common Mistake Today

1. Must insist this *subjective* approach is wrong. Any subjective feeling is ambiguous at best:
 - a. feelings/experience can be interpreted a million ways.
 - b. what might be a deep, significant "religious experience" to one might be indigestion...
 - c. how does one know for sure they're interpreting their feelings correctly? What's criteria?
 - d. how can one NOT be sure that "tongue speaking" isn't psychological or caused by Satanic powers (cf 2 Thessalonians 2:9) "*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.*"
2. Feelings/experiences are subject to changes
 - a. Illus. – Mary reminded me how I changed my mind in naming kids by how day going...
 - b. you may have wonderful feelings... and then conclude "I'm saved!"
 - c. what if you wake up feeling rotten... are you then to conclude you are not saved?
 - d. Illus. – D. L. Moody had man say to him didn't feel saved. Moody asked, "Was Noah safe in the ark?" "Certainly he was!" "Well, what made him safe, his feelings or the ark? – Point being not feelings that saved Noah and his family.
3. Bible nowhere says a particular *feeling* or *experience* is the basis of knowing you are saved; instead, your assurance is based on objective events (truth) we'll talk about in a moment.

He who looks in himself will find no true basis for hope!

III ASSURANCE AND PROMISES

- under grace salvation is NOT ours because we earn or deserve it in anyway...
- sin is there, but it is covered by blood of Christ – our assurance rest entirely on God's promises – we literally are *standing on the promises!*
- Three objective reference points must turn to when doubts arise as to our salvation:

A. The Death of Jesus

1. Romans 5:8 "*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinner, Christ died for us.*"
2. No matter what may happen, fact remains that Christ died to pay the punishment for your sins...
3. Why doubt His love – loved us while we were His enemies – imagine how much He loves us as His very children!
 - Romans 5:10 "*For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!*"

B. The Resurrection of Jesus

1. God promises to give us life, to raise us from spiritual death at baptism... to raise our bodies at his 2nd coming...
2. Why accept/believe this? Because God has already demonstrated his ability and desire to so in Christ' own bodily resurrection.

C. Our Own Death and Resurrection

1. Again, God promised, "Meet me at baptism and I will apply the blood of Christ to cover your sins and give you the gift of My Spirit to enable you to live for Me.
2. May doubt our feelings... our baptism... may wonder about experiences we encounter...
3. Still have objective reference points – death, burial and resurrection (Christ's and ours) – God promised to meet us at baptism and there we would receive all He promised to give!

Conclusion: Reformation leader, Martin Luther writes of the time he too was wondering of his standing with God. He writes, "It was if Satan were whispering, 'Martin, do you feel your sins are forgiven?'" Luther writes, "After fretting, I rose to my feet and said, 'No, I don't but I know they are because God says so in His Word.'"

Christian hope rests on God's promises not on feelings &/or experiences. It rests on works – God's works and not our works!

May our minds rest upon God's strength and faithfulness and not upon our weaknesses and doubts. Our text makes clear – *“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He is faithful who promised.”*