



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, 1 John 1:5-13

"Assurance"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the promises of Thy word that if we approach Thee through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, though dost hear our petitions. We thank Thee for the invitation to come and to bring to Thee the needs and aspirations of our hearts. And we do come to Thee now specifically that Thy blessing may be upon us as we study Thy word. We remember the many things that are said in Scripture concerning the Scriptures, how they are truly a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

We pray that Thou wilt enable us to walk in the light of the word. We pray that we may be convinced more and more of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for all of the life that Thou hast given us to live. We pray that Thou wilt make us fruitful Christians. We pray too, Lord that Thou wilt give us opportunity to communicate the faith that Thou hast communicated to us to others that they too may enjoy the relationship with Thee that means the forgiveness of sins, and sonship, and justification, and the other blessings that belong to the members of the family of God.

We praise Thee, Lord that we do have a Heavenly Father, and therefore we know that we can come to Thee and expect Thee to care for us, to guard, and protect us, and keep us. And then ultimately, Lord, to bring us home. And we pray now that as we

study the Scriptures we may be given insight to understand the truth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Now, the subject that was announced for tonight in our bulletin was, "The Believer and Sin," but it has occurred to me that we have omitted saying anything about the doctrine of assurance and consequently, since that is an important part of basic Bible doctrine, I'm going to take the liberty of changing the subject for tonight. We'll take up, "The Believer in Sin," next Wednesday night and tonight speak on the subject of, "Assurance."

Last week we discussed, "Eternal Security," which has to do with the assurance of our eternal salvation. But assurance, in the sense of the doctrine of assurance has to do with the possession of eternal life now. Now, I'd like for you to turn with me to 1 John chapter 5 and let me read the first thirteen verses of this chapter. 1 John chapter 5 verse 1 through verse 13.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not burdensome. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

That's a well-known fact that the seventh verse in the Authorized Version is not found in the most ancient manuscripts, and so we will skip that. The manuscript testimony for it is

extremely weak and almost all students of the Bible, orthodox and otherwise, agree that it is not part of the inspired first epistle of John. The eighth verse says,

"And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 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 of God hath not life. 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 again that last clause is not found in the most ancient manuscripts. And if you have a version such as the New American Standard Bible or others you will not find it. The section ends with,) 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."

We may begin by pointing out that every believer in Christ is safe from eternal judgment, but not every believer is sure of it. We find many illustrations of this kind of thing even in our natural life. A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches. He may live childish, die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

About fifteen years ago, I was in the Washington area and was reading *The Washington Post*, and I have made confession of sin for having read *The Washington Post*. [Laughter] And in the course of reading it that morning I noticed an incident, the account of an incident that happened which illustrates what I am speaking about. There was a fireman, who was off duty, by the name of Richard Gregory. And one night he stopped by the firehouse for a cup of coffee with the boys and learned, while he was there, that

he was the heir of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The money was left in trust to this man by a New York writer who had died in June of that particular year or the year before. And an attorney had been trying to find this young man by the name of Richard Gregory Shaw. And when he walked in the firehouse to have a cup of coffee with the boys, they had the paper before them and they said, "Hey, is this you?" And he looked at it and he realized, yes it was he. He remembered having known this writer and having befriended him and, of course, was greatly pleased to discover that he was the heir of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. But if that news had never come to him, he may have lived out his life unaware of the fact that he had inherited a quarter of a million dollars.

Today the popular language is the language of doubt, such as; we surmise, or we suppose, or we rather think, or we hope. And many who are believers do not really have the assurance of their faith. It's not uncommon at all for individuals to be very disturbed over whether they really have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore have salvation. Historically, this was a question that disturbed large groups of professing Christians, too. For example, the Church of Rome in the Council of Trent has said, "A believer's assurance of pardon for his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence." Cardinal Bellarmine, who was the champion of Rome on assurance, commented that it was, "The prime era of heretics." On the other hand Augustine, who was a much greater Catholic and a much greater believer, said, "To be assured of our salvation is no arrogant stoutness. It is our faith. It is no pride, it is devotion. It is no presumption, it is God's promise.

Now, when we turn to the Bible we know that the writers of holy Scripture do affirm that they not only have salvation but they know that they have that salvation. Job said, "I know that my redeemer liveth." The Apostle Paul says that he knows that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. The Apostle John here says in the thirteenth verse, "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." It is

not pride and arrogance to say, "We know that we have eternal life," according to Scripture.

Assurance is not simply a doctrine given to tickle our theological curiosity. It has great practical value. Salvation brings life, but assurance brings healthy life. And the believing Christian who is not only saved through his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ but knows that he possesses eternal life has a stability and also a joy that leads to an effective Christian testimony. John Calvin has something to say about this too, and I thought I should read that as well. In the *Institutes on the Christian Religion*, Calvin's greatest work, he says, "But they contend that it is a matter of rash presumption for us to claim an undoubted knowledge of God's will." Now, I would concede that point to them only if we took upon ourselves to subject God's incomprehensible plans to our slender understanding. But when we simply say with Paul, "We have received not the spirit of this world but the spirit that is from God, by whose teaching we know the gifts bestowed on us by the Lord God," how can they yelp against us without abusively assaulting the Holy Spirit? But if it's a dreadful sacrilege to accuse the revelation given by the spirit either of falsehood, or uncertainty, or ambiguity, how do we transgress in declaring it certainty."

So John Calvin together with the Apostles and others have affirmed that it is possible for us to know that we have eternal life. It's not pride. It is our faith.

Now, what are the means of our assurance? The Bible sets forth three means for assurance and I'm going to call them very simply, first of all, evidential; secondly, internal; and thirdly, external. But first of all, evidential or works in the Christian's life. Now, you have your Bibles opened at 1 John chapter 5. Just turn back a couple of chapters to 1 John chapter 3 verse 7 through verse 14, and notice as we read these verses the great stress that the Apostle John lays upon the evidences that we truly possess Christian life.

Now, verse 7 of 1 John chapter 3 reads, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin

is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Incidentally, that, "he that committeth" has reference to persistent sin not the sin that may occur upon occasion. That is the experience of all Christians. It was the experience of Abraham. It was the experience of Isaac. It was the experience of Jacob. He's talking about persistent sin, the life that is truly characterized by sin. So,

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and killed his brother. And wherefore killed he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

So the Apostle John says it is the inevitable issue of Christian life that Christians do good works. They love the brethren. They do righteousness, and their lives are an evidence of the outworking of the faith implanted within them by God the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter in the first chapter of his second letter and the tenth verse says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make (That form in the Greek text may be translated, "to make for yourselves," for stress rests upon what we do.) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make for yourselves your calling and election sure."

Now, you can see that he is speaking from the human standpoint rather than the divine by the order in which he has calling and election. If he were looking at things

from the divine standpoint he would have said, "To make your election and calling sure." But he says, "your calling," which is something that occurs in our history. Election is something that has occurred before we even came into existence. But Peter says he wants the brethren to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. And the following context sets forth a way of life and that way of life is the outworking of the life that God has implanted within us. It's one of the means by which we may examine our own life to see that we are in the faith. The man who says, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," but whose life has not changed at all is only fooling himself because when a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he is given a new nature and that new nature must express itself. Just as a new life expresses itself in the noise of crying so a new life in Christ expresses itself. And as that new life continues in its existence, it manifests itself in a definitive change of human existence. The believer, when he believes in Jesus Christ, is the recipient of a change within him that means a definitive change of life.

Now, some call that the perseverance of the saints. But it is one of the evidences of the fact that we belong to the Lord. The first sign, the first of the ways by which we may have assurance of salvation is evidential works in our Christian life.

The Puritans used to like to say, "Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doing." Last week in discussing eternal security I said, "The Lord Jesus described two marks which were found on all of his saints." The mark on the ear, they hear the shepherd's voice. And the mark on the foot, they follow him. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me." The inevitable result of the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is that he begins to follow him. They may follow him like a puppy, which follows its master for a little while and then wanders off in the field but always comes back. Now, that kind of following may be the following that we undergo. Jacob was that kind of an individual. He followed the Lord like a dog. He ran off into this place and he ran off into that. But you'll notice Jacob's life there was

a constant coming back to his master. So the Lord's sheep have those two marks. "I know them, they follow me."

Vance Havner has an old story about some Christians who went to a logging camp in his little book, *Peace Like a River* he talks about it. And he says that some time afterwards one of the men was asked by a friend this question. I guess those gruff unbelievers up there gave you quite a time about you being a Christian didn't they? He said, "No. They never even found it out." It always reminds me of a story of two fellows who went up to a preacher, had given a good message, and they both were talking to him and they recognized each other. And they said to the preacher, "We work at the same plant and it's just great to discover that we both are Christians." And the preacher said, "You mean you've been working together in this plant all these years and neither one of you knew that the other was a Christian?" He said, "I'm not even sure you are a Christians," because the life that we have in Jesus Christ is a life that will manifest itself.

Well, the first of the evidences of assurance is evidential works in the Christian's life. The second, I'm just going to call for the sake of an outline, an internal evidence. And it is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 8 and let's read verse 16. Romans chapter 8 and verse 16, the apostle writes in the sixteenth verse of the eighth chapter, "The spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Incidentally, the meaning of this text is the Holy Spirit bears witness and our spirit also bears witness. The point is not that the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God, though that is true. What the text really says is that there is a double witness here. There is the witness of the Holy Spirit and there is the witness of our spirit that we are the children of God.

Martin Luther was famous for quotable phrases, such as for example, *simul peccator et justus*, at the same time sinner and just. And what he meant by that simply was that a man who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ is a justified man, but at the

same time he is also a sinner. The fact that he is a sinner does not change since he's come to be related to Jesus Christ. There is a change of life in its heart and there is a definitive change that flows out of it, but as long as we're in the flesh we always can be called sinners. In fact, James calls believers sinners in his epistle. So Luther called men, "simul peccator et justus," and that was a focal point of theological controversies. The Romans Catholics saw it as a confession, inadvertently from him to the effect that he meant to teach that grace remained wholly, external to the believer. Well, they didn't like the idea of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and being legally accounted, justified before the Lord God. And at the same time, having within us a nature that was still sinful. And so they considered that statement of Luther's to be a confession that the grace that we receive in salvation was wholly external to us. Luther didn't mean that. He definitely taught that, while it's true that we were sinners and justified at the same time, there was a definite change within us that continued into sanctification.

One of the greatest of the statements made was, "*Spiritus Sanctus non est scepticus*," which is another Latin theological expression and it means simply the Holy Spirit is not a skeptic. The Holy Spirit is not a skeptic. What he meant by that when he used the expression was that the Holy Spirit breeds certainty. In other words, when we are responsive to the Holy Spirit what we receive is a testimony that is a testimony to the certainty of spiritual truth.

Now, with that in mind let's turn over to Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews chapter 10. In Hebrews chapter 10 we reach the climax of the writer of this epistle's argument concerning the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And beginning with the first verse let's read a few verses. This is Bible reading night. Hebrews chapter 10,

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make

the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?
Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins."

A very simple argument but very significant. If, for example, you have people coming to your house like I've been having for the last two or three days trying to repair the telephone. The telephone company's been there twice all ready. Well, every time you see the repair man coming up that's pretty much evidence that what was done before did not really do the job. And we'll probably have another visitor too because they're having difficulty finding the trouble. So the very fact, the writer of this epistle says, that you have a day of atonement over year after year after year, that's evidence that the sins were never taken away by the blood of bulls and goats.

"In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins,"

The author looks back to the tabernacle and the testimony that it gave to an unfinished work. The priests were constantly carrying on the sacrifices and the services pertaining to the tabernacle. Someone has pointed out, no priest ever sat down in the tabernacle area.

He was always on his feet working because his work was never finished. That was God's way of saying the redemptive sacrifice had not yet been made.

"So every priest standeth daily ministering and offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, Jesus Christ, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (testimony to the accomplishment of a finished work) from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

Now, that is a marvelous revelation, a revelation of a finished work. That is the Lord Jesus Christ has done something and it no longer needs to be done. It has been done. You know, when people give you a testimony of something good it's very helpful for others to say in testimony to something that it has truly taken place. For example, let's just suppose that I was the one instead of that fireman by the name of Richard Shaw that inherited two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Well now, if you came to me and said, "Lewis, did you read the newspapers? You've just inherited two hundred and fifty thousand dollars." Well, depending on your credibility I might respond with faith or unbelief. If some of you came up to me and said that I'd know you were joking with me. You don't have any credibility. And then if others of you came I might say, "Well, it just might be so." And some of you, well I would just know if he said it, it must be true. In other words, when we get something like this, if we become the heir of a fortune, we must have it on the highest authority. Well, the Scripture says that there is salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be good, of course, for some individual to say to me, "Did you know that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you'll have eternal life?" If he was a credible witness, well that would mean something to me. If, on the other hand, I read it in a book by a man who was outstandingly known for the credibility of his witness I would believe it even more. But in the final analysis if I'm going to be sure of spiritual

truth I must have it from God himself. That's why in testimony the ultimate testimony is the testimony of God in his word as the Holy Spirit applies that word.

Did you notice the next verse in Hebrews chapter 10? After he has said, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," he says, "and the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us." This is the greatest testimony of all, the testimony of the Holy Spirit that we who have believed in Jesus Christ do have the forgiveness of sins. For after he had said before, this is his testimony.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (And then he said,) and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

So the Holy Spirit's testimony is the ultimate testimony to the possession of everlasting life. He takes the word of God and applies the word of God to the believer. There is, then, the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit to the truth. And implanted within us by God is the testimony of our own spirit.

Now, I cannot describe how that feels to you and you cannot describe how the testimony of the Holy Spirit has affected you. It's not a feeling in the sense that it is something that is with us now and leaves us tomorrow. It is a deep conviction implanted there by God based on the word of God. But, the Apostle Paul says, there is that internal testimony to the salvation that God gives to us. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, deep down within, has the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit to the credibility of the word of God which says that when we believe in Jesus Christ we have everlasting life.

Now finally, the Bible also speaks of an external means of assurance and that is the word of God itself. Let's turn back to 1 John chapter 5 and verse 18, the passage that we read at the beginning of the hour. 1 John chapter 5 and we'll just read again verse 18.

1 John 5, did I say 18? I mean 13. 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. 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."

Now, we need to distinguish a couple of things here. We must distinguish the basis of our salvation from the basis of our assurance. They are not the same thing. The basis of our salvation is the blood of Christ or the atoning work of Christ. In Romans chapter 3 when the apostle describes how we have been justified, he says that God has sent forth Jesus Christ a propitiation through faith in his blood. In other words, our salvation rests upon what Christ did. That's why we preach constantly when we're preaching the Gospel, the blood and the cross. That's why the apostle, when said he went to the Corinthians, he spoke to them nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is the Gospel and that is the basis of our salvation. It is related to the sacrifice of Christ. We can put in various ways. We are saved through his death. We are saved through his atoning sacrifice. We are saved by the shedding of his blood. There was a little girl in Iowa who thinking about the word blotted said, "Jesus has blooded out all my sins." And what she said was nevertheless true theologically that our sins are gone because the blood of Christ was shed.

I have had a friend in the city of Dallas in whose home I had a Bible class many years ago. It was a very large Bible class. We frequently had a hundred and twenty-five people in this home. It was a large home and out of it a number of people came and were largely responsible for the growth of one of the leading Bible churches in this part of the city. Well, about fifteen years ago the husband contracted cancer and it was after Believers Chapel had been in existence for four years. But I went by to see them because they had been old, old friends. And the wife began to tell me about how she had gone forward in a meeting many, many years ago as a child near McKinney thinking that she was accepting Jesus Christ. She joined the Methodist Church. She was a nominal one for

a number of years. And then one Christmas, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Southern Methodist University had their Christmas meeting in their home.

And they asked me to come and speak to them and I spoke from Romans. She told me, she said, "You spoke from Romans." Romans, I was so surprised for a Christmas message. And she said, "The next Sunday we came to your church." I was preaching at Grace Bible Church at the time. And she said, "We kept coming off and on for a few months and then as you were preaching a series on the blood or something specifically along that line I remember a morning in which I felt a great burden roll off my shoulders." I'm reading exactly what she told me. "It was just like a great weight and I felt free for the first time in my life, I believe. We went out to the car and I got in and said to my husband, 'Something happened to me this morning. I don't know what it is but something happened. I felt a great burden leave.'" It reminded me of Christian in Pilgrim's Progress for that's exactly how he describes his salvation. How he carried that burden on the back of his shoulder but finally it fell off and it rolled right down into the cross and the tomb and disappeared. He felt the burden leave.

Well, the basis of our salvation is the blood of Christ. That's why we're saved. If we're saved, we're saved because of what Christ has done. But that's not the basis of our assurance. The basis of our assurance is the word of God.

Now, in 1 John 5, 13 we read, "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." So the things that are written are written that we may know that we have eternal life. Knowledge is the fuel of confidence. When you see a Christian who has great confidence it is because he has great knowledge. If his knowledge is deficient his confidence is going to be deficient. The secret of a stable, happy, Christian life is the knowledge of the word of God. These things are written that you may know, so knowledge is the fuel of confidence. We learn that the blood makes me secure and that that word makes me sure. So I'm secure

because of the blood of Christ that was shed, but I am sure of it because it is written in God's word and God does not lie.

In the Old Testament, when the saints of the Old Testament brought their sacrifices they were told in passages like the Book of Leviticus, for example, in the fourth chapter and about the twentieth verse where the author speaks about the sin offering they were told these words, "And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them." How did they know that they were forgiven? Well, they brought the sacrifice, of course, but the reason that they knew they were forgiven was because God had said that they would be forgiven through Moses. They were forgiven because of what Christ would do later on, but they became assured of their forgiveness because they believed the word that God spoke to them through Moses. Our salvation comes to us by virtue of what Christ has done but we are sure of it because of what stands written in the word of God. And as we think of the one who has written the word and are persuaded of his faithfulness then we have assurance. Salvation comes from the cross, assurance comes from the word. That is why it's so important for us to read the Bible and come to understand the truths that are in the word of God.

Someone pointed out a long time ago that there were three great words. One of them is the word, "are." It stresses the fact of our assurance. The Apostle Paul says, "By him that believe," I think it's, "By him they that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses." "Are justified," do you remember the text in 1 John 3, 1? "Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God," and the old Greek manuscripts add, "and we are. Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God and we are."

And the next word is the word, "hath." "He that hath the Son hath life." Not hopes to have, not might have, not probably has, not we may surmise has, but hath, h-a-t-h. Roland Hill used to say, h-a-t-h, that spells got it. "He that hath the Son hath life."

And the other word, the other great word of assurance is the word, "know," and we've all ready had that in 1 John 3, 14. "We know that we pass from death to life because we love the brethren." In 1 John 5, 19, "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the wicked on."

I love an illustration that Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse used to tell of an experience that he had when he was in Brussels, Belgium. He was preaching in a French speaking congregation one Sunday morning and took as his subject the doctrine of the new birth. Now, Dr. Barnhouse knew French very well because he was an aviator in World War I and after World War I was over he stayed in France and pastored a little church or two there while he also studying history at one of the French universities. But he was preaching in Brussels and he said in the course of his message that he gave that morning to this French speaking congregation, he said, "I know I have been born again. I know that I have eternal life. Believers have been given the right to know that they will be in heaven so I am sure I will be there." I know that's exactly how Dr. Barnhouse said it because that's the way he used to talk. There was never anybody surer of anything that he talked about than Dr. Barnhouse.

Well, the next morning he said, "The bell and the corridor of the hotel clanged where he was and soon the concierge brought to his office a young man in the uniform of the Belgium army. He wore the stripes of an adjutant. He had been in the church the day before and immediately he began speaking of the manner in which I had presented my message. He said, 'Miseur, le pasteur, your assurance frightens me. If you had said, 'I hope I'm saved. I'm trying to be saved. I'm doing the best I can to be saved. I hope that I shall be in heaven,' and then I can understand. But for you to say so dogmatically, 'I know I'm saved. I am sure I will be in heaven.' Miseur, your assurance frightens me.'"

Dr.

Barnhouse looked at him and he said "Agetent, are you married?" With some surprise he answered, "Oh, yes I am."

And immediately Dr. Barnhouse said, "Agetent, your assurance frightens me. If you had said, 'I hope I'm married. [Laughter] I'm trying to be married. [Laughter] I'm doing the best that I can to get married. [Laughter] Perhaps after I've lived with my wife for twenty years, I shall be married.' [Laughter] Then I should understand, but for you to say right out, 'I am married. Well, your assurance frightens me.' 'Oh,' but he began to protest, 'it's not the same thing. It's not the same thing.' And Dr. Barnhouse said, 'Why isn't it the same thing? Didn't you go to the city hall and get married?'" You know anything about continental marriages; you know that's where they are performed. And in Brussels, when I was visiting in Brussels many years ago, we went down to the square in front of the city hall and observed some of the married people who'd just been married by the mayor coming out. And in those days, I don't know whether the mayor does it personally now, but in those days the mayor himself performed the marriages. And they were not legal unless the mayor performed them and signed the certificate to that effect. Frequently people would then go to a church, but the church marriage had no legal standing at all. It was the civil marriage that really counted. That was the one that was the legal marriage.

So he said, "If you had said, 'I hope I'm married,' I could understand. But for you to say, 'I'm married,' your assurance frightens me." He said, "Agetent, how do you know that it was the mayor who performed your ceremony? How do you know that the mayor was not sick that morning and that the janitor did not take his place? [Laughter] Did you know the mayor personally?" He said, "Oh, no but I'm sure it was the mayor." "Well, how do you know?" He said, "For would you really be married if the man who performed the ceremony were a substitute, and imposter? Would your marriage certificate be valid if it really were a forgery? Would you really be married?" "Well, no he hesitated. But I'm sure it was the mayor." And Dr. Barnhouse said, "Ah. In other words, you have

faith in a man and in a document. Your assurance that you're married depends upon the identity of the man and the validity of that document." He said, "It's the same with our salvation. It depends upon the identity of the man who performed the saving work on the cross at Calvary, and the validity of the document of the word of God."

As a matter of fact that's precisely what John says. He says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave of His son. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son." Our salvation depends upon the identity of the triune God, and the sacrifice, and also the validity of the record in which this saving story is given.

Now, can we know then that we are saved? Yes. Faith may be faith of full conviction. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says, "Let us come unto Him with full assurance of faith." We can know that we are saved and it is not pride, it is not arrogance. Now, of course, I want to say this for some of you that are weak because I know there may be someone in this auditorium who still even after this wonders whether you really have eternal life or not. It's possible to be saved but not sure of it. In other words, it's possible for an individual to have truly believed in Jesus Christ but have nagging doubts about their salvation. There unfortunately are many people who have a great deal of difficulty with this. And sometimes their doubting period extends over a period of time.

Now, I know I had an experience quite similar to that. It did not extend over a lengthy period of time, but at least six months or so. And I can remember finally reading John chapter 6 and verse 37. I was still in the insurance business in Alabama at the time and I was disturbed again over whether I had really believed in Christ. But I saw that text that said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." And so I went in my bedroom, I can still remember it. I was by myself; I went in bedroom, got down upon my knees and said, "Oh, God. If I have never come to you, I come to you now. And I

am claiming this text, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' I'm coming now if I have not come before." Since that time I never had any doubts. I think I was saved earlier but my assurance dated from that time.

Now, I'd like to just give you a little illustration. I'm going to give you two illustrations. I'm going to give you a gentile illustration and I'm going to give you Jewish illustration. I'm going to give you the Jewish illustration first. Perhaps the greatest ceremony that a Jew ever undergoes is the Passover ceremony. And let's just imagine now that we are observing a Passover feast in Egypt. And we notice that we have an insight into a little family and we also have insight into a family, an Egyptian family. Now, let's suppose it's the time for the destroying angel to come and the promises of God, of course, have been given through Moses that if the blood is on the two side posts of the door and on the upper doorpost. When he sees the blood he will hover over, that's the meaning of the Hebrew expression, he will hover over that particular home. And when the destroying angel comes through he will prevent the destroying angel from coming in and slaying the firstborn. So that's the picture.

Now, we have a fellow over here who's name is Esau Unwar Nassa Sadat [ph49:25] [Laughter] and he's an Egyptian. He's a neighbor. He lives in the same little suburb. It's kind of like Richardson out of Cairo. You know? [Laughter] And he's an Egyptian and he does not believe the words that Moses has been given. He's heard something about, he has a Hebrew friend, he's heard what was said but he thinks all of that is just poppycock. Well, now he doesn't say that. If he were an Englishman he would say, "It's twaddle." But as an Egyptian he just says, "It's all Nile water," so far as he's concerned. He doesn't believe that at all.

But of course, we know that what happens incidentally, this is the name of where they're living is Pyramid Street in case you wanted to know exactly where they're living. Now, when the destroying angel comes through of course he's going to lose his first born because he's an unbeliever. He does not put the blood on the doorpost because he

doesn't believe. Now, he illustrates a man who hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ but who just does not believe it. He doesn't believe the word is truly a word of salvation so he's lost.

Now, living next door to Esau Anwar -- what did I say? Sadat Nasser, or whatever his name is, there's a fellow whose name is Goldberg. And the wife's name is Sarah Goldberg and the husband's name is Isaac, and they have a little boy that they call Abey. He was named after Abraham. Now, the message has come to this little family about the fact that they've got to put blood on the two side posts and on the upper door posts. And if they don't the destroying angel's going to slay Abey. Well, now Sarah is a worry wart. She is a wife but she worries about little Abey. Now, she's heard the word. She's the heard all of the word about what's going to happen. And every five or ten minutes she goes out and looks to be sure the blood is on the doorpost and fixes it up a little bit so it was looking real red all the time.

Constantly disturbed, has her fingernails worn down to the bone, has all ready consumed a whole bottle of compost, badgers and heckles her husband, and don't you know what compost is? [Laughter] Badgers and heckles her husband constantly but Isaac, her husband, is, see he's a person who not only believes. Sarah believes but she's just not sure. She really believes. She's put the blood on the doorpost. But Isaac not only has believed and seen that the blood is on the doorposts but he's resting in the faithfulness of God. He keeps saying, "Sarah, why are you so disturbed? God said he was going to hover over us when the destroying angel came through. He said it in his word. He is faithful to his word. God does not lie. Don't you know that?" She said, "I know, but. I know, but."

But he's sitting there reading the *Memphis Dispatch* wondering if the Ramses Rats or the Goshen Giraffes won the chariot races. [Laughter] And finally, being provoked by Sarah he says, "Just remember the faith rest technique that Bob Themstien taught us some time ago." [Laughter] Well anyway, you get the point. Isaac is a person that not only

believes, but he has rested in the faithfulness of a God who said what he said. Now, Esau Nasser Anwar Sadat or whatever his name is, he's lost because he didn't believe. Sarah, she's saved because she has believed. She's put the blood on the doorpost but she doesn't have any assurance because she doesn't trust God's faithfulness in his word. But Isaac is just enjoying the whole situation because by the grace of God he's been brought to faith and also to a sense of the faithfulness and trustworthiness of the word of God.

Now, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and you have a confidence that God is faithful to the word that he has given us, you're saved and you're sure of it. It is possible, however, to be saved and not be sure because you've not come to settled conviction concerning the faithfulness of God. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Knowledge is that which shores up confidence in spiritual things. I said I'd give you a Gentile illustration.

Suppose I were to walk up to you and say, "You know, I have the greatest admiration for you. And as you know I'm just rolling in money and I'd like to do something for you. And I'd like you to know that today I went down to the bank where you do business because you mentioned it to me that you do business at the First National Bank. And I've gone down to the First National Bank and I've deposited ten thousand dollars to your account just out of appreciation for the fellowship that we've had and the ways in which you've been a blessing to me." Now, there are three ways in which you could react to that. First of all, you could react in unbelief. Most of my friends would say, "That's the way I would react to it all right if you told me something like that."

But you could react by saying, "Well Dr. Johnson tells the truth most of the time and I believe he has probably told the truth. He is rolling in money. Can't you see? He's rolling in money and he could easily do that, put ten thousand dollars to my account. And so I just think I'll just go down and find out what's happened." So he goes down and over and he writes out the check for ten dollars. But he doesn't got any money in his

bank account. He goes and writes out a check for ten dollars and hesitantly pushes it toward the teller wondering, "Now, is this check good or not?" Well, he actually has believed me but he doesn't have a great deal of confidence in me. So that's one kind, that's another kind of reaction. The reaction of most would be unbelief. But then this reaction, I do believe him but I'm just not sure. And then finally there is the other reaction, you could just go down to First National Bank, write a check for ten thousand dollars, go over and slap the check down in front of the teller and say, "Fork over that ten thousand dollars that was deposited in my account." [Laughter] Now, that is faith and assurance.

Now when we come to spiritual things, you see in the word of God we've been told we have salvation through what Christ did on the cross. And we also have in the bible the testimony of a faithful God. And since he does not tell a lie we can be assured that when he says that salvation is available on the basis of grace through the instrumentality of faith by the virtue of the blood that was shed through Jesus Christ, we can know that we have salvation when we believe that word that has come from God. He assures us of the truthfulness of it and he does not lie.

I said in the beginning and I must stop with this, that there's a great value in assurance because while salvation gives us life, assurance gives us joy and confidence. What a value this becomes when death draws near. Is your faith one that you can die by? Is your faith one that you can simply live with? Because when the time comes for us to make the ultimate transition from this life to the life that is to come, it's the assurance of our salvation as well as the possession of the salvation itself that will make it possible for us to enter into the presence of the Lord rejoicing in confidence, assured, and happy that we leave this existence to enter the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that if you're here tonight and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you realize that salvation comes by the blood that was shed. Flee to him. Trust him. If, however, you've had a problem concerning assurance we encourage you to

remember that the word of God is written by a God that cannot lie. May God bring you to not only salvation but to the assurance of your salvation and to a joyous happy Christian experience. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the teaching of Thy word. We thank Thee for the assurance of our salvation that it is not pride or arrogance, that we can know that we belong to Thee. Give, Lord assurance to all of the believers in this room. And for the unbelievers, bring them to Christ and to salvation and assurance in Jesus name, Amen.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]