



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Can I Know that I am Saved? or The Doctrine of Assurance.” TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] And again we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and redeemer and we ask that through the Holy Spirit you may teach us tonight the things that we need to know concerning the truth. We pray that each one present may have the thrilling experience of the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for tonight is “Can I know that I am saved?, or The Doctrine of Assurance.” And I want to read a few verses from the 5th chapter of 1 John. And so will you turn there and we will read the first thirteen verses? 1 John chapter 5 verses 1 through 13. Now, John writes, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” And you'll remember that last time we discussed this verse in connection with the doctrine of faith. And we pointed out that the “believeth” is in the present tense, “wherein is born” is in the perfect tense which indicates that the faith is the product of the new birth.

“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 grievous. 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.”

Now, verse 7 as you probably know is a verse which has very very little textual authority and, consequently, it is almost certain, in fact I think it is certain, that this is not a part of the word of God. Now, I know it is in the English text and, of course, some people think that the English text is the word of God, but remember we have talked about this before. The word of God is the original text, the original Greek text and the original Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Old Testament. And this text has insufficient manuscript support. It was inserted later by a scribe who wished to prove the doctrine of the trinity. And we admire and have sympathy with the motivation that led him to insert this particular statement, but it just doesn’t have sufficient textual authority to be regarded as genuine. And almost all translations of the Bible of more recent times in the last hundred years or so do not have the seventh verse. I’ll read it anyway,

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

Now, that is not bad theology. It just so happens it’s not part of John’s first epistle.

“And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”

Now, verses 9 through 13 are the verse I want you to particularly pay attention to,

“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 that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Now, as we may begin our subject tonight, the Assurance of the believers, we are pointing out that every believer of Jesus Christ is safe, but not all are sure of it. If we have genuinely believed in Jesus Christ, we are safe. But it is sadly true that many who have believed in Jesus Christ are not sure that they are saved. It is very much like a child who should grow up the heir to a great fortune but who should never come to an understanding of it. He may grow up. He may live childishly, die childishly; that is without knowledge of his great riches, and never know the things that he possessed the ignorance of his inheritance. And it is, of course, sadly possible for believers who have really and truly believed in Jesus Christ to not realize that having believed in him they have everlasting life. It is possible to believe in him and to worry and say I wonder if I really have everlasting life. I know I believed but I’m just not sure that I have everlasting life.

About six years ago, I was in Washington for some meetings and while I was there I read this little clipping or this little article from the paper which I clipped out.

Now, when I go to Washington I read the Washington post because it is about as liberal a newspaper as you can find in the United States. And I always like to see what my enemies are saying. And I was reading the Washington post and in the article in the newspaper was this article. And it begins Fireman Richard Gregory Shaw, 34, was off duty last night but stopped by the firehouse for a cup of coffee with the boys and learned he is heir to two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The money was left in trust to Shaw by Bushnell Diamond a New York writer who died last June sixth and this is September the fourth. An attorney had been trying to find Shaw in the New York Daily News ran a story yesterday in the form of an open letter to Shaw. Hey is this you Fireman Gregory Shaw. When he stopped at the firehouse and, of course, he discovered it was him. And he had been living for three months with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars waiting for him but he was completely ignorant of it. Well, he said he was going to take a belated honeymoon trip to Hawaii and he was going to quit his extra job as a taxi cab driver. He was a fireman and a taxi cab driver and he had spent three months driving that taxicab when he didn't have to do it because he just did not know the riches that possessed. There are many Christians like that. They have the riches of the assurance of everlasting salvation but they do not know.

Now, today, the popular language is the language of doubt. And we hear people saying we surmise. We suppose. We rather think. And, consequently, many Christians are caught up in this and think often that it is the thing to do to be unsure of spiritual truth. And, of course, there are certain sectors of the professing Christian church which have it as a part of their doctrine that you should not know that we have everlasting life. 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. Now, that is a rather startling statement. A believer's assurance of pardon for his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence.

Cardinal Bellarmine, the great champion of Romanism, wrote on assurance it is “a prime error of the heretics.” So if you believe in assurance of salvation, you have been entrapped in a prime error of the heretics. Augustine, however, was a member of that same religious group and he said these words, “To be assured of our salvation is no arrogance stoutness. It is our faith. It is no pride. It is devotion. It is no presumption. It is God’s promise.”

And this afternoon as I was coming down from Chicago on American Airlines, I was reading, you guessed it, “John Calvin’s Institute of the Christian Religion.” And I was interested in what Calvin had to say about assurance. And this is what he had to say. I picked up this paragraph. 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 plan to our slender understanding.” What Calvin means is it’s perfectly all right for them to object and say that we do not have an undoubted knowledge of God’s will if you mean by God’s will a knowledge of all of his truth and his mind. Of course, we cannot subject all of God’s truth to our slender understanding.

But he continues, “When we simply say with Paul, however, we have received not the Spirit of this world but the Spirit that is from God by whose teaching we know the gift bestowed on us by God, 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 12, how can they yelp against us without abusively assaulting the Holy Spirit?” In other words, if the Holy Spirit has said that we have been given the Holy Spirit of God when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how can they yelp against us when we say we have what the Bible says we have?

And he continues, “But if it is a gentle sacrilege to accuse the revelation given by the Spirit either of falsehood or uncertainty or ambiguity how do we transgress in declaring its certainty.” And so if the Bible said it then we are not wrong in saying it ourselves. We are not proud when we say it. We are not arrogant when you say it. We are simply saying the truth. And as a matter of fact, if we deny what the Bible says so

positively then we are assaulting the integrity of the Holy Spirit. We are saying he is lying when he says you have the Holy Spirit which is a sign that have true eternal life when we believe and we say oh no but we don’t or we’re not sure what are saying to the Holy Spirit. Well, we are doubting his word. And so, consequently, it is not pride. It is not arrogance. As Augustine said its God’s promise its devotion it’s our faith.

Well, of course we are not finally and completely convinced by men like Calvin and Augustine and others. We’re most of all convinced when we see it in the word of God. And in Job chapter 19 verses 25 and 26 we read these words written by the Old Testament author, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God I know that my redeemer liveth.” And Job is convinced that in his flesh he shall see God.

And then the Apostle Paul in the New Testament in the eight chapter of the letter to the Romans verses 38 and 39 says these words, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other (creation the Greek text says) creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And so Paul says there is no way for separation to come between us and God. Once we have believed in him we can be sure that we have life. Or as John puts it in 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 (know, know) that you have eternal life.” Assurance is then not simply a doctrine given to tickle our curiosity. It is of great practical value.

In fact, I think it is true to say that it is impossible for us to have a stable Christian life if we do not know that we have everlasting life. Salvation brings us everlasting life but assurance brings us health, joy and a sense of having a foundation in our Christian life. Remember when David sinned and he lost fellowship with God he prayed. When confessed his sin “restore unto me the joy of my salvation.” He did not say restore unto

me salvation, for in his great sin he did not lose salvation. He said restore unto me the joy of my salvation. And so when we have believed in Jesus Christ, we have everlasting life. When we come to a sense of assurance, we know that we have it and then we are joyous and happy and can be fruitful in the Christian life. But how can we know that we have everlasting life?

Now, tonight I want to give you three of the reasons why we can know that we have everlasting life. The first is an evidential reason. The second is an internal reason. And the third is an external reason.

And first of all, evidential works in the Christian life. So let’s take our Bibles then and turn back to 1 John chapter 3 and will you listen as I read verses 7 through 14. First John chapter 3 verses 7 through 14. And let’s listen to what John has to say about the issue of Christian life, “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. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” Now, that does not mean does not commit a sin. It means does not practice sin. It is a verb in the present tense in the Greek. And so whosoever is born of God does not practice sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot go on sinning (present tense again), because he is born of God. In other words, when we believe in God there is a radical transformation in our nature. Remember we talked about the new birth. We have been born again.

Verse 10, “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.” In other words, the inevitable signs of the true believer in Jesus Christ are number one that he does righteousness, number two that he loves his Christian brother.

Verse 11, “For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.

And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates 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.”

Now, you can see then from verse 14 and verse 10 that there are two inevitable signs of the new birth. Number one the Christian who has believed in Jesus Christ does righteousness. Number two the Christian who has believed in Jesus Christ loves his Christian brethren. These are the issues of Christian life.

Now, we don't have time to read James chapter 2 verses 14 through 26 but that passage is familiar to you and in that passage James says, “Faith without works is dead.” And so we can say that works are the product of true faith in Jesus Christ. So the inevitable issue then of the genuine Christian life is that the Christian does good works, works of love works of righteousness works of faith.

Now, this is what Peter means when he says “Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Isn't that strange? We talked about election and here's Peter who believes in election says “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” And that word to make is a word that means to make for yourselves. “Give diligence to make for yourselves.” It's something we do. Make your calling and election sure. I thought it was God who chose us and I thought it was God who called us. How can we possibly make our calling and election sure? Well, it is the human side of divine salvation. This is the evidence of a genuine calling and election. Did you notice the order? It's not election and calling. That's the divine order. He elected us. He called us. He justified us as we've been seeing. But he said “Give diligence to make your calling an election sure.” That's the human order. That's the way we come to understand it. And so it is that Peter says the way you do this and he in that passage points out that we do this adding in our faith a series of virtues or doing good

works. And this is what we do in order on the human side to demonstrate the reality of the new birth that has taken place in our hearts.

The Puritans said, “The faith of adherence comes by hearing, but the faith of assurance comes not without doing.” A Bible teacher once said “The Lord’s sheep have two marks: a mark on the ear and the mark on the foot.” And then he quoted the text “My sheep hear my voice.” That’s the mark on the ear. They are responsive to the word of God. “And I know them and they followed me.” That’s the mark on the foot. So the sheep are characterized by hearing the word of God and by following Jesus Christ. And they follow him in works of righteousness, works of faith, works of love. So this is one way we can know that we have been born again, works in our Christian life.

Now, this is a systematic theology class but still no theology is good theology if it is not applied theology. And so I ask you a simple question. If others looked at your life would they have assurance that you belong to Jesus Christ? Would they see the works of righteousness, the works of love, the works of faith in your life?

Now, the second reason is internal the witness of the Holy Spirit. And let’s turn over to Romans chapter 8 in verse 16 because here we have Paul saying something that pertains to this particular point. Romans 8:16, Paul writes, “The Spirit himself.” Remember the Spirit is a person and while the word for spirit is neuter in Greek the Greeks used a different type of gender than we do. We, of course, speak naturally and our gender is natural gender. The Greeks use grammatical gender and since the word spirit is neuter, they had to use a neuter pronoun but we should translate it himself in all of our versions that realize this have made the correction. “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

You know Luther was famous for many quotable phrases, such as, for example, Luther’s famous statement which the Romanist used against him. His statement was *simul peccatore et justus* which means at once a sinner and a just man. At once, at the same time a sinner and a just man. Now, by that Luther sought epigrammatically to express the

fact that when I believe in Jesus Christ immediately I am justified but at the same time I am still a sinner.

Now, the Romanists took some of his phrases and took them out of context and sought to criticize him. And they said, of course, if you are at the same time just and a sinner apparently the grace of God is not entered into your heart. And they accused Luther of teaching a kind of grace that was always outward and that man is never really changed by faith in Christ as the Bible taught. He did not mean that, of course. He was trying to express the fact that while when we believe on Christ we are justified immediately. We still have the old nature and we are still a sinner. And Luther was absolutely right. And this statement, one of his epigrams, has become very famous.

Well, he also gave another statement which pertains to our study tonight. He wrote this or let’s see, *Spiritus Sanctus non est skepticus* or “The Holy Spirit is not a skeptic.” The Holy Spirit is not a skeptic. And by this Luther sought to express the idea that the Holy Spirit whenever he testified the truth gave a sense of certainty. The Holy Spirit is not a skeptic.

Now, the Bible teaches, of course, that when I believe on Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit indwells me. He comes to indwell me. Now, if he comes to indwell me, he’s not going to give me a sense of uncertainty about spiritual things. He’s going to give me a sense of certainty. He is not a skeptic. He doesn’t come in with all of these doubts. He doesn’t come in cause us to say “Well now, it just may well be that we really are born again and have everlasting life.” Or we may therefore, presume because Calvin and Augustine and Paul and Johnson have said that we are saved and have eternal life, it just may well be that we do have or perhaps we do or you know. He’s not a skeptic. He testifies to certainty.

Now, Paul says Romans 8:16, “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” In other words, the Holy Spirit who comes to indwell us when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ breeds a sense of certainty in our hearts that he

belongs to Jesus Christ. And every believer in Jesus Christ possesses the Holy Spirit and deep down in his heart he should have the testimony the Holy Spirit to the fact that he belongs to God.

Now, that sense of certainty, that sense of assurance is something within us and it comes from this believing Holy Spirit who communicates certainty to us. By the way, that text it does not only mean that the Holy Spirit witness but strictly speaking Paul’s words mean the Holy Spirit testifies together with our testifying spirit. And so when the Holy Spirit came to indwell us and communicated new life to us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ our spirit was renewed. Our human spirit was renewed. And the Holy Spirit came to indwell us, so Paul really tells we have two witnesses. We have our spirit renewed by the word of God testifying together with the third person of the blessed trinity, the Holy Spirit, that we are the children of God. So every believer in Jesus Christ should have deep down in his heart a sense of assurance that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I’m going to ask you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10. So this is one of the great chapters of the New Testament, as you know. And last year we expounded in the Sunday morning services the Epistles to the Hebrews. And we went through the tenth chapter and I tried to present the teaching of this tenth chapter which reaches its climax in verse 18 with “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” The point of this tenth chapter in the earlier parts at least is this, in the Old Testament there were many offerings but offering of animals cannot take away sin. In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ came to offer the one sacrifice for sin and this he offered. And as a result of what he did by offering himself for us upon Calvary’s cross as verse 10 puts it, “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Sanctified, set apart so that we are able to approach God and worship him.

Verse 12 says, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his

footstool. For by one offering (one offering) he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Now, notice the fifteenth verse, “Whereof the Holy Spirit is a witness to us.” In other words, the Holy Spirit who has come to indwell us is a testimony to the fact that through the once and for all offering of Jesus Christ we have been perfected forever. We have everlasting life. The Holy Spirit is the testimony to it. And he goes on to speak about how he testifies to the fact that there are sins and there are iniquities. I will remember no more.

If we wished to be sure of something, we want credible testimony. Do we not? Let’s just suppose, for example, that I’m walking down the street with Mr. Harry Hunsicker. And I’m reading the newspaper and suddenly I come across a little item that says a man in Great Britain has died. I guess with a name like that I really ought to say Hunsicker, Hunsicker. What nationality is that? German? Oh all right. I’m reading and I’m reading and I see a little note from Wiesbaden, Germany, which says a certain Mr. Hunsicker has died and he has left a fortune of one million dollars to an American by the name of Hunsicker. And I say this to Harry. I say Harry well look here. Here’s an interesting item in the news. It says a German has died and has left a million dollars to an American. And he said so what? And I said by the way his name is Hunsicker. And with that he’s immediately interested.

He said where does he live? I said he lives in Wiesbaden. He said oh I have some relatives who live in Wiesbaden. What’s his name? And I said well his name is Adolph Hunsicker. He said that’s my grandfather. Did you say that he left one million dollars? I never knew he had a cent. And he was tight with all that he did have. And he’s left one million dollars to me? Well, I couldn’t believe that. I just really couldn’t believe that. Listen. Wait a minute. Would you stay here I’ve got to find out about this. And so he immediately rushes off because, you see, when I said a man in Germany died and left a million dollars that’s of no particular interest to him but when I said he left it to

you then he immediately becomes very much interested but in the proportion as he becomes interested he becomes doubtful. And he thinks of all kinds of reasons why this could not be him. There must be another Harry Hunsicker and so on.

Now, when we read in the word of God that when we believe in Jesus Christ we have everlasting life. It’s natural for us to want to doubt it because after all this is the greatest possession a man could have. And we could think of all the reasons why we cannot be sure about our salvation. So we must as Harry Hunsicker for his million dollars. He wouldn’t really be interested in this but I would. But he must have it on the highest and most credible authority in order that he might be sure. And I must have it on the highest and most credible authority that I have everlasting life. And thank God I do. I have it on the authority of the Holy Spirit of God and who testifies to the fact that when I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ I have everlasting life. Now, isn’t that an amazing thing? Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us and he testifies in the words of Scripture. “Their sins and iniquities, will I remember no more.”

Now, thirdly, if I have an evidential reason for knowing that I have everlasting life, works in the Christian life, and an internal reason, the testimony of the Holy Spirit within my heart, I also have an external testimony to assurance in the word of God.

Now, let’s turn to 1 John chapter 5 in verse 13. 1 John 5 verse 13. Here John writes, “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 are going to have to distinguish two things here. We’re going to have to distinguish the basis of our salvation and the basis of our assurance. They are not the same.

Capital A, the basis of salvation, the blood that, of course, is the blood of Christ. The basis of our salvation is the blood of Christ or the sacrifice of Christ, his saving redemptive work which he accomplished on the cross at Calvary. The basis of our assurance we will talk about in a moment.

Now, the basis of our salvation is the blood. For example, Paul says in Romans chapter 3 verse 25, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” In other words, Paul said God has set forth Jesus Christ as a sacrifice upon the cross at Calvary. He is propitiation. His death has satisfied the Father. He has satisfied the Father and all of his righteous claims against man and, consequently, as a result of the satisfaction of the Father. As a result of that satisfaction, we can be sure that we have everlasting life. The basis of our salvation is the blood which Jesus Christ shed.

There was once a little girl in the state of Iowa, who went to Sunday school class, and which the subject of the forgiveness of sins was discussed. And when she came home, she had a little conversation with her mother, and her mother asked her what she had studied. And she said I have studied or we have studied the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ. And she said well what did Jesus Christ do with your sins? And the little girl had been told that Jesus Christ had blotted them all out, but she didn’t get it quite right. And she said to her mother Jesus bloodied them all out. And she really wasn’t as wrong as you might have thought because he blotted them out by shedding his blood.

About fifteen years ago, I was preaching in Dallas in the church here, and a woman came in who had been a professing Christian for many years. She was a Methodist and had been extremely prominent in the Methodist church. As a matter of fact, she had held about every office in the Methodist church which it was legal for women to hold but she had no assurance of salvation. I had been asked over to her house for an intervarsity meeting in order to give a Christmas message. And I went over and I spoke on Romans. And she told me afterwards you came over to our house and you gave a Christmas message and you spoke on Romans. I have never heard anybody give a Christmas message on Romans. And so she appeared at church after that. I guess

to see if on Sunday it was as strange as it had been in there home. [Laughter] And she began to attend off and on.

The Holy Spirit was working in her heart efficaciously and finally brought her to the place where one Sunday morning, she left and she told afterwards that I was speaking on the blood that morning. I don’t remember the message at all. It was in the Gospel of John. And she went out to her car and her husband got in and she stood outside. And she said, “Jay something happened to me today. I don’t know how to explain it but something happened to me today. When he talked about the blood of Jesus Christ, it seemed as if a burden rolled off of my back and I feel just as free. And I feel as I’ve never felt in all of my life, although I’ve been a Methodist for [laughter] decades.” She had come to an understanding of the fact that salvation is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the shedding of his blood. And she, of course, became afterwards a very active Christian and still is in this city. That’s the basis of salvation. We, many of us, remember singing in church just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me. And that thou bidst me come to thee oh Lamb of God I come. I come. The blood -- that’s the basis of our salvation.

Now, the basis of our assurance is the word of God. Look at this 1 John 5:13 passage, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know.” Look, “These things have I written that ye may know, written that ye may know. In other words, knowledge is the fuel of confidence. It is the knowledge of the truth as found in the word of God that brings us to confidence in the reality of which the words speak. “These are written that ye may know” by the way, it does not say these things are written that ye may feel. “That ye may know.” “These things are written that ye may know that you have everlasting life.” If the blood makes me secure, the word of God makes me sure. “These are written that ye may know.” So you see my salvation is based on what Christ did. My assurance of it is based upon the truthfulness of God’s word. Does he tell a lie? Well, he says “He that hath the Son have

life.” If I have the Son do I have life? I hope so. That’s what we say but the Holy Spirit is not a skeptic. You’re not speaking in the Spirit when you say I hope so.

If you have really believed in Jesus Christ, and I were to say to you, do you have everlasting life, what should you say? Yes, I have it. I know I have it. Now, that’s not arrogance. That’s not pride. That’s not presumption. That’s our faith. That’s devotion. That’s just being honest with God and acknowledging that he does not tell a lie. So “These things are written that ye may know.” It’s through the word of God that we have assurance. God does not lie. And he says if we believe on Jesus Christ, we have everlasting life. It’s very interesting that in the Old Testament Israel, of course, was given instructions regarding the sin offering. And they were told when they committed certain sins that they were to bring certain offerings. You know in the case of the case of the sin offering they were to bring under certain circumstances certain animals as sacrifice. And then the statements are made throughout that 4th chapter of Leviticus that when the offering is brought then those sins are forgiven.

Now, you can see that the offering was brought in order to look forward to the time when Christ would come and die for sins. But then the statement is made that when the offering is made those sins are forgiven. So the forgiveness rested upon the bringing of the sacrifice. The assurance of it rested upon the truthfulness of the word that said your sins are pardoned when you’ve brought the sacrifice. So in the Old Testament salvation is based upon the sacrifice. Assurance of salvation was based upon the word of God. He does not tell a lie.

There are three great words in connection with assurance. The first word is the word “are.” It’s found in a number of assurance texts like “By him are we justified from all things.” Well, let me read it. It’s Acts chapter 13 verse 39. Acts chapter 13 verse 39 Paul says, “And by him all that believe are justified from all things.” Notice the “are.” Are justified. Are justified. Now, turn back to 1 John chapter 3 verse 1. 1 John 3 verse 1. John writes, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we

should be called the sons of God.” And if some of you have the Revised Standard Version you will notice that these words are added, “And so we are.” Now, that is one time when the RSV is a better rendering than the AV. Did that hurt your feelings? There are other cases too. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God and so we are.” Literally the Greek text says and we are. We are. We are the sons of God, Cardinal.

And then the word hath. Look at 1 John 5:11. 1 John 5:11 says, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Hath given. “He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Hath not will have, not may have perhaps shall have, hath. As Roland Hill used to say H-A-T-H that spells got it. [Laughter] I like that, you know. I said that fifty times in my preaching career but I like that. H-A-T-H that spells got it. Hath everlasting life.

And then the word, “know.” Look at 1 John 3:14 hath, are, and know, “Hereby know we that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” First John 5:19, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.”

Now, let me sum it up. We have an evidential reason, the works in our Christian life. An internal reason, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. An external reason, the word of God for believing that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we have everlasting life. Now, as many of you know Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was the man who led me to the Lord and many many years ago, at least, twenty-five or thirty, he was preaching in Brussels to a French speaking congregation. And one Sunday morning he took, as his subject, the doctrine of the new birth. And in the course of that message he said, “I know that I have passed from death unto life. I know I have eternal life. Believers have been given the right to know that they will be in heaven. So I’m sure that I will be there.”

He was staying in a hotel and the next morning the bell did clang and soon the concierge brought to his office a young man in the uniform of the Belgian army, and he wore the stripes of an Adjudant. And he had been in church the day before and when he

was brought to the door he immediately began to speak to Dr. Barnhouse. And he said “Monsieur, 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, then I could understand, but for you to say so dogmatically I know I am saved. I’m sure I will be in heaven. Monsieur your assurance frightens me.”

Dr. Barnhouse said he looked at him and he said “Adjutant are you married?” And with some surprise he answered, “Well yes I am.” Immediately Dr. Barnhouse said “Your assurance frightens me.” He said “If you had said I hope I’m married, I’m trying to be married, I’m doing the best I can to be married, I hope that after I live with my wife for twenty I shall be married 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, you don’t understand. 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?” And you know, of course, that in Belgium marriage is a civil ceremony and not a church ceremony. I saw a marriage when I was in Brussels in the town square. I saw the people come out. The mayor performs all of the marriages. And so Dr. Barnhouse continued. He said “If you had said I hope I’m married I could understand, but you’ve said I am married. Well, your assurance frightens me. He said Adjutant do you know that it was the mayor that performed your ceremony? How do you know that the mayor wasn’t sick that morning and that the janitor didn’t take his place?” He said he looked at Dr. Barnhouse nonplussed and then he said, “I’m sure it was the mayor.” “But I do you know?” he said. “Would you really be married if the man who performed the ceremony were a substitute, an imposter? Would the marriage certificate be valid if the name were a forger? Would you really be married?”

And he said “Well no, but I’m sure it was the mayor.” In other words, he said “Your faith is 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.” And he said “It’s the

same with regard to my salvation. It depends upon the identity of the man who died for me, Jesus the Son of God and the validity of the document of the word of God in which the story of his sacrifice is contained.” And as John says if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. And that’s what we have. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

So we don’t have to apologize. Can we know that we are saved? Yes. We can have faith. In fact, we can have full assurance as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says “Let us come with full assurance of faith, not weak faith, full assurance of faith,” because it’s based on what Christ did and the truthfulness of a God who cannot lie.

Now, I’ve got about seven minutes and I’m going to give you a Jewish illustration. And if I have time, I’m going to give you a Gentile illustration but I may not have time and so we may have to pass it by. But let me give you the Jewish illustration first.

Let’s just say for the sake of illustration now we are going to be carried back to the time of the first Passover in the land of Egypt. And we’re walking the streets of Egypt, and there is a man who lives in a nice two-story house here. And you walk up to the door and there is a little plate like they have in Charleston.

By the way, did you notice in Southern Living magazine that wonderful article on Charleston, “America’s most historic city?”

And so you walk up to this house and you notice and it says the name of the Egyptian who lives there is Esau Nasser. And word has just gone out among the Hebrews that God is going to do something strange. And Moses the Hebrew has been talking about the destroying angel coming down in the midst of the houses and slaying the first born if blood is not placed on the door posts and on the top posts of the house, the side posts and above. And you knock on the door and soon Mr. Nasser comes and you say Mr. Nasser word is out that God is going to do a new thing in Egypt through Moses and the Hebrews. The destroying angel is going to come down through the streets of Egypt tonight and if a man doesn’t have blood from a lamb on the door posts of his house he’s going to lose the first born child in the house. What do you think of that? Well, he

doesn’t say twattle because he’s not an Englishman and he doesn’t say poppycock because he’s not an American but he doesn’t say rubbish because he doesn’t know English, but I presume he says something like now water and shuts the door and turns around and goes back because he just does not believe. He just does not accept the message in the blood. He does not accept the testimony of the God of Israel but you go next door and you notice that there’s a nameplate there and it says Goldberg. And so you walk in and you get a little look at what’s going on in the house. And there is a wife sitting over in one chair and there is an obvious husband sitting over in the other chair and there’s a little boy playing over on the floor. And you say Mrs. Goldberg. Yes my name is Sarah Goldberg. Well, what do you think about all of this and, of course, she’s there and she’s worried about little Abbe who’s playing around on the floor. Her fingernails have been chewed to the bone and she’s full of [worry]. And she’s badgering and heckling her husband because she’s very much disturbed.

And so you say to her “Well, Mrs. Goldberg is it not true the Moses that if the blood is on the door posts the child is safe?” She said, “Yes I know he said that but.” “Well, you have the blood on the doorposts.” “I know” he said, “and I know we have it on the doorposts. I believe the word of God but, but.” And you sit down and she immediately begins to speak to Isaac Goldberg because Isaac is sitting over in his chair and he’s reading the *Memphis Gazette*. [Laughter] That is the *Memphis Egypt Gazette*. And he’s wondering if the Ramses rats or the Gotion giraffes have won the chariot races [laughter] of that week. And so here he is reading the newspaper perfectly calm perfectly settled and Sarah is badgering and heckling him and saying I don’t understand how you can do that. I don’t understand how in the light of the fact that the destroying angel is going to come down through the street and little Abbe, our precious little Abbe here, might be lost and you sit over there reading the newspaper and above all the sports pages. And he said well Sarah.

He finally puts the paper down and he said “Well Sarah God said through Moses that if we put the blood on the door posts Abbe would be safe.” And he said “Come here,” and he takes her out and he says “Look. The blood’s on the doorposts. The blood is on the two sides of the door posts. The blood is on the level above. The blood is on the doorposts. We put the blood on the doorposts.” “I know. I know, but.” And he said “But Sarah do you think that God lies?” “No I don’t believe God lies, but.” And he says “Listen what you need is for me to turn on the tape recorder and let’s listen to that faith rest technique which Bob Themestein told us.” [Laughter]

Well, you see it’s just as simple really as that. Abbe was safe because the blood was on the door posts and even if Isaac had been much upset and if Sarah had been upset, if everybody had been upset, little Isaac’s Abbe was safe because the safety depended on the blood on the door posts. But assurance, well you see, Sarah had no assurance at all because she couldn’t believe the word of God. Esau Nasser is the unbeliever. He doesn’t believe the word of God. He didn’t put the blood on the doorposts. Sarah believed enough to be happy that the blood was on the doorposts, but she had not trust in the word. Abbe was safe but she didn’t have any assurance. But Isaac, Isaac put the blood on the doorposts and he believed the word of God and he was a happy resting believer.

Now, you see if we have not believed in Jesus Christ, we are lost. There is no way of salvation but through Jesus Christ. But if we have come to the cross and we have believed and yet we have said thank you Lord for dying for me that’s putting the blood on the doorposts of the heart. And then if we can accept the testimony of the word of God, “He that hath the Son hath life,” we shall not only have salvation but we shall have the assurance of salvation and then we should not be a worried anxious believer but a resting believer.

Now, I said I was going to give you a Gentile illustration. Now, this is one I made up. The other one I made up too, of course. [Laughter] Now, there are three possible

reactions to what I’m going to say but let’s just suppose for the sake of illustration that I walk up to or I say to you “I am so pleased with my relationship to you that I just want you to know how much I love you and I have just deposited one thousand dollars to your account in the bank.” And each one of you just imagine that I am speaking to you.

Now, there are three reactions to that. Number one, the reaction of unbelief. You can just say I would not believe it and as I told when I spoke on assurance a long time ago. When I told this illustration to Mary, I tried it out on her. She said that would be my reaction. [Laughter] I just do not believe it. Now, of course, if you do not believe it, well then you shall never have the joy of the enjoyment to of that one thousand dollars but you might have a second reaction. You might say well, Dr. Johnson, after all, he does drive a Dodge. He does own his own house. He is a preacher and preachers have been known to be rich. There are three of them that are rich. I think. It’s possible. It’s just possible that this is true. After all, they pay him a giant salary wherever he serves the Lord, but at the same time there is another thought that comes through your mind. He is a preacher. Yes, I don’t know any rich preachers.

And, furthermore, there are other things that make me wonder whether he’s really got that money and so you go down to the bank and you kind of anxiously and worriedly and hesitantly write out a check for ten dollars and you put it over on the counter and you say is this good? And you see you really have the thousand dollars but you are not sure about it. And so you don’t have the joy of it. Or the third reaction, as I’m sure the reaction of all of you, you would just say “Well praise the Lord I have a thousand dollars. I just know all the ways in which I could spend that.” And so you immediately rush down to the bank you write out a check for one thousand dollars and you walk over to the teller and you put that thousand dollars check down in front of him and say fork it over because you are so confident that it’s there because you see it rests upon whether I have a thousand dollars and whether you believe my word. And that is what God had

said. That he is offering salvation to men. That through Jesus Christ he is offering salvation.

Now, you may respond and say "I just do not believe it." Well, then you lose the benefits of it. Or you may hesitantly say "Lord I do receive as my personal savior" and then when you finished your prayer say "I hope I have it." Now, you won't enjoy your salvation. Or you may say "This is just what I've been wanting. This is the thing that I've been longing for. I've been wondering what is the meaning of life, and I now see it that Christ has come and he has died for me and all of my experiences have been designed to bring me to the place where I see my need. Oh Lord I want this life. Thank you for dying for me. And thank you for giving me eternal life. And you close your prayer and say Hallelujah I'm saved. I have everlasting life. I'm a Christian," and you live in the joy of it.

Now, that, of course, is a reaction of a man who not only has life but also has assurance. I said earlier that there is great value in assurance for while salvation gives us life assurance gives us joy and confidence. And, of course, when we draw nigh to death, it is then that it is really a worthwhile thing to not only have life but to have assurance.

Last night I was sitting by the bedside of a man who has terminal cancer. And it was a thrill. He is a man of fifty-five years of age who came to Christ about six years ago, 1964. And you know it was a tremendous thrill to hear this man say that in spite of what has happened to him and in spite of the fact that he does not understand everything that has happened his faith is in the Lord and he's looking forward to seeing him very soon. It's wonderful to have a faith that you can die by and that's what we have in the Christian faith.

Well, that's the doctrine of assurance. I hope that you know that you have everlasting life. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the wonderful word. We thank Thee for the clarity of it and we pray that if there should be one person here who does not have life give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Jesus Christ. And for those who may have life who are not sure of it, Oh God, impress upon the truthfulness of our great God. And that we can rely upon thy word. And may they enter into the joy of their salvation.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.