

Assurance

by Ernest C. Reisinger

Ernest C. Reisinger's sermon on assurance emphasizes the importance of understanding and attaining true Christian assurance through the Holy Spirit and biblical teachings.

Duration: 57:54

Scripture: Matthew 9:2, John 14:16, Romans 8:35-39

Topics: "Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a blind man and his dog to illustrate the importance of having both light and sight. He emphasizes the need for the promises of God to be made real by the Holy Spirit, rather than just memorized. The speaker also highlights the deceitfulness of the human heart and the possibility of self-deception. He concludes by urging the audience to seek both the light and sight provided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Verses from Romans 8, beginning at verse 35 to 39. But before we read the book, let's pray that the author of the book will assist us to hear and assist us to speak. Let us bow our heads and our hearts in just a word of prayer.

O Holy Father, Righteous Father, we bless thy name for this another opportunity to expose our hearts to your holy truth. We ask that thou would send thy spirit to assist us in speaking, assist us in hearing, and may we hear from thee. We thank you for those gathered here, for those churches that they represent, the homes that they represent.

We pray that because we have come together, Lord, that we might be of mutual help one to the other in most difficult days. Help us to edify one another by our presence and by our conversations. Hear our prayer, O Lord, and send us of thy spirit.

Lord, you said if we ask for bread, you would not give us a stone, and if we ask for a fish, you would not give us a scorpion. O send thy spirit, because thou has promised how much more you would give the spirit to them that ask. Grant to us that spirit that gives us discernment and conviction and power for Jesus' sake and for the good of his church.

May I just read these few passages? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

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 creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is quite a large subject, Christian assurance, and certainly one subject that has connected with it no small amount of controversy. There are some aspects of Christian assurance that I will make no effort to touch on, not because I don't think they're important, but because I have tried to siphon down some of the things that just statements of what I believe the Bible teaches about assurance.

I might say at the outset all that I have to say on the subject would be also expressed in those two great confessions, one the mother of all confessions, the Westminster Confession, and the London Confession, which is the Baptist Confession. What I have to say would be that which is expressed there and in that framework and in that form of doctrine. I won't be saying much about the little statement there that says that the assurance is not of the essence of faith.

Many remain confused about this point when they turn to the Reformers because, I think there's an answer for it, the Reformers were fighting a different battle. They were fighting Rome, a church that hates the doctrine of assurance as much as it hates the doctrine of justification by faith. And they were fighting a battle of no assurance and therefore they didn't make that fine distinction that the Westminster Divine later made when they set forth in chapter 18 of the Westminster Confession the chapter on assurance of grace and salvation.

I would suggest, however, there's 40 pages in the book I mentioned this morning by Cunningham that will solve all your problems. I have been in some difficult arguments and straits myself about people trying to prove to me that Luther and Calvin and Zwingli did not believe that assurance was not of the essence of faith. And one of the reasons for silence.

I commend to you Cunningham on his about 38 or 40 pages on the subject of assurance in reference to the Reformers. The second thing I won't be touching on much is spending a great deal of time on the other aspect of assurance which has caused no small amount of division and difference among well-informed theologians. And that is the aspect of the witness of the Spirit.

That's a subject of all by itself. And of course I won't be touching on those subjects that are closely related to assurance, namely perseverance of the Saints. I remember we wanted John Murray to write up a pamphlet on perseverance of the Saints and Christian assurance.

And when we talked to him about this, he hadn't turned us down yet, but he said this. He said in his little classic on the atonement, the redemption accomplished and applied, he did say that he didn't want that book to go out until he had written a chapter on assurance because he believed that they're so related, that is the perseverance of the Saints and assurance, but he was pressed for time and he didn't do it. So I won't be touching on that, although it's vital.

And the other thing, self-examination is closely connected with assurance and of course the degrees of sanctification. Now I just say at the outset before I begin recommend by way of recommendation, by no

means an exhaustive list of books, but some books that I've found very helpful and I'd commend them to you on this subject. First the one I mentioned here.

I would also recommend the Westminster Confession or the London Confession on the subject. I'd recommend Thomas Goodwin volume 8 particularly, a little treatise by a great Scottish experimental divine William Guthrie, *The Christian's Great Interest*. I noticed in reading Dr. Clark's he's written a little book called *What Presbyterian Beliefs*.

He's written a lot of books but this is one of them. And in his chapter, I was telling somebody he must have been fixing the lawnmower that day he wrote that chapter because he uses a wonderful illustration about the lawnmower blades and I like it. But in his chapter he recommends on the subject of assurance a book that I'd like to doubly recommend and that's Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affection*.

If you can wade through it especially. So much for some of the key recommendations on the subject. Now just a few statements as to what is assurance.

When we say we believe the Bible teaches certain things about assurance, what are we talking about? Assurance is a God-given conviction of one standing in grace, stamped on his mind and heart by the Holy Spirit supernaturally. It's in the same sense as the great truths of the gospel facts must be stamped on the heart and on the mind supernaturally. It is a sensible and an experimental discerning of our being in the state of grace.

That's assurance. And two of the main elements of assurance, one would be, the element of assurance is, the Holy Spirit confirming to our conscious awareness that God has really wrought a saving work in us. Bringing us to real faith.

Bringing us to real repentance. Bringing us to a real knowledgeable, sensible, knowing a real change in our nature. Renewing our heart.

Really taking us out of the old paths of sinful habits and bringing us into a new path of Christian obedience and righteous living. That's one element of it. That is, the Spirit confirming to our conscious awareness these things.

The other element is this. It's more of a, some would call it a direct, immediate test of God's fatherly love. Given as a kind of a communication to the soul.

Like God saying to the soul, I love you. Or, I am thy salvation. I am thy, I am thy savior.

Awareness of that. Now don't think of this as some isolated single experience, what I'm saying now, the second element. Rather something altogether different.

I'm not a Greek student. The only Greek I know makes submarine sandwiches. He's here somewhere where I enjoy.

But I do have some Greek friends. Greek friends and some, I know some Greek scholars. And everyone I've checked on Romans 8, 16, it's this Greek, it's the Greek present tense.

Which means a continued activity. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit. It's not a single isolated thing, but continued activity.

That's the second aspect of assurance. Bunyan does well with this when he pictures the Christian receiving a mark. You remember when the tin fell off his back at the cross, the burden fell off his back? Three shining ones appeared.

And one put a mark on him and gave him a roll. That was his assurance. He found that at the cross.

Thomas Goodwin said, assurance is the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2, 17, which none knows but the one that received it. William Cunningham, who I referred to a moment ago, said, we believe that the, now this is a strong statement, and if it was true then, think what is true today. We believe that the prevailing practical disregard of the privilege and duty of having assurance is no inconsiderable, is to no inconsiderable extent at once the cause and effect of the state of, of the low state of vital religion among us.

James Denny, that author of that great classic on the atonement, the death of Christ in the place of interpretation of the New Testament, said, quote, the acid test of any version of Christianity is its attitude toward assurance. Some regard it as presumption. Some regard it as duty.

The New Testament, Denny proclaims it as a fact. Now I'm quite aware of the abuses. I'm quite aware of the wild views and the controversy.

And I think that these wild views and the controversy has led to much silence about the subject of assurance. I find few ministers, unfortunately, I find few ministers, even among those places where it expected, that at least in the outworking of their convictions about assurance, there's no sign that they understand the biblical doctrine of assurance. And I believe part of this silence naturally results in much ignorance.

Nevertheless, assurance is important. It's the fruit of faith. Assurance is a privilege.

Assurance is a duty. Assurance is a gift. Assurance makes men more holy, makes men more strong in the faith, makes them bolder, makes them more zealous.

Assurance makes men tireless in Christ's service. Assurance brings joy unspeakable. Therefore, every Christian worker, whether he be a deacon or a preacher, should have two desires in respect to this doctrine.

One is to bring people, to bring people, his family, his parishioners, his friends, his Sunday school class. One desire of every Christian ought to be to bring the people of his acquaintance that he's interested in to a well-grounded assurance. That ought to be one desire.

And the second, we ought to be desperately anxious that men do not fall into a state of false peace and false assurance. And that double desire automatically has two very serious dangers. Bishop Ryle said, in trying to point out these dangers, Bishop Ryle said, the subject of assurance is a narrow path.

For while seeking to rob those of a false assurance, there is always a danger of robbing the weak in faith, who are genuine Christians, but weak in faith, robbing those of a true assurance. I think another divine, and I'm not sure where I got it who said it, but another divine put it this way. He said the road to heaven is very narrow.

And beside being narrow, there are two serious deep ditches, one on either side. There is the ditch of despair on one side, and the ditch of presumption on the other. But bless God, he said, in front of those ditches are two hedgerows.

In front of a ditch of despair is a hedgerow of God's promises. And in front of a ditch of presumption is a hedgerow of God's precepts. You follow John Bunyan much as I do.

You noticed when he got in, when giant despair had him locked up in the castle. What was it that caused him to get out of doubting castle? He was in that one ditch of despair, doubting castle. Bless God, he discovered within his bosom he had a key.

You know what the keys called? Promise. That's right. The key of promise.

That got him out. So bearing that in mind, the dangers, our desires, coupled with those desires, these two particular dangers, may I just state without much meat on, but a few bones, what the Bible teaches about assurance. First, the Bible teaches clearly that there is a false assurance.

Very clearly. Teaches us that the heart is deceitful. Many of the parables set forth the real and the scurrious.

And not only do they set them forth, but they set them forth in such a way that they make both look alike. The weak and the tares, they both look so much alike. Christ told us, don't you touch it.

We see it in the two houses. They both look alike until the storm of God's wrath. And then we see that there are ones on a bad foundation.

But in appearance, they look alike. This is only to say and point out the great possibility of self-deception. Our Lord in Matthew, the passage that Pastor Martin referred to last night, Lord, Lord, have we not all this list of things? And he said, depart from me.

What's that? But self-deception. They had grave assurance that all was well, but it was a false assurance. They were fundamental and orthodox in their theology, and yet they were self-deceived.

They were devout. No one can pick up the New Testament and read about the devotion of the Pharisees and scribes without saying they were devout. They had a peculiar dress that identified them with religion.

The Bible says our Lord accused them of long prayers. Some of you don't pray at all, but they prayed long prayers. The Bible tells us they tithed and fasted two days a week, and yet they were self-deceived.

They were not only devout, and they'll put you to shame in their devotion, but they were evangelistic, no less. I read in Matthew chapter 23, verse 15, that they compassed land and sea, evangelistic in their efforts, and still self-deceived. I would remind you that it was the religious man in Luke 18 that had the assurance.

He was the fellow that had all the assurance. When he says, I'm glad I'm not like this fellow. I'm religious.

There is a false assurance in the Bible. From beginning to end, warns, Christ warns, Christ teaches but parable and precept, and we have it in example of those, that there is a false assurance. Secondly, the Bible teaches that there's a true assurance.

We have it in such texts as I've already mentioned, Romans 8, 16, the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are, that we are the children of God. First John 2, 3, we know that we know him. First John chapter 3, verse 14, we know that we've passed from death into life.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, uses language like this, I know and am persuaded. That's assurance. The passage that I read to you tonight from Romans is a, what Charles Hodge and many other good commentators consider a classic New Testament statement on Christian assurance.

In fact, there's, Hodge calls it a rhapsody on Christian assurance. That's his way of describing it. In passages like, who shall separate us from the love of Christ, and immediately in verse 38, I am persuaded.

We have it in other ways expressed in the Bible that teaches a true assurance. We have it for the children, no less. In the psalm, in the, in the shepherd's psalm, the Lord is my shepherd, not I'd like him to be, maybe he is.

It'd be nice if he'd be, but the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. So the Bible teaches there's a false assurance.

The Bible teaches there's a true assurance. The Bible further teaches that a man may be a true believer. Now some of you might leave me here.

I just beg you to bear with me and study those old confessions and the scriptural support for them. The Bible teaches that a man may be a true believer and yet lack full assurance that he's a child of God. I offer you some scriptural proof of that, but the strongest proof would be 1 John chapter 5, verse 13.

John is writing to believers. Very clear. You don't need to turn to the commentaries.

He said, these things have I written unto you that believe. That ye may K-N-O-W. So apparently it's obvious that there were some believers who did not have all the assurance that they might have, or maybe none.

I don't know. But at least he was writing that they might have a proper, a well-grounded assurance. I think we see it in passages like Luke 9, 24, the father of the boy who was amused.

We see this expression. I believe, he said to Christ, help thou my unbelief. He had faith in Christ, but he wasn't sure of his faith.

He had true faith. You know, some are sure they're saved and they're not. They never question their assurance.

No self-examination. They've never questioned the validity of their profession. I'm afraid of those people, I'll tell you now.

They never question. They're so sure. They never lack assurance for a moment.

Others are saved and not sure. Now there's a difference between Faith is the root. Assurance is the fruit.

Faith is that poor penitent thief crying, Lord remember me. That's faith. Assurance is Job sitting in dust and covered with thorns saying, I know that my Redeemer lives.

Though he slay me, yet shall I trust. Faith is Peter crying out as he began to think, Lord save me. He had faith in Christ.

Assurance is the same Peter standing before the council at other times, rebuking for the stone, rejecting the stone, calling Christ the stone that the builders rejected. Or saying to the crowd, neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Bunyan didn't miss any theological turns in Pilgrim's Progress. That's why he points out the fact that the Pilgrim on the hill of difficulty, what did he lose? Well, it was a difficult hill. And if you haven't found any of them yet, well, you just haven't been on the way very long.

Just wait. You'll find some hill difficulties before too long. And he was on the hill of difficulty and he needed a little rest.

He saw that arbor. Oh boy. Relax, he did.

On the hill of difficulty. And what happened? He fell asleep and he lost that role. The fellow from Moody that translated that English version missed the whole point.

He thought he lost his Bible. Doesn't mean that at all. He had to find out what that role is.

Nothing more simple than text. He didn't lose his salvation. I remember the first time I was a, everybody's born an Armenian and I remember I said to my brother, I love this book.

I said, the only fellow, only problem with Bunyan is he, he thinks he can get saved and lost. And I don't understand that. Well, I just didn't understand perseverance.

I had that wicked antinomian view. Well, let's not go into that. That's not in my notes.

Anyhow, he could have gotten me on that. But the point I make is this. Bunyan didn't miss the point that a man may lose his assurance and be yet a true believer.

So the Bible teaches that a man may be a true believer and lack full assurance or lose his assurance. The Bible teaches that a believer, now get this, the Bible teaches that a believer should attain, seek after proper assurance. And I want to give you two reasons for that.

First of all, it's commanded. And if you're a Christian, you're interested in the commands of the Bible. It's commanded in texts like this.

This is a text on assurance. Second Peter 1:10. Wherefore, the rather brethren, give diligence, not half-hearted about it, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

We have it in texts like Second Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Be sure. Prove your own selves.

Know your own selves. That's exhorting and commanding to seek assurance, the proper assurance. We have it in texts like Hebrews 10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

We have it in Hebrews, in texts like Hebrews 6:11. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full proof of assurance. So I say, true believers, the Bible teaches that true believers

should attain or seek assurance. For one reason, because it's commanded.

Secondly, because it's related. Now get this. Assurance is related to some other things.

It's related to joy. It's related to your comfort. And God wants you to know the comforts of the Bible, as well as the things that convict us.

It's related to service. And I believe that it's related to witnessing. Why do I believe that? I think the clearest text to support that statement would be found in David's confession of his awful sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51.

And in the midst of that psalm, where he cried out to God to have mercy on him, when he gets to verse 12, he says this, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. In the next verse, he says, then he'll do something.

Then, says David, that's for sure. Restore unto me this. Then, he said, I'll do something.

What did he say he would do? Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. I say the second reason, it's related to service. It's related to joy.

It's related to comfort. How will I have joy in a thing that I'm not sure that I possess? How will I have comfort in the gospel if I'm not sure that it is mine? How will I have comfort in the gospel if I'm not sure that I've closed with the offers of mercy? No comfort. Comfort is an assurance.

Or, how will I want to say to my friends, Oh, come and share, let me share with you the treasure that I've found. I've found salvation. Come, I want to share with you salvation.

And then, in the next verse, say, I'm not sure I have it. No, my dear, assurance is related to joy. It's related to comfort.

It's related to service, and particularly witnessing. The Bible further teaches that assurance, this is one of the accusations of Rome, the Bible teaches that assurance does not lead to looseness. How many times have I talked to people, non-Christians sometimes, confessing my faith to them in Christ, and confessing the joy that I have of knowing sin's forgiven.

And I say, boy, if I believe that, I just, would you please? Oh, would you? Well, let me tell you, they don't understand it. Why? Because God Almighty gives this assurance by bringing our spirit into harmony with his word. And if he brings our spirit into his spirit in harmony with his word, it won't lead to looseness.

I say, why, another reason it will not lead to looseness is because this, assurance is the fruit of diligence, and wherefore the rather brethren give diligence. So I say that assurance is the fruit of diligence, therefore it can't lead to carelessness, if it's the fruit of diligence. Now, if your assurance is of some other sort, and not a well-grounded assurance, if it's based on something you did long ago, if it's based on some kind of a proof text assurance, if it's based on something like that, well, it may lead to looseness, but not so if it's based on God's holy word, the kind of assurance that I'm talking about tonight.

May I call your attention to a few statements, and I'm going to read them verbatim, because they're, I think they're so vital to this subject. Charles Hodge points out some of the differences between true and false assurance. He says this, true assurance begets unfeigned humility.

False assurance begets spiritual pride. How true. He said true assurance leads to increasing increased diligence in the practice of holiness.

False assurance leads to sloth and self-indulgence. True assurance, said Hodge, listen to this, leads to candors, self-examination. Boy, when I meet those people that hate examination, I never meet them but when I think of what Charles Hodge said.

True assurance leads to candors, self-examination, and a desire to be searched and corrected, if you will, by Almighty God. False assurance leads to a disposition to be satisfied with appearance and avoid action. True assurance, he said, leads to a constant aspiration after more intimate fellowship.

True assurance rests upon the word of God and the spirit of God. God said certain infallible things in his word, such as he that believes in Christ already possesses eternal life, John 3.36. God's infallible word also declares, if we know him, if we know him, we keep his command. It says both those things.

You can't just take one, you must take the other. And the same God who declares these things produces them in his people. Therefore, when we do believe in Christ and the best of our life is toward the pathway of obedience, the Holy Spirit enables us to know that we do.

Only then are we in possession of true assurance. Now, don't misunderstand me. Keeping his commandment is not part of our justification, but keeping his commandment is part of us knowing that we're justified.

I hope you get that distinction. I'm not confused. That's a vital point.

Or I could say it like someone else has said it. We're justified by faith alone, and I believe that. But that faith which is alone is not justifying faith.

The Holy Spirit applies what he's ordered. Don't look for some new, never some new and special or private revelation. I'm not talking about that when I'm talking about assurance, no.

The Holy Spirit applies what he's already revealed. When our spirits are brought into conformity with God's Spirit, then what we say, what we say, will it be agreeable with what the Spirit says in the scriptures? Not in what God says along some proof text, but rather in the fact that we are by grace enabled to say of ourselves what God says about a true believer in the scriptures. Sixthly, the Bible teaches that Christians may have the assurance of their salvation shaken, intermitted, and diminished.

I hope you recognize that language. That's from the Westminster Confession. That's also from the London Confession.

I've got to be careful with my Baptist friends. They don't have to believe I'm a Baptist now. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken.

It's a good thing. Intermitted and diminished. Good question.

How? How may a true believer have anything touched by negligence in persevering in holiness and obedience? That'll touch your assurance. Two, by sin. I've talked to many, many people.

After meetings, when they seek you out, you preachers know how these dear people seek you out. You ought to be glad for it. I am.

And when they're finished, I don't know if they're Christian or not. I had that experience last week with somebody that I love. Somebody that once looked as though they walked in the light of God's countenance.

Somebody that once looked as though they followed that narrow road. And after a couple hours with this dear fellow, I said in the course of this conversation, I said, do you think you were genuinely converted? And he gave me the best answer he could. He says, right now, I don't know.

I was glad for that statement. It would be wicked for me to try to discourage him and say, and try to repudiate all his past. That would be wicked.

But it would be just as wicked for me to give him full assurance that all is well. When his own testimony is, there's not a thing in my life. I've been born of God.

I don't know. If you're honest, you've got a lot of people in your church like that that you don't know about. Don't run around telling their faith.

Another reason why assurance may be shaken or diminished is temptation. Not necessarily sin. Temptation.

When God takes his assurance away from his child, it's a blessing. And I'll tell you why. Because it's one of the means to bring his child back to seek him.

And anything that causes a child of God to seek him for fresh forgiveness and fresh assurance is a mercy. And when God shakes your assurance or it's intermitted or it's diminished, or if for some reason unknown to us, God just seems to withdraw the light of his countenance, sometimes on his choiceless saint. We all know and have sung William Cowper's songs.

All through his life, he had a problem with melancholy and assurance. All through his life. Now, we must remember, dear brother, that when we're talking about assurance, we're not talking about salvation.

When we say to a man, what must I do to be saved? Or a man says, what must I do to be saved? That has one answer. I know no other gospel than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only gospel I know.

But when somebody asks you, how do I know that I've done it? That's a different question. That's a different question. And it has a different answer.

And the answer is different altogether. Because we know that for several reasons. There are three grounds of assurance, at least.

One, and I don't want to minimize this, when I say disparaging remarks about proof, text, salvation, there is a place for this. Now let me explain it. First, the Bible does.

There is the promises of God that are made real by the Spirit. And notice I added not just some promise. I said the promises of God made real by the Spirit, not just memorized in a promise.

Now why do I say made real by His Spirit? Simply for this. You can go to hell memorizing Scripture. You're not likely to, but you could.

You can memorize Scripture like you memorize the Gettysburg Address. And that's where I say the promises of God made real by His Spirit. You see, my dear, man has two problems, not one problem.

First of all, they need the Bible because it's a lamp to our pathway. And the Bible is a lamp to our pathway. Let's not minimize that.

But my dear, men have another problem. They not only need light, but they need sight. I see some of the men here from Camp Susquehanna, the best boys camp I know.

That's a good pluck there, Chief Bob. Over at Camp Susquehanna where I was a chaplain last year, they had a blind fellow, a wonderful Christian blind man, and he had a wonderful dog. He died now.

Dessa was the dog's name. Now remember the prudent director of that camp takes movies. And one night the blind man was showing the boys some things about how a dog is trained.

He told us all about the training of dogs and all that. And so the prudent director wanted to take movies of Chief Ed. And he put big lights up, shining lights that made it hotter than this place, if you could believe it.

But he put these shining lights. And I thought to myself, and Ed couldn't see a thing. He had these shining lights for the purpose of taking the movies, and poor Ed couldn't see a thing.

But he had plenty of light. Plenty of light. When we deal with sinners, my dear, we must remember they do need the light for their pathway, but they need sight.

Two problems. And that's why I say one of the grounds of assurance is this, the promises of God made real by His Spirit. Another ground is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and I've touched on that.

And the third ground, you see, works do have something to do with assurance. And the third ground of assurance is Christian character and conduct, that has something to do with assurance. If I don't act like a Christian, love what a Christian loves, hate what a Christian hates, if the best of my life isn't toward that character of Christ, what reason do I have to believe that I'm a Christian? If I don't act like it, talk like it, love what a Christian loves, what reason do I have to believe that I'm a Christian? Because if somebody goes hocus pocus, no, I say another ground.

I didn't say one ground. This is not the only ground. First John, the tests of First John are fine, but that's not the only ground of assurance.

I like what that great old Presbyterian divine said when he was commenting on 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 10. John Brown, who wrote that great three volumes on 1 Peter, he died before he finished his commentary on 2 Peter. If he ever gets as much as he's written, I'll get a hold of it if he can.

Because on his comment in 2 Peter, he died before it was finished. But when he commented on 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 10, he said this. I'll never forget it.

The text says, we're to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. He said, if we would prove to the world and to our own heart that we are the called and elect of God, we must be and do what the called and elect of God are called to be and to do. So I say the answer to the question, what must I do to be saved, is one answer.

The answer to, how do I know that I've done it, is an entirely different answer altogether. Now, there's some practical problems you and I face today. There are kind of like three classes of problems in connection with assurance.

Some people have assurance with no scriptural right to it, no evidence that they're saved. In fact, there's all evidence to the contrary. To these, we need to apply the text of 1 John, or we need to show them the parable of the sword, or we need to teach them 1 Peter verses 1 to 10.

Then there are others who lack assurance, who are true people of God, but they lack assurance. They're weak in faith. They are dear people of God, but they lack assurance.

They lack strong assurance. And you know, I guess you know by now, Bunyan, my patron saint, that some people when they read Bunyan, they think all he's doing is scrutinizing the hypocrites. He does have Mr. Talkative, never forget it.

And when he's finished scrutinizing the hypocrites, he's trying to send them down. Mr. Talkative, Mr. Ignorance, Mr. Facing Both Ways, and all these characters. But never forget, Bunyan did not miss the fact that there were those who were weak in the faith, but true.

He also had Mr. Steering, and he also had Mr. Ready to Halt, and he also had Mr. Feeble Minds, all true men. They had the root of the matter in them. So we must remember, some have assurance with no right to it, scriptural right.

Others lack assurance, who are weak in the faith, but they're true. They're real. And then of course, I think there's some people who have assurance, and they kind of misrepresent it, or they call it by some other name.

Do you know that probably two of the doctrines that I've searched more to satisfy my own soul on, I'll just tell you one. One is baptism, and the other is the work of the Spirit, that is, as a subsequent work to salvation. I've read every book I get my hand on.

Every time I thought I got a little light, and you know, it was not until it pleased the Lord to get me in some of the historic stream of Christianity, and I saw the doctrine of assurance, it solved that problem. It was not until I saw that, and I believe many of these people, some of them when they talk about that, I think what we're talking about is they really got converted. And if they tell you about, well I didn't do this, I didn't do that, and then one day, what kind of salvation did they have in the first place? But assurance, I believe many of these people, and I think this would take in some of our dear Pentecostal friends, the Keswick movement, some of these people really got a real dose of assurance, a different degree of assurance, at least.

Why do I say that? Well, because one of the things, the results of assurance is this, it's a new sense of God's love, a stronger sense, an assured sense of God's love. It's a new sense of holiness, God's holiness, and a love for moral obedience. There's a new sense of compassion when you have assurance, a strong assurance.

And if you'll take your own little graph, you'll find out when you were walking in the joy of your salvation, then you had more compassion for the lost. Love of Christian service and stewardship, and sometimes I think these people really just came into a clearer, fuller assurance. Now, you theologians can fight with me about that later, but my dear friends tonight, I'm not old, I hope, real old, but you know, in the last couple of

years, I've been traveling to church after church, and I want to be honest with you tonight.

The caliber of Christianity that prevails in most places where I go, among most people, indicates some defective evangelism. And I believe that one of the areas of these defective aspects of the Church is bad counseling in the area of assurance. And my plea tonight to you is, if you have not studied the doctrine of assurance, I beg you in God's name to do it.

I'll tell you one of the things it'll do. It'll put you out of the assurance business forever. You will not be in the, you might be in the insurance business, but you won't be in the assurance business anymore.

You might tell people how they can have assurance. They should have it. You might show them the promises of God, but you will be out of the assurance business.

I don't know if my friend Bill Davison's here or not, and I don't think he'd mind you telling me a great lesson that God taught me as a couple of his friends, and I talked with him about his eternal welfare and his relationship to his Maker. But God, again, emphasized and reinforced what I'm trying to say to you tonight. You know, all the personal work courses I took in my early Christian life, they all had this little syllogism.

You know, here's a promise. Are you a sinner? Yes. Do you believe that Christ died for sins? Yes.

Well, then you're a Christian, you know. Maybe it was a little more than that, but, and I'm caricaturing it somewhat, but it was a little syllogism, you know, and you got them to put their name in there. And then if they didn't say they were saved, you told them you're making God a liar and all that sort of thing, you know.

Well, I soon learned that these people didn't act like Christians, a lot of them, and I had their name in John 3, 16 like nobody's business, but they didn't act like Christians. They didn't live like Christians. And so you start wondering, what's the matter? Didn't I do the same thing? They said it right, they answered the questions right, and they fit into the little syllogism, you know, major premise, minor premise, conclusion, and everything was fine.

Well, after a while, I finally learned that that's wrong. But when I, some of us talked to dear old Bill for a good long time, at least a year and a half about his soul, and I remember he started to reform. Oh, he quit this, and he quit that, and he started to read, and he started to study, but he used to tell us, I'm not a Christian.

I'm not saved. This was after a year. And some of the other dear friends that were talking to him about his soul, we'd meet sometimes, and I remember we met a couple times, and I said, you know, I believe Bill's saved, he just doesn't know it.

And I'd go home to my wife after a conversation, I'd say, you know, I believe Bill's saved, but he just doesn't know it. Then one night, and I don't know if he remembers it or not, but I do, but it was a great lesson to me. One night, I'd just finished my dinner, and I was having my dessert, and the doorbell rang, and here comes Bill, and he said, oh, this may not be verbatim, but he said, you know, I found my problem.

He said, for nights and nights, I've been getting down on my knees every night, I'm praying for God to save me, and let me know that I'm a Christian. He said, you know what I found out? He said, I have another God. Yeah, tell me about it.

He said, well, it's about that big, and it's white. I said, tell me more. Well, he said, you see, he said, somehow in my mind, when I pray, in my mind's eye, it comes up that it's Christ or Sunday God.

He said, last night I died to my other God. He wasn't long telling me that he had, what am I saying? Oh, you say, that's just, no, it's a little different with Bill. You see, Bill was going to be a pro, and he practiced for 20 years.

Those of you who used to see him hit balls, hours and hours and hours, he was on a good start. Three or four times champion of the country club, Eastern collegiate champion, head of the Penn State golf team. He had some indications to believe that he, that he had a career as a pro, but for 20 years, he practiced to be a pro.

And it wasn't like me quitting Sunday golf, or you. To him, it was a life because, listen, because all the tournaments end on Sunday. And so for him, it was 20 years, a life's ambition.

And you see, this is my point, that Christ would not plant the white flag of peace in his soul when he was still at war with the king. And Luke, how remiss I would have been to tell him, and give him false peace, and get him to put his name in a verse, and tell him he's a Christian, and act like he was a Christian. I didn't know that he was in war with heaven.

I didn't know he had another God, and my friends that talked to him didn't know that he had another God. You see, what am I saying? When Christ was on earth, he could look into the heart of that harlot woman and say, thy sins be forgiven thee, because he could look into her heart. You don't have those kind of eyes.

And when he left this old world, he only left one person, one person to do that work. You better stay out of these shirts, Jimmy. I was preaching Philadelphia some years ago, and I was preaching on self-examination.

I don't have many strings on my banjo, you know, and I got to play the ones I have. The Arabian Bible Institute didn't give me a full course in apologetics and all that sort of thing, but I keep playing those couple strings, and I was on one of my favorite strings, self-examination, and so on. And the preacher, I think he was getting about enough of it.

So he said to me, you know, five preachers, 500 people he preaches to. In fact, he preached about 700 every Sunday morning. And he loves me, too.

And he says, Ernie, what do you want me to do, stand up and tell them they're not Christians? I said, no, you don't want to play God. But I said, you might be a little remiss in telling them they all are all the time, because here they didn't act like Christians. They didn't live like Christians.

They didn't act like Christians, love what Christians love and hate what Christians hate. Who is he? He said, well, what do you do? I said, well, I said, I believe he just, I said, if it was me, doctor, I said, the way I do it is, I said, I got a Bible. And I said, it tells me in this Bible what a Christian is meant to be and to do.

And I said, now and again, I try to hold that standard up. This is what a Christian is. This is what he's meant to do.

I don't know, but I got a book that tells me what a Christian is, a Bible teaches about assurance. You might think I'd be presumptuous tonight to assume that there's somebody here that really doesn't have assurance. I see some young people, wives, and I notice them.

I get in churches where the husbands are saved and the wives aren't saved. They're rebellious and everything. Hate the gospel.

They kind of go along because it's the custom of the place and vice versa. Men go along because it's the custom of the place. Children would go along with it because it's the custom of the place.

And I feel I'd be remiss tonight when I get in a crowd of more than 12. I assume, possibly, I don't assume they're not Christians. I assume possibly there's somebody there that's not a Christian.

I'd be remiss tonight if I didn't assume it in this crowd that possibly you don't have assurance. I want to ask you about your assurance tonight. What is the assurance that you have that you'll safely cross that river that has no bridge? What's it based on? Something you did 75 years ago? Listen, yesterday's assurance is a day late for today.

It's a day late! Young people, what's the basis of your assurance, Father? What's the basis of your assurance, Father? What's the basis of your assurance? May it please God if you're here tonight resting on false hopes. One of the marks of the false prophet is this. Jeremiah 6, I was reading the other day, and one of the marks of the false prophet is this, that he heals the daughters lightly and slightly.

This is one of the marks. He says, peace, peace, when there is no peace. That's a mark of a false prophet.

My prayer is that you would have a well-grounded assurance, and you'd seek Christ until he plants the white flag of peace in your soul. Let's pray. O Lord Jesus, it's not that we depend on the extent of our reading or the subtlety of our wit or the power of our persuasion or the depth of our philosophy, but we cast ourselves fully, fully on the power of thy Spirit to do what only thy Spirit can do.

Come, O Holy Dove, come, O Holy Ghost, come, we pray thee, and do that work that no man can do and no man can undo. Hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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