

The Gospel Our Trust #5

by Ernest C. Reisinger

The sermon emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between true and false assurance in faith, urging listeners to seek genuine belief in Christ.

Duration: 1:00:17

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:13-17, Romans 2:5-6, 2 Peter 1:10, 2 Peter 2:3

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of steady growth in one's faith rather than relying on initial emotional experiences. He mentions a person who boasted about how high he jumped when he was saved, but the speaker suggests that it is more important to focus on how far one runs in their faith journey. The speaker then turns to the story of the dying thief in Luke chapter 23 and highlights seven evidences of regeneration in the thief's life. These evidences include crying out for mercy, casting oneself on the mercy of Christ, and resting in the promises of Christ. The sermon concludes with a review of the trust in the gospel and the task of spreading it in the light of God's omniscience.

Transcript

It's a bit irreverent to say I found a sure thing, but if you'll look at Luke chapter 2 verse 15, you'll understand it's not as irreverent as it might sound. Now tonight we come to a, the end of our time together. I certainly have enjoyed the fellowship with many of you dear people.

I've enjoyed the fellowship with your pastor, and of course it's been nice to see my brother again for a change. We don't get together so much, but it's been nice and refreshing, and it's put a sunshine in my path to be with you. I feel the Lord has great things in store for this church.

There's a lot of things I see that I like. Steady growth, not some phenomenal soap bubble that goes up and down about as fast as it goes up. Like I was telling, a fella came in my office and he was telling me how high he jumped when he was saved, and I thought to myself after listening to him for about 20 minutes, I'd be more interested in how far he runs after he hits the ground.

I think there's some good healthy things here, and I'm impressed, and the right way. Now tonight we want to look at our little text again and kind of take up where we did last night, and not so much review tonight, but before we do, let's bow our heads, bow our hearts, and ask the Lord to accompany us with his Spirit and power. Blessed Lord, tonight as we come to a very, very narrow path, we need thy direction.

We need discernment tonight, Lord, to distinguish between those things. Which differ. And our Father, as we approach it, we recognize that the narrow path, we would not rob thy very own from that assurance which is theirs.

But our Father, we would seek by thy grace to be a friend to that soul who may be in the place of carnal security and self-deceived. We would seek to be a friend to that soul tonight. Lord, since this is such a narrow path, if ever we need thee, we need thee just now.

Both for hearing and speaking. And so anoint the ears of the hearer, and assist by thy Spirit our lips tonight. For thy dear name's sake we pray, amen.

Last night we talked about that part of our text that we've taken as kind of a little theme text for these four meetings together, or five. 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 4. We've talked about our trust in the gospel and spent a time on that. We've talked about our task, so to speak, the gospel, by life and by lip.

Discussed the aspects of our motives for that task, the message of that task, and methods, God-honoring methods, as we seek to do the task. Last night we talked about an aspect which tries our hearts, and that is to be honest with men about spiritual things. And we were talking particularly last night about being honest when we invite men to Christ.

I didn't get to it, but I would have liked to had brought in one other scripture last night, and that was Luke 14, where our Lord gives the example as he invites men to Christ to count the cost. We were making the point that we should be honest with those we invite to Christ. And I believe that we should make the gate narrow at the outset, not any narrower than our Lord made it, but not to trick and trap and use gimmicks and gadgets to trick people about holy things.

So tonight we want to take up that thought, not on the invitation to Christ, but we want to think a bit tonight, and I've tried to rethink today and kind of get a mixture of two messages. I really needed one more, but I can't stay till Thursday, so that's out. I really wanted to spend a night on Bible assurance and one night on perseverance of the Saints.

So tonight it'll be probably a little mixture and probably not so homiletical or some keen outline that you can remember, but I want to try to touch on those two things with the best of my ability and the assistance of God's Spirit. Now we must, I believe, under God distinguish between things that differ. I used the phrase this week, I didn't know I used it, but I would have used it tonight anyhow if I hadn't, and that is proof, text, salvation.

Now what I mean by that is this giving people assurance on a verse of scripture. What I mean by that is, here's somebody, we decision them, and I don't see where that's in the Bible anyhow. God never asked us to give anybody assurance.

He told them to tell them how to get it, how to be saved, point them to Jesus. That's the way, walk in it at our best, we're signposts. But we're never called to enter into that holy realm of giving people assurance.

Now we can assist them, we can tell them how to get assurance. We can show them that assurance should be there and so on, but we can't enter into that holy area between a man and his God and the Holy Ghost as he ministers through the scripture. Now I think what I mean by that is getting people to say, I believe.

And then as soon as they say, I believe, John 3.16, to tell them, now you're saved. And then they go on with that verse, and anybody that asks them from then on, regardless what kind of, what situation they're in, they say, I believe and I'm saved. Now I do not mean tonight that a man does anything else to be saved, but I would say tonight, and I want to make a serious effort to give you some evidence for what I say, or proof of what I say, that it's necessary to know whether you believe spuriously or whether you believe efficaciously.

I see both kind of beliefs in the Bible. So we want to look at them, and I'll look at the spurious first. If you turn to John chapter 2, we're going to take several passages now, and look at the spurious believer.

And I would remind you that it's the same word as we have many other places. So let's look a few texts on the spurious believer, because the real question we ask is not just to say with our lips we believe, but to know in our heart whether we believe efficaciously or spuriously. John chapter 2, verse 23.

Now when he was in Jerusalem, that is, our Lord, at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name when they saw all the miracles that he did. But, and if I remember any grammar, that's a conjunction that's connecting with what goes before. I suppose you wonder if I remember any sometimes, but, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.

And I say to you tonight, without any equivocation, if Jesus does not commit himself to a man, he will never believe efficaciously. If the Spirit does not reveal the Christ of the Bible, you may wind up with a Christ that you think you believe in, that you've contrived with your own imagination, but you will not wind up with the Christ of the Bible, because this one must be revealed by the Spirit. The Spirit is the only one who can make this Jesus real enough to save you.

Somebody said to me once, I'm talking like this, oh, and I, it's probably been said to you many times, if I had been there when Jesus was here, and if I could have heard him, and if I could have seen the miracles that he did, I believe it would have been much easier to believe. My dear, I want to assure you that you're, you couldn't be more wrong. Could you picture yourself with a little Jew, and I don't believe he's like we see him in the pictures.

I read about him in Isaiah, and that description that I get him, get of him is nothing like some of these effeminate pictures we have of Christ at all. If you read about Isaiah 53, I believe your mind's eye will give you a more, a better portrait of the Son of God than all the pictures you ever saw. But I say to you tonight, if one stood up in your midst, a little Jew with nothing about him that looked, that caused you to desire him, and he said I was God, unless the Spirit revealed that truth to you, you would have crucified him too.

The Spirit had to show people that he was God. Let me just, in passing, let me show you what I mean. Over in this famous Roman Catholic passage, Matthew chapter 16, and I wish our generation would know this, in Matthew chapter 16, we have the point that I'm trying to make.

Our Lord was, he came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, and he asked his disciples, whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Then they went on to say, some thou say thou art John the Baptist. This is Matthew 16, 14. Some said, and they said, some say thou art John the Baptist.

Some Elias, and others Jeremias, are one of the prophets. And he said of them, but whom say ye that I am? And then Simon Peter made that great confession of who he was. And I want to call your attention not to Simon Peter's confession, but the 17th verse.

This is verse 16. Simon Peter answered and said unto him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Listen to what Jesus said.

Jesus said, and Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you? No indeed, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say tonight in John chapter two, the text we looked at, Jesus did not reveal himself to them. And therefore that was a spurious belief, it wasn't efficacious, it was not a saving belief.

We return to John chapter 8. John chapter 8, verse 31. And as he spake these words, many believed on him. If you follow to the end of the chapter, you'll find that the same crowd, in verse 59, took up stones to cast at him, but he hid himself.

The same crowd. If you look at verse 31, Then said Jesus to those Jews which believe on him, If you continue in my word, then are ye made disciples indeed. I'm just going to hit the verses and we'll comment on this truth afterwards.

Chapter 12 of John, verse 42 and verse 43. Nevertheless, among the chief rulers all so many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him. Now listen, this is serious, dear heart.

They did not confess him. Why? Lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Acts chapter 8, a very embarrassing passage for a Baptist to turn to, but since we must be honest with the Bible, we are going to turn to it anyhow.

This wouldn't be as embarrassing for you as it is for me. I say this facetiously, of course. Acts chapter 8, I find a fellow that believed and he was baptized, but obviously not saved.

And we want to show you why we believe the scriptures teach us that he wasn't saved. Verse 12 of Acts 8, And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself also believed, or believed also.

And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondering, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now I want to take you down a little farther, that same fellow, that same fellow, ulterior motives. Verse 20, Look what Peter said to him.

But Peter said unto them, Thy money perish with thee. So Peter thought he was going to perish, because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart.

This is why I say the Bible gives evidence that he wasn't His heart wasn't right. And if there's anything that changes when a man is saved, it's his heart. Even when he stumbles and falls in his practice, he can be right in his heart.

But this man was wrong at the wrong place. He was wrong in his heart. He said, Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

And he told him, Repent therefore of thy wickedness, and pray, God, that the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness in the bond of iniquity. Then said Simon, and this, I think, is the conclusive reason why there's evidence that this man never efficaciously believed.

He was a spurious believer from the outset. Then answered Simon and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, and notice his prayer. Was his prayer, O God, be merciful to me for my sin? He wasn't worried about his sin.

He was only worried about one thing, and that's the consequences of sin. And that's the point I was making the other night when I say those who just want to close with Christ in one of his offices. He wanted a Savior, but he wasn't worried about his sin.

Therefore, note the content of his prayer. Pray ye to the Lord for me that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. The consequences only.

I turn you to one other text on spurious believers, and that's found in Luke chapter 8. Luke chapter 8. Our Lord didn't give us the interpretation of all the parables. We can wish sometimes when we go to the commentaries that he did, when we see so many divisions about some of the parables. But this is one of the parables that our Lord did interpret for us, thank God.

And so it ought to end forever what he was talking about. Now, I'm not going to read the whole parable tonight because I'm pressing for some time, but I'm going to read our Lord's interpretation of it. The disciples asked him in verse 9, it's the parable of Sorah, about some fell by the wayside, verse 5, some fell on rocks, verse 6, some fell among thorns, verse 7, and some fell on good ground, verse 8. And the disciples asked him a question in verse 9, he said, what might this parable be? In verse 11, now the parable is this, that seed is the word of God, that settles that.

Those by the wayside, are they that hear, then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their ears, lest they should believe, and be saved. They never were even awakened, I don't think, went off like water off a duck's back. But there's another group here, verse 13, they on the rocks, are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy.

Last night we went forward in a big meeting, and we go, we're living in the clouds for about three days or something like that. These have no root, which for a while, what class, and in the time of temptation, fall away. Furious believers, temporary believers, never savingly, efficaciously, closing with Christ.

Now you ask, there's a very important word in this text, and that is a while. How long is a while? Huh? How long is a while? Might be a week, it might be a month, it might be five years, it might be ten years, I don't know. I only know that the end proves whether it's furious or efficacious.

Now, let's come again. What am I saying? I'm saying this, that it's not just simply getting someone to say a verse and say, I believe a verse. It's not saying, it's not saying, I believe.

And yet I want to say at the same time, it's not more than believing. Look at 1 John. This epistle was written to combat antinomianism.

1 John, chapter 1, verse 7. Or verse 6, rather. Chapter 1, verse 6. If we say, I better say it in my Sunday school class, somebody stopped me the other week and said, Ernie, don't say these words if you don't tell us what they mean. Maybe I better say what antinomian means.

An antinomian, it comes from two Greek words, and I'm not trying to impress you with my Greek. The only Greek I know makes submarine sandwiches. But I do know this from looking up to some people that do know something about Greek.

An antinomian comes from two Greek words, anti and nomos. Anti is against law, I mean, anti is against nomos' law, rule, or reign. There's a Greek student.

Am I right, Pastor? All right, so you believe me. An antinomian is somebody that's against the rule and reign of Christ. He's an antinomian.

And we have bred a generation of antinomians by a wicked doctrine called eternal security. A wicked doctrine, as most people believe it. Now I want to hurry to correct this so somebody doesn't think I believe you can get lost and saved a dozen times.

Because I don't believe that at all. You only get saved once. And I believe that the great difference between eternal security as generally taught and the perseverance of the saints, which is the doctrine that we believe as Presbyterians, namely this, that he that is saved will persevere to the end.

And he's not saved because he perseveres, he perseveres because he is saved. Now we want to deal with that. Because this doctrine ties in with false assurance, with spurious believers, and antinomianism.

It all goes together. And there's no place in the Bible that says eternal security. There is a place that talks in Hebrews about eternal salvation.

But for those of you who might be stumbling right now at what I'm saying, I think I'll clear it up if you stay with me a little while. But let me turn you to the verse that most people talk about when they do talk about eternal security. They don't read far enough.

It's Hebrews. I thought it was 5.8. Yes, that's what it is. 5.8.9. 5.9. It's Hebrews 5.9. This is the only place that comes close to what I'm talking about.

And they usually don't read the rest of the verse. It's Hebrews 5.9. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that believe John 3.16. Huh? What did your Bible say, class? He became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. Now we'll get to this.

Bear with me now. We want to look at the book that's talking about fighting antinomianism just now. 1 John 1.7.6. If we say, and here we have that word again, it's not what we say.

If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we what, class? Lie. The Bible is not so polite. It's the only book that will be honest with you.

It's the only book that will be honest with me. It says we lie and do not the truth. Over in chapter 2, verse 3 to 5, let me read it again.

Don't forget, John is fighting antinomianism. Hereby we do know that we know him if, don't you take that if out of there, if we keep his commandments. Not if we believe a verse of scripture.

This is how we know that we know him. We're saved by believing the testimony of scripture. But to know that we're saved, there's certainly obedience connected with it.

We're going to get to the confession in just a minute. He that saith, I know him, and keep not his commandments, verse 4, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. Now does that mean we don't sin? Of course not.

There's a provision in verse 1 and 2, but some people forget who this provision is for, and they flash this verse around so wonderfully. Notice, this is to my little children. These things write I unto you that ye sin not.

Now when you stumble, there's provision. But this provision is for those who are in the first part of the verse, whose desire it is to sin not. And they will sin.

And there's provision. But it's a provision for those whose desire it is to sin not. These things write I unto you that you sin not.

That's the picture of the Christian's heart. He doesn't want to sin, or he hasn't made it. And he does stumble and fall, and God has made a provision for somebody that's praying in heaven for him, a lawyer in heaven, a propitiation, an advocate, if you please, for those who desire to sin not.

Now let me turn, and I think this is the key, one of the keys, to this great thing. There is, we must make a distinction between the ground of salvation and the ground of assurance. I'm going to be a little tedious here.

You see, the ground of salvation, this is very important as we are honest with men in dealing with their souls. If you turn to the Confession, you don't have that, but I'm going to read it to you the best I know how. I want to read what our Confession, the Westminster Confession, has to say about assurance of salvation.

Assurance of grace and salvation. It's chapter 28 of the Westminster Confession. Hear it carefully.

I wish I had time to read every scripture that's connected with these great statements. It's not talking about salvation, it's talking about assurance of salvation, and I'll come to that in a minute, too. Although, hear me now, although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and the estate of salvation.

Now it says that carnal men may falsely and vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions. Although that's true, which hope of theirs shall perish, yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him in all sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed. Now listen, paragraph 2. There's four little paragraphs, and I'm going to read every one of them, even if we quit after I read it.

But I got some comments to make. Now we come to a vital part of assurance. Listen carefully.

This certainty that he spoke of in the other paragraph, that belongs to these who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, this certainty is not a bare, conjectural, probable persuasion grounded on fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith. Now I want you to notice what it's founded on, and this is the key to what I had to say. But an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation.

That's this, the Bible. In other words, it's founded upon the promises of God made real by the Spirit. That's one, but that's not all.

Secondly, an inward evidence of those graces which these promises are made. The testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirit that we are the children of God. In other words, there are three basic

grounds of assurance, not one, like salvation.

The hope of salvation is on the finished work of Jesus Christ and his blood, and if you're trusting anything else for your salvation tonight, you're lost. But the assurance that that salvation belongs to me, and I'm not a spirit believer, has three grounds of assurance. One, the promises of God made real by the Spirit.

And notice I said made real by the Spirit, because there's a difference between just saying John 3.16 and having the Spirit make John 3.16 real to your heart. Let me explain what I mean. If Khrushchev stood here tonight and quoted John 3.16, it would be true.

If an unsaved man here tonight and quoted John 3.16, it would be just as true as if you're a pastor or if I quoted or if you quoted it. I've dealt with men in a mission that could quote forwards and backwards many of the verses that were around the wall, but they weren't saved. They could quote the verses, they could say them with their lips, but they weren't saved.

Now the difference is this. When I say the promises that God made real by the Spirit is this. That is objective truth.

I pick up my Bible and I read John 3.16 and that is the truth. If Khrushchev reads John 3.16, it is the truth. That's objective truth.

Now, what's the difference? It's when the Holy Ghost takes that objective truth and makes it subjective. And I still say, now, did you ever hear testimony something like this? Well, I believe John 3.16 and I believe John 3.16 and then one day I believed John 3.16. What does that fellow mean? I'll tell you. He means that one day the Spirit took that objective truth and made it real to his never-dying soul.

That's what he means. And so it's the promises of God. We're talking about the ground of the church.

The promises of God made real by the Spirit. That's what the Confession is saying. Number two, the witness of the Spirit within.

We don't hear much about this today, but never forget that Romans 8.16 says, "...the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit tonight that you belong to him? That's the second ground of assurance, not the ground of salvation, the ground of assurance. The third ground is Christian obedience. And that is, he gave eternal salvation to as many as obeyed.

And if I read in the Bible that no, no, no adulterer shall enter the kingdom of God, and I have committed, and I'm committing adultery, I have no reason to believe that I'm saved. If I read in the Bible, no drunkard, I remember the fellow aboard ship that used to come back to the ship time after time. We'd be out in the South Pacific and he'd come to our prayer meetings and he'd sing the songs with us and he'd pray with us and read the scriptures with us.

As soon as we'd get back to the shore, he'd be off drunk, wine, women, and song. I remember the time I put my arm around him, I says, Dozer, I said, I thought you were a Christian. He says, my daddy's a Baptist preacher and he told me, once you're saved, you're always saved.

Living in, the benefit of his life was drunkenness. And I said, Dozer, my Bible says, no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of God. Now, we'll clear this up in a minute, stay with me.

Stay with me. I'm talking about Christian conduct. When the Bible clearly tells us, let me give you the verse that I'm talking about, I'll come to it quicker.

In 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10, there's a great verse that says this, give diligence, give diligence. You can't do this half asleep. And tonight I may be talking to people who's hiding behind carnal presumption and not God's eternal salvation, but carnal security.

It says give diligence to make your calling and election sure. I think I quoted this today to somebody. We were talking about this old John Brown, the senior minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, who taught Greek exegesis at Edinburgh, Scotland, made this statement about that great text in 2 Peter 1, 10.

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. This is what he said about it. He said, if we would know that we are the call, no it's assurance.

If we would know that we are the called and elect of God, we must and do what the called and elect of God are called to be and to do. Did I say it too fast? Let me put it into different words. If I would prove to my own heart and to the world that I'm a Christian, I got to be and do what a Christian is meant to be and to do.

If I don't act like a Christian, what reason do I have to believe that I am a Christian? If the world don't seek any Christian characteristics about me, what reason will they have to believe that I'm a Christian? Now let me go on. I want to read paragraph 3, because this, I believe, is the crux of where the error is, and that is, when we make salvation and assurance of salvation synonymous, you're in for trouble. I'll tell you what, you'll be counting some people out that you don't know about, and you'll be counting some people in that you don't know about.

You see, this is holy ground, and this ought to make you very careful never to say, after somebody's made a perfection and walked with the Lord and then they stumble and fall, you never say he's not a Christian. You don't know. You don't know.

The game isn't over. You're trying to find out the final score in the third quarter. You don't know.

If you'd have looked at Judas those days when he followed the Lamb of God, we would have said, oh, he's a Christian. Look, he's just like the rest of them. But the end proved that he never was.

And when Judas confessed his sin, if you'll notice, he said, I betrayed innocent blood. He never did make a clear confession. This proves he was never real.

In John 12, 6 it said he was a thief. He never confessed that. So he was a spurious believer from the outset.

He was described very vividly in Luke chapter 8, that I pointed out to you, verse 13. Had you looked at Peter when he denied the Lord, you'd have been wrong again, because you'd have said, he's not a Christian, and you'd have been dead wrong. What proved you wrong? Peter's repentance and remorse and coming to the Lord.

The difference is this. A true believer may fall down on the deck of the ship many, many times, but he'll never fall overboard. And a spurious believer falls clear off the ship, even though he may appear for a long time to have some of the marks of saving faith.

Now, let me read you paragraph 3 of the Confession. This infallible assurance, and this is the key, hear it, does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a believer may wait long for salvation. No, you don't get to salvation by degrees.

Salvation is not by degrees. Tonight you're justified or you're lost, you're saved or lost, but your knowledge of that may fluctuate in many degrees. There may be those who have strong assurance, those poor ones who have weak assurance.

If you have the weakest faith, you're saved. And if you have the strongest faith, you're saved. Assurance is not weak or strong.

God saves people with faith, period. It's not a question of weak or strong. In other words, assurance is a requisite to the well-being of a Christian, but it's not a requisite to the being of a Christian.

We're talking about assurance. The spark of fire is true fire, just as true as a building of blades. But ashes aren't fire, smoke isn't fire, any degree.

Now let me go on. And that's why I say, my dear, as we're honest with men, don't try to give them assurance. Tell them how to be saved.

You see, because God may be wanting to deal with somebody. Maybe there's an area in his life that you can't see or I can't see, and God is withholding assurance for a good reason, to deal with that soul in some areas where you can't go. And if you try to play the Holy Spirit, you'd do a wicked thing.

Listen to this. This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it. Assurance, not salvation.

Yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given unto him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of the ordinary means, attain thereto. Therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. That's not talking about getting saved, that's talking about making something sure that you think you have, and do have.

Therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in the love and thankfulness to God, in the strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance. Obedience, proper fruits, that's the assurance, that's the fruits of right assurance. So far is it from inclining men to looseness.

Assurance of salvation doesn't incline men to looseness, the Confession says. Ah no. The last paragraph, and I think this is important.

True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers' ways shaken. My dear friend, if you're saved tonight, the gates of hell will never shake your salvation. But there are some things that may shake your assurance.

There are some things that may shake your assurance. Listen, and the Confession was very different ways. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken in different ways.

Diminished, that means lose it all together. Those of you who know Pilgrim's Progress will remember that he went to sleep in the arbor. And what did he lose, somebody? He lost his role and went down the hill

because he fell asleep.

Did he lose his salvation? Of course not. Read it and you'll find Bunyan was talking about the assurance of his salvation. We may have salvation shaken, divers' ways diminished, intermitted, and here's how.

By negligence and persevering in it. That's the way your assurance may go up and down. By your negligence and persevering in it.

By falling into some special sin. Show me the man that's fallen into some special sin. Do I believe he lost his salvation? The Bible doesn't teach that.

David fell into a special sin. A special, special sin. A terrible, wicked sin.

Did he lose his salvation? Of course not. Look at Psalm 51. You'll find crying out, Oh God, restore to me, what, my salvation? Uh-uh.

Restore to me the joy, somebody said, the joy of thy salvation. Read it in Psalm 51. There's a man that lost his assurance.

And rightly so. You don't have any business with assurance tonight if you're stumbling in sin. God's not going to give you the joy of assurance.

You see, salvation is heaven by and by. But assurance of salvation is heaven on earth. Heaven on earth.

Now listen. How does a man lose his salvation? By neglecting to persevere in it. One.

By falling into some special sin. Two. What does that do? It wounds the conscience, grieves the spirit.

Another one. By some sudden, zealous temptation. His assurance may waver.

Not his salvation, dear. Even such as fear him and walk in darkness, and have no light for a while, nor his verses for all this. Yet they never, yet they are never utterly destitute of the seed of God and the life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which by the operation of the spirit, this assurance may in due time be revised.

And by which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair. Ah, that's wonderful. That's David.

He was supported from utter despair. Peter was supported from utter despair. But he did lose his assurance.

He did lose his assurance, but he didn't lose his salvation. Now, you see, what I'm fighting vehemently at is antinomianism. And that is giving people false assurance.

What I meant when I began, we travel, this is a thin path. This is a narrow path. Because every conscientious Christian worker does not want to rob some poor saint of God with weak faith, the assurance of their salvation.

And on the other hand, he ought to be under tremendous consciousness of his responsibility never to give some carnal, somebody resting in carnal security, assurance when they have not salvation. And that's what makes it a thin path, a thin path. There are two passages of scripture that I want to call your attention to tonight, that I feel have been much wrested, wrested, by the antinomians.

It's their favorite text to prove eternal security. One of them is John chapter 10, verse 27 to 29. And I want to read this three ways tonight.

I want to read it like an Arminian, that's somebody who believes you can be lost and saved. Then I want to read it like an antinomian. Then I want to read it like a Presbyterian.

All right, hear me now. I want you to get this. This text has been wrested.

Jesus said, verse 26, you believe not because you're not my sheep, I say unto you, as I said unto you, this is what he said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them, they follow me. Now the Arminian would love to put a little if in here. He'd just love to put a little if in here.

He'd like to read it like this. My sheep hear my voice and I know them if they follow me. That's wrong.

I'm putting words in the Bible, aren't I? Now the antinomian or the typical eternal securitist, I don't want to be too hard because I've stood here once and there's sincerity here and there's a sense in which you are eternally secure. Don't misunderstand it. The only thing I'm trying to do is distinguish between an antinomian view of eternal security and the historic Christian Presbyterian view of the perseverance of the saints.

Now the antinomian would like to read it like this and he puts the emphasis here. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never, never, never, never, never. All he wants to do is call your attention to never perish, never perish, never perish, never perish.

That's the only thing he sees. And he gets too many nevers in there and he misses his key point. Now how's the Presbyterian read it? I'll tell you.

My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. Who do you give eternal life? My sheep that follow me. That too has eternal life.

They follow me and I give unto them. Who do I give? They that follow me. Now don't misunderstand me.

This is a narrow path. We're not saved because we follow. You'll miss me tonight if that's what you interpret me to say.

We're not saved because we follow. We follow because we're saved. We follow because we're his sheep.

That's what it tells us. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. Why do they follow him? Because they are his sheep.

And if you're not following him tonight, you should say to your heart, am I really his sheep? And you should not want to give somebody carnal security who's not following Christ. The other text is Romans 8, a wonderful text. I've pillowed my head in it more than one time and I guess you have too.

Romans 8, 35 to 39. 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 accounted 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 creatures, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Don't miss one of the key words of that text.

You've got to make sure you're one of the us. He says, who shall separate us? So make sure you're one of the us's. And when you're sure you're one of the us's, then it all applies.

But if you're not one of the us's, then it doesn't apply. The ground of assurance is three, the promises of God made real by the Spirit. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.

The Spirit making real that promise. The witness of the Spirit within. And a life that evidences by practice what a Christian is called to be and to do.

I was talking about evidence once, and I want to close in just a couple minutes. I'm going a little over tonight. But I was teaching a Sunday school class once, I'll never forget it.

Somebody jumped on me and said, when I was talking about evidences, there ought to be evidences in our life that we belong to the Son of God. There ought to be that evidence of following. And I can see the fellow back there yet, and he said, Ernie, wait a minute.

He said, how about the dying thief? He said he didn't have time to show any evidence. And I went home, and with the help of old William Guthrie, I looked at that dying thief. And I want to ask you tonight, I want to call your attention, turn to Luke chapter 23, and bear with me a minute.

He says, I want to point out seven evidences in that dying thief, and I want to know if you have that much evidence tonight. Seven evidences. I'll read it to you.

Verse 39, one of the male factors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. And the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? We indeed justly, for we receive a due reward for our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. What evidence is here that this man, first of all, he fell out with his former companion over Christ.

That's evidence, isn't it? Huh? He fell out with his former companion over Jesus Christ. Number one. Number two, he justified God in what God was doing.

He said, We deserve it. That's the voice of a Christian. That's the evidence of a changed heart.

Lord, I don't deserve to be saved. It's your mercy that saved me. He justified God.

Verse 41. He saw what he deserves. He says, We indeed justly, for we receive a due reward of our deeds.

Number three. Ah, this is wonderful. He saw Christ as perfect.

In the same verse, he said, This man hath done nothing amiss. He saw Christ perfect. That's evidence.

He had some kind of other eyes than those two things sticking in his head. Ah, the Spirit opened his eyes. You've got to see that to see Christ perfect.

That's three. He acknowledged Christ to be a king while his enemies seemed to have him under. Did he look like a king dying on a cross with nails in his hands and nails in his feet and a spear in his side? Did he look like a king? Did he look like he had a kingdom? Why, of course not.

The Spirit showed that thief that, and that's the evidence that he saw him as he really was. He said, He acknowledged Christ to be a king while his enemies seemed to have him under. And the other evidence, number five.

He believed in another world. That's the evidence of a Christian. A Christian is somebody that sees two worlds.

He believed in another world. He believed in a state of glory after death. And the big thing is he preferred that to his present state.

Notice the unregenerate thief. What was his request of Christ? Read it. He says, If you be, get down yourself and get us down.

He was thinking about right now, this world. But what did the second thief desire? Did he say anything about this world? No, no. His eyes were on another world, another kingdom.

And he said, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. He recognized a state of glory after death, and he preferred that to safety and bodily safety right now. Six, what's the other evidence? He cast himself on the mercy of Christ.

He cast himself on the mercy of Christ. That's all. That's evidence.

When a man comes to that place, he says, Lord, I can't get to you, but you can get to me. Lord, I don't want what's coming to me. Have mercy on me.

You're all right. You made it. When you cry for mercy like that, he never turns any way.

That's what he did. Lord, remember me. Mercy.

Evidence of regeneration. He cast himself on the mercy of Christ. And then it seems by the context that he rested sweetly in the promise of Christ.

He rested sweetly in the promises of Christ. Now I believe, I believe there was somebody else there making all that real to him, the Holy Ghost. Let me close tonight with just a word of review and a word of exhortation about our text.

Look at it just a minute, we close. We've talked about our trust, the gospel. We've talked about our task to spread the gospel.

We must spread it in the light, as we do it, we must spread it in the light of God's omniscience. He knows and tries our hearts about it. The evidence, I believe there's three evidence of our sincerity as we try to do this in this text that we've been considering night by night, right in the context rather, not in the text, but in the context.

And I want to call your attention to the next two verses after the verse we've been working on, and that is verse 5 and 6. And I close with these three thoughts. First of all, the evidence of our sincerity about all this is this. Verse 5, we see that Paul avoided flattering words.

Don't flatter men in their sin, or give them vain hopes. That'll require you to be honest, and it'll avoid flattering words. The second thing will test our sincerity as God's witnesses.

We must be covetous, we must not be covetous, not like the false apostles in 2 Peter chapter 2, 3. That's number 2. We must not be covetous about any vain glory. And the next, the third thing brings us to that very thought. It's found in verse 6, he says, "...nor of men thought we glory, neither of you." Avoid ambition and vain glory, desiring not the honor which comes from men.

This will test our sincerity. And I close with John on this point, desiring not the honor which comes from men. I close with John chapter 5, verse 44, words from our Lord along the same line.

And we would be sincere about this. We will avoid flattery. We will avoid, we will not be covetous, and we'll not approach it from any kind of covetous motives.

We'll avoid ambition and vain glory, not desiring the honor which comes from men. And I close with John 5, 44. How can you believe which honor one from another, and seek not the honor which comes from God only? I hope I don't have you confused tonight about assurance.

And I hope I do somehow get through to you that we must distinguish between things that differ. We must distinguish between things that differ, and not salvation and assurance of salvation synonymous. It leads to many, many, many evils in our day.

Let me ask you a question tonight, and I would be a friend to your soul. Do you have as much evidence in your life that you have savingly closed with Christ as that dying thief? Huh? Did he manifest in one hour? Do you prefer the glories of another world to this world? Have you bowed to the kingship of Jesus Christ, and recognized that he is a king and he has a kingdom? Have you rested sweetly in his promise? What is the ground of your hope? What is the evidence of your assurance? It's been nice to be with you these days, and I trust God would somehow take these few nights together to bless your soul. I trust I've been a friend to your soul, if you're not saved to drive you out from carnal false security, to drive you out into the clear light, where you'd let the light of the glorious gospel shine into your heart, and see him who is sunshine.

Lord, we thank you for these evenings together, and tonight we're quite cognizant of our great task, and therefore we call upon thee to help us as men and women, pastor, elders, deacons, men and women of the pew. Help us, Lord, to make the glorious gospel known in a world that has no other hope. Our friends who do not even know why they're here, help us to restore in them the lost image of thyself, as the glorious gospel shines into their darkened hearts.

Lord, our hearts go out to that boy tonight here, that girl tonight, that man, that woman who is never savingly closed with the Savior. Lord, unloose them. They're in the prison, and they don't have the key to get out.

Loose them, Lord. Loose them. Bring them to thyself.

Spare us of carnal methods. Spare us, Lord, of bad motives, wrong motives. Hear our prayer.

Sanctify and bless this church. Bless this dear pastor. Bless the elders and the people to be a lighthouse in this community.

For thee, thank you for these hours together. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, and for the glory of the Father, and for the good of man. Amen.

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