

Biblical Assurance (Part 3)

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of examining ourselves to see if we are truly saved, and highlights the tests of 1 John as a way to discern whether our profession of faith is true.

Duration: 36:14

Topics: "Assurance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of truly belonging to the Lord and living a life that reflects this relationship. He warns against the danger of claiming to know God while not obeying His commandments, calling such individuals liars. The preacher encourages the congregation to have a passion for God's word and to live a lifestyle that seeks to know and obey it. He challenges them to prioritize evangelism and spreading the message of Jesus to everyone, regardless of their background or species.

Transcript

I would that you'd open up your Bibles again to Second Corinthians for just a moment. Chapter 13, verse 5. Second Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5, let's all stand. Second Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5. Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith, examine yourselves or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we come before you and we pray that Christ would be exalted, that believers would be encouraged, that the lost would be saved. Lord, I know we are asking for much.

But all things are possible with you. In Jesus name, amen, may be seated. One of the things, again, as I said last Sunday, I will say it again, one of the greatest problems in the evangelical community in America today is our weak gospel.

We have convinced men that if they will simply repeat a prayer, repeat a prayer, that they are somehow ushered into the kingdom, they are born again under the power of God. And that is simply not true. Salvation is a supernatural work of God by which the very heart of a man is transformed.

His heart of stone is removed. His heart of heart of flesh takes it takes its place. And that man is transformed.

He literally becomes a new creature. One of the greatest problems in counseling today is many people don't recognize that many pastors. And so they're trying to teach supposed Christian people who have problems.

They're trying to teach them when the problem is they're lost. It's the same way with discipleship. We always hear, you know, there's just as many people coming in the front door is going out the back door and we're gaining all these people for Christ.

But we're losing them. No, my dear friend, it is not that we need to disciple for that reason. We should disciple, but not for that reason.

If they're coming in and going out, it's because they're not born again, because if they truly come to know the Lord, they'll stay. Possibly not with us, for there are other biblical churches, but they will stay within the community of professing Christians and they will grow in sanctification because he who began a good work will finish it. Now, again, we go back to this text because Paul tells the church in Corinth and tells us to do two things with regard to our salvation.

If we profess to know Christ in order to have assurance that that profession is true, he tells us to test ourselves, examine ourselves. So many people today will say, well, I know I'm saved because in my heart of hearts, I know I'm saved, but your heart is desperately wicked or I think I'm saved. But there is a way that seems right unto a man and it leads to death.

How can we truly know that this faith that we profess is true and is a saving faith? Well, now let's go over to First John, where we went last week and go to chapter five again, because I want us to have a somewhat of an introduction, possibly for those who were not here in First John, chapter five, verse 13. He says, these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. How can we know that we have eternal life? John wrote his letter for this purpose.

In the gospels, the gospel that John wrote, he says that he wrote the gospel for a specific purpose, that men might hear it. And on hearing that gospel or reading that gospel, they might be convinced that Jesus Christ is the son of God, the savior of the world, and they might have eternal life. When he comes to this this epistle, he says, I've written these things so that those of you who profess faith in Christ might truly know whether that profession is true.

An example I always use, if we were to dismiss this church this morning and we were to all go out and visit all the homes in this county, we would find out that the great majority, the overwhelming majority, probably over 95 percent of the people would say that they believe. And most would also say they are Christians, but. Their assurance is wrong, their faith is false.

How do we know that? Well, my dear friend, I'm from a farm, I was raised on a farm and I was raised on a farm. Anybody here from Chicago, please do not get angry with me. But I was raised on a farm very far south from Chicago.

And we all we all were cattle herders. We had cattle. Everybody had cattle.

And we always dreaded deer season because we knew that people from Chicago would buy a gun and come down and go hunting on our farms. But they couldn't tell the difference between a Hereford and a deer. I mean, you'd be surprised how many cattle are lost in southern Illinois.

Now, just comes to reason you stand out there, you look at something and the man says, look at that beautiful deer. No, sir, that is not a deer. That is a cow.

How can you know it's a no, sir, it is a cow. Look at the horns. They curl up.

They don't break off. There's not there's just one horn on each side. And, sir, choose as could, sir.

He goes, move, move. Please do not shoot the thing. You say it's a cow.

Why do you say it's a cow? Because it has characteristics of a cow. Why is it that when we get into Christianity, we suddenly start to super spiritualize everything? And well, it doesn't look like a Christian, doesn't act like a Christian, doesn't talk like a Christian. But you can't say he's not a Christian because you can't see inside of his heart.

We do not need to. See inside the heart, because the whole idea of you can't judge a book by its cover. That's not in the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

As a matter of as a matter of fact, he said just the opposite. You will know them by their fruits. Now, I have seen recently and I praise God for this, a returning to what we call biblical counseling.

Where pastors and other men are soul doctors, they're not just sitting there going, OK, you prayed the prayer you're in, but they're trying to help people who profess faith in Jesus Christ to discern whether or not they truly are Christian, whether or not they truly are saved. This is not a minor test. This is the difference between life and death, heaven and hell, eternity of blessedness, eternity of justice.

Now, I'm not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I can tell you this, there are people on this church roll sitting in here this morning that probably do not know the Lord. Now, it's not because I know your life or have studied it, it's just a simple thing of statistics. You get a church this large, you're going to have people coming and becoming members, some of them for all the wrong reasons.

And I'm not saying this to hurt you. I'm saying this, I'm challenging you, I'm begging you to listen. This is not a small thing.

Are you born again? Do you know the Lord? Now, here's the question, does your life demonstrate it now? And we went to the first test. We look through the book of first John and we begin in chapter one. And I want us to turn there just briefly.

John gives us a series of tests to let us know there are series of tests that after taking them, it will help you discern whether or not you're a Christian. And the first one is, of course, verse six. If we say that we have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

What he's saying is if we say that we are Christians and yet we live a style of life that contradicts what God has told us about his nature and contradicts what God has told us about his will, we're not Christians if we live a style of life that reflects a character of our own that is totally different from the character of God. And if we have a style of life that contradicts what he has revealed in this book about his will, we're not Christians. Now, John says it bluntly and never forget, John was known as the apostle of love.

He's not being angry, mean spirited. He's loving these people and he's telling them, think, think not all who profess the name of Christ truly know him. Do you know him? It goes on to the second test, verse eight, if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

One of the greatest marks of a genuine Christian is that they are sensitive to the sin in their own life. The Lord brings them to repentance and confession. Are you sensitive to sin? Now, be careful how you answer that, even if you are a true Christian, because I want to tell you something.

We live in a culture that is immersed in sin and don't think that that culture does not influence you. What unbelievers called sin and were horrified about just 50 years ago, Christians practice today, or at least those who call themselves Christians practice today. We have become a people who is who we are numb to sin.

Now, let me tell you something, whenever someone comes to me and says, Brother Paul, I have a new relationship with God, I always ask them this question. Do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don't have a new relationship with sin, it's evidence you don't have a new relationship with God, because if you've been truly converted, the sin you once loved, you will now hate, you will loathe it, you will despise it. And although you can be trapped again, although you can be enticed to turn back to that sin, you take one mouthful of that sin and you know the wrong you've done.

Now, we're going to go to the third test and it's in chapter two, verse three. Now, listen to the clarity of John's speech. By this, we know that we've come to know him.

If we keep his commandments. Jesus said one time he talked about men that would stand before him on the day of judgment, and he says to them, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. What he's basically saying there, depart from me, those of you who claimed to be my disciples, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey.

You lived as though I never gave you a precept or a command or or a maxim of wisdom. You claim to be my disciples, but you act as though I never told you anything. So what he's saying here by this, we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Now, does it mean that the only way you can be a Christian is if you keep the commandments of God perfectly? No. Again, as I said last week, he is talking about a style of life, a style of life with regard to the commandments of God, that when someone looks at the entirety of your Christian life, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they will not see a perfect man. They will not see a perfect woman.

But what they will see is a style of life given towards the word of God that seeks to know the word of God and seeks to obey the word of God and has some measure of victory in doing those two things. Now, again, when someone comes to me and says, Brother Paul, I have a new relationship with God, I always ask them, do you have a new relationship with sin? And then I ask them, do you have a new relationship with God's word? Because if you don't have a new relationship with God's word, you don't have a new relationship with God. Now we go on again, I want to iterate something that I said last week in verse three, he says, if we keep his commandments now throughout all of this, John writes, many of the most important verbs are in present tense, which in the Greek language indicates a continuous action, not just something that happens here, but it's a continuous action and it represents a style of life.

And so he says, by this, we know that we have come to know him if we keep continuously keep his commandments as a style of life. It doesn't mean that we do not sin, but the habitual practice of our life is to concern ourselves with God's word and seek to obey it. You say, well, if these things are true, I mean, I know very few Christians, maybe so.

Maybe so. Again, I would rather I fear God too much to be mean, to be mean and to try to attack you and hurt you if you belong to the Lord, who am I? But I will tell you this and I'll beg you to listen to me. Are you sure that you belong to the Lord now? He says, and this is very important.

Verse four. This this verse is so important, especially in super spiritual congregations with super spiritual people. Because this is what's going on, he says, the one who says I have come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.

But the way this is arranged, the one who says I've come to know him is almost like, for example, the worship that was going on and the beauty of it and everything else. And someone just gets carried away by emotion and stands up. Oh, I've come to know him.

I've come to know him. I've come to know him. And John looks at that person and says, if you do not keep the commandments of God, you've not come to know him.

I don't care how many goosebumps run up and down your back. He's talking about that person in the moment of religious excitement or or when he's around other influences that seem to prompt these types of things, stands up and said, oh, you know, I know my Lord, he's a wheel within a wheel. Well, that may be so, but you might not know him.

This is the one who says I've come to know him. There's emphasis here. The person is emphatic with their voice.

I've come to know him and don't tell me I haven't. Well, how many people are that way in church? You know, it was one of my primary obligations in Peru as a pastor because. And that was to.

Look at the congregation and if there were people walking in a way that they should not walk to warn them. If you read the reformed pastor by Baxter or the Puritans or anything, you'll find that the primary obligation was a past of a pastor was to shepherd, to go to people, to warn them personally, to encourage them, all sorts of things, but to let them know. For example, if you have a teenage son that starts that walks with the Lord, it appears for a few years and then all of a sudden he goes off somewhere.

It's the responsibility of leadership to go after him and warn him, not that he's going to lose his rewards, but that possibly he's not even saved in the name of love. Now, look at John's language. The one who says I've come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar.

Now you say you get a pastor in here one day and you say, no, pastor, we want you to be biblical. OK, that will mean that possibly one day he will walk up to you, hopefully with a great deal of love in his heart or walk up to one of your children and say. All indications are this, that your profession of faith in Jesus Christ is nothing but a lie.

Would you be able to deal with that? I want to tell you something, if I pass away this this morning and I die, I pray I've already prayed that God will put men around my boys that are courageous enough to tell them the truth, but loving enough to hold them as a shepherd. I need that. So that's a test.

That is a test. Now, if you look on in verse five, look what it says. But whoever keeps his word in him, the love of God has truly been perfected.

By this we know that we are in him. I love God's word. Well, that's wonderful.

Do you keep God's word? Jesus said, if you love me, you'll keep my commandments. If you love his word, you'll be about keeping them. Now, look what he says.

The love of God has truly been perfected. There is no way there's no way to know exactly where John's going here. There are two options.

One. Is that God's love towards us, we have so come to grasp a true sense of God's love towards us that it causes us and leads us to keep his commandments or that our love for God has so matured that it is manifesting itself in obedience. Could be both.

John always leaves these things open. So if you're sitting there all the time going, boy, I just know God loves me. I know God loves me.

I just know he loves me. I am certain about that. The way that statement will be proved true or false will depend on your relationship to his word.

If you are not about obedience, then you do not fully comprehend or even come close to comprehending God's love for his people. Or if you sit there and go, I love the Lord, I love the Lord, I love the Lord. But the word of God, the word of the Lord has no place in your heart.

It's a frivolous, vain, trite statement. Now, I need to stop. Give a warning here.

And it's this. These words that I'm saying are not directed towards the person here. Who has a sincere faith in Christ.

Who is struggling to walk in the light. Who is seeing their sin and upset with themselves and and confessing their sins and looking at the word and sometimes realizing their failure. It is not my intention nor God's intention this morning to crush the little light that is in some of you.

So if you sit there and go, I don't do any of this stuff perfectly, my answer to you is join the club. You say, I struggle sometimes with this, so do I. Well, then what are you teaching? I'm talking about the person who just openly professes Jesus Christ as Lord and doesn't concern themselves at all with walking in the light. And sin is no big deal in their life.

And the word of God has no place in their life. I'm not talking about the struggling saint. I'm talking about the hard hearted, high handed sinner.

You say, well, where is he? Our churches are filled with them. Remember, on Sunday, everyone has their makeup on. And it's not in our intention.

I know this is a scary thought, but it's my intention that people start walking through those doors without makeup on. Now, I'm speaking spiritually, speaking spiritually, just so you know. You know, God loves you.

The driving force and some of you saints need to hear this. The driving force in my life is not condemnation and it's not guilt. The reason I want to obey the Lord, even more than I obey him, is because I know he loves me.

And that's what I want to see in you. That the love of God becomes so real in your life that it perfects in obedience. People who are free and people walking and using that freedom for the glory of Christ.

Now, let's go to verse six. Here's another test. The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

Now, that's a biggie. Try to fill those shoes. You look at me and say, well, you're preaching awful strong there, Pastor, but what about yourself? Would you stand up in the pulpit and say that you walk in the same manner as he walked? Yes and no.

You have to understand the context of this. First of all, the one who says he abides in him. Now, again, this is another way of saying the one who says he's a Christian, the one who says he's saved.

We have this crazy idea somehow out there. We have learned that people can be Christians without knowing the Lord, that they can be Christians without fellowshiping with the Lord and they can be Christians without abiding in the Lord. That's not true.

The New Testament sees those as a whole package. But the word abide means to dwell with, to sojourn with, to walk with him. On a daily lifestyle, daily practice, daily basis, the Christian life is a pilgrimage.

That's why it's called Pilgrim's Progress. So many people treat salvation and it's because of bad preaching. They treat salvation as a ticket they somehow purchased to heaven.

Instead of salvation, yes, that leads to a walk with God and God's son. Now, he says the one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked. This is not an option.

You can be a Christian and not walk with the Lord. You can be a Christian and not walk at all like the Lord. Again, you don't become a Christian by learning how to walk like the Lord.

If you truly become a Christian by faith, the power of God, then you learn to walk like the Lord. Now, what does it mean to walk in the same manner as he walked? Does it mean that all of us are just going to do everything Jesus did all the time or that we're even in anything that we do going to reach his level? No, that's not necessarily what it means. I'm going to give you an illustration from the farm about what it means.

When I was a little boy, my dad would come into my room five and five thirty in the morning, every morning and say, Paul, boy, get up. No rest for the wicked. This first verse I ever memorized.

I mean, I'm a little boy. And he says, get up. No rest for the wicked.

Get up. Because in those days it was legal for parents to kill their children if they said, get up. You got up and you better be up before get up finishes.

We would get up and and my dad was a very big man and I just I thought he was Superman and I just wanted to be just like my dad. Well, up in the north, we have a white this white stuff called snow. And sometimes we would go out and feed cattle in the snow.

And my dad was a lot taller than me at that time. And he would walk with what seemed to be these giant steps. I mean, just giant steps.

Now, I wanted to walk like him. I don't know if any of you other boys did this raised on a farm or whatever, but I just wanted where his footprint was at. I wanted to put my footprint there.

Now, you can imagine what I look like. I look like a spider or something walking across there. I was stretched out so far trying to put my stretched out too far.

Stretched out just too far. Those steps were just too big. I looked ridiculous the way I was walking.

Sometimes I looked ridiculous and sometimes I fell down trying to put my foot where he had put his foot. But if you looked at that little boy, you knew that the greatest desire of his heart was to walk like his dad. What does it mean to walk like he walked? Would any stand up and claim to have the same measure of grace that Christ had on his life, the same measure, the power of the Holy Spirit on their life? Would anyone say they're holy as Christ is holy? Would anyone here stand up and say they walk just like him? No, but I can tell you something.

If I observed every life in this building right now for seven days, I would find some in which you would see a sincere, true desire to walk like Christ. And I would see others. It never enters into their mind to walk like Christ.

And to walk like Christ, not just in a religious context, that's one of the greatest problems of being a minister. You forget what it's like to be normal. Forget what it's like to live where many of you live and work where many of you work.

But even in that context, you are called, you ought to walk as Christ walked and your greatest desire should be to reflect the life of Christ. Everywhere you walk and to walk like him, but not only look, isn't it amazing that here he says in verse six, the one who says he abides, that's the first time he uses that word. Usually he says the one who says that he knows him or the one who says he has fellowship with him.

But here he says the one who says he abides. Now, what does that word mean? To sojourn with. Look what he's saying.

The one who says he walks with Jesus should walk like Jesus, because how can two walk together unless they'd be in agreement? If you say that you walk with him. There will be something of a reflection of his character in your life, the way he walks will be in some ways reflected in the way you walk. Now, I'm not talking to people outside and I'm not talking to people who are going to get this this CD or whatever it is.

I'm talking to you, do you not realize? I wouldn't be worth my salt if I wasn't if I wasn't burdened over the lostness of people, even in this congregation, I am speaking to some of you. You profess to be Christians. But walking, reflecting the character of God, walking in his will is foreign to you.

You profess to be Christians, but sensitivity to sin, you don't even know what I'm talking about. You can watch horrendous things, say horrendous things, listen to horrendous things, participate in horrendous sins and it not bother you. You don't even realize it's sin and his commandments.

That Bible gets picked up on Sunday morning as you're running out the door. Your home is not guided by the law of God and a passion to walk with him. You don't know such a passion.

You want to look like the world. Talk like the world, act like the world. Oh, my dear friend, these things should not be.

And what I'm telling you is if you come down and you say, Pastor, you just described my life. I guarantee you, you will not be crushed. You will not be condemned.

You will not be just thrown off to somebody else. We'll sit down and we'll work this out. If I have to call in other people to help, we'll work this out.

And there are other people, if more people need help, there are other people to help them. What we want to be about in this church is seeing people, not just making a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. And I know this has been the heart of this church for a long time.

Well, I want to continue that on for the time I'm here, that people are genuinely saved, but not just saved, being able to show the validity of their faith through a changed life. And not only that, a changed family life. Is it not true that some of you are sitting out here right now and you can't even think about the things of God because your family is in such terrible condition? It doesn't have to be that way.

Work this thing out. God can minister. God can do things and he will.

Let's believe him for it. One day, I want to stand up here in a couple of months and be able to say this. Let's go after him.

Let's go after everybody in Austin. If it moves, we're going to witness to it. If it moves, we're going to evangelize.

We're going to have everything in here from parrots to dogs to crickets. So anything that walks, we're going to tell it about the Lord Jesus. But if I were to do that right now, some of you'd be angry.

And you want to know why? Because you'd be saying this to yourself. He wants me to go out and evangelize. My family's falling apart.

I'm falling apart. Everything's falling apart. How can I think about the world? We've got to get you strong so that you can go out there.

But getting you strong and God can do that, he can do that through the preaching of his word and through the ministering, not only of this staff. Through the ministering of the elders and not only them, through the ministering of these focus groups, one of the most phenomenal things in the state of Texas is the focus groups in High Point Baptist Church. But are you saved? Because what matters, all of this, if you're not saved, are you saved? Prove it.

Prove it. And I'm going to close by saying this, I'm not a boy and I didn't just start doing these things. I am aware that in the last two Sundays that I have preached, I do not have much of a sense of the power of God in preaching.

But I am praying that God will move upon his people. And I am praying that sooner or later. Holy Spirit is going to show up, manifest himself and do a work among you.

But the invitation is open. If you're broken, if you're hurting, if you don't even know what you are, if you know that what I taught today, your life does not measure up to it, please, I beg you, as though God were begging you through me, do not walk out those doors. You say, well, you're busy.

No, I'm not. This is what I do. This is what we do here.

And there are a lot of men and a lot of women that will be willing to stay here the whole afternoon if it's necessary. Come to Jesus today. Come to him.

Come to Christ. Come. If I could lasso you and drag you in here, I would.

If I could beg you here, I would. Come. Let's do it.

Let's stand, Brother Robert. Do not let what God has spoken through his word be stolen out of your heart. Don't let it happen, please.

So if God wants to save somebody, he will. Yes, that's true. But God is using me to call out to you right now.

And that call is this. You come. He will not forsake you.

Anyone who desires come. Anyone who's thirsty come. Anyone who's hungry come.

Anyone who's needy come. The only one who can't come is the proud, arrogant man who says, I need not the Lord. Anyone else? Come.

Come. All to Jesus I surrender. All to him I pray.

I will let it save you. I surrender to Jesus. I surrender.

Make me save your holy vine. May thy holy spirit, a power divine. I surrender all.

I surrender all. All to thee, my blessed savior, I surrender all.

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