

Don't Trust in Testimonies, Feelings, or Experiences

by Tim Conway

This sermon addresses the challenges believers face in their assurance of salvation, emphasizing that salvation is not based on personal experiences but on faith in Jesus Christ. It discusses the fluctuations in spiritual experiences, the impact of physical conditions on spiritual well-being, and the danger of misinterpreting God's dealings as signs of being untrue. The message encourages believers to focus on their relationship with Christ rather than their feelings or circumstances.

Scripture: Psalm 42:5, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Psalm 27:13, Romans 8:38, Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:6, Hebrews 13:5, James 1:2, 1 John 5:13

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Faith in Jesus Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Here's another place he likes to test our assurance. Ah, your experience isn't like somebody else's. Can you imagine the devil coming along to Timothy? Timothy, he looked so up to Paul.

Can you imagine him whispering in Timothy's ear? How was Timothy's conversion? Likely, he doesn't know the day he was saved. You know what? He was reared in a Christian household. He had a godly grandmother, he had a godly mother.

Probably he didn't know the day. Probably it was much like the sun rising. It was dark and little by little the light came up.

That's how it is with some of us. My wife can tell you she doesn't know the day. I can tell you almost the moment.

Because you see, the devil could come along and speak to my wife and say, well, you don't know the day. Your husband does. Well, you must not be real.

You know, you can get online and you can watch Paul Washers give his testimony and the devil can be right there when you're watching that. Well, you weren't saved that way. No, the truth is Paul Washer wasn't saved the way the Apostle Paul was.

You know, Lloyd-Jones didn't even want to have testimonies given in his church because he was afraid that people would be driven to despair because of this very thing. I'll tell you this. I've been a pastor long enough, two decades.

I have seen people with some of the most glowing, amazing conversion experiences imaginable and within months they're gone. You know, Charles Virgin was one to say he preferred the wounded stag. You know what I mean? The deer that's been wounded, that crawls away in the thicket and licks its wounds.

Spurgeon himself, with all the experiences he had of conversion, said typically the firework display, not the most impressive in the long run. So listen, you know what you want to say to the devil? You want to say to the devil that you're not saved by your experience. You're saved because of your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can tell him. Jesus' blood is no less powerful if there was no firework display at the beginning. What matters is are you clinging to him now? You tell him that.

Talk to him. Or how about this? Fluctuations in your experience. Oh, this one, he takes... You know what happens? You're saved, you're full of joy.

I know a pastor friend there in the United States, Don Johnson is his name. He said when he first got saved, he said it was like one baptism of the Spirit after another. He said it was glory.

One after another after... He just... this was heaven on earth. And then you know what happened. I'm not going to say reality came because it was no less real what he was experiencing in the beginning.

It's just the full orb hit him. And we can have these fluctuations in our experience. What happens? Well, we don't feel like we once felt.

And the devil can be right there to say, well, you're falling away. Or you've fallen away. That's what it is.

I mean, you know what happens? Dryness comes in. Coldness comes in. You get these fluctuations.

We don't always live on the mountaintop. And now you find yourself in the valley. You remember how it was in Pilgrim's Progress? The valley of humiliation.

The valley of the shadow of death. There were these ups. There were the delectable mountains.

But he also wrote of other places. And see, that's the real Christian life. That's how it is.

We typically don't walk through life. There's this consistent thing. And the devil will be right there to tell you that because this change has taken place in your life, you were never real.

That's what he'll tell. You talk to him. You know where I'd take him? Take him straight to David.

Listen to David. Why are you cast down? Who's he speaking to? Himself. Why are you cast down, O my soul? My soul.

Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him. In other words, I used to praise Him. Now I'm cast down.

I'm not so much praising. But I'm not going to always be in this condition. I'll be back to the place where I'll praise Him.

My salvation. Look, I'll tell you this. If you know of no variation, I'll tell you this.

Typically, it's the tares that have no variation. Why? Because he doesn't want any variation. The devil just leaves him right there.

No variation. He loves to attack the variation in the life of the true believer. You take him to texts like this.

No variation in the Christian life is not even consistent with Scripture. That ought to make you question if there's never any inconsistency here. The Psalms are some of the most experiential books in our Bibles.

You ever read them? David is up. David is down. David's rejoicing.

Then he's cast down. And I'll tell you this. There's a physical element.

Our spiritual well-being is so closely tied to our physical condition. Maybe some of you remember that last sermon. Maybe you've watched it online.

The last sermon that Bob Jennings preached at our church before he went to be with the Lord. And he was suffering with that cancer. And he said to the young people, he said, look, don't think that when you come to your deathbed that you're going to have all this opportune time to be in the Word and be praying.

He said, when you're in that kind of pain, you can hardly think. You can hardly go there. But brethren, the thing is we're getting older, all of us.

And the issue is we're going to run into more and more physical problems that can have direct bearing on how we feel spiritually. And the devil will be right there to say, oh, look how you're feeling. You were never true.

You were never real. Look how dry you are right now. Look how cold things are.

Well, brethren, you talk to him. You talk to the devil. Go to him.

The fact is the devil seeks to persuade us to pay way too much attention to our moods and our feelings rather than paying close attention to our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes we can get up and we can look in the mirror. How am I feeling today? And everything's measured on that.

When really we need to pay more attention to our relationship with Christ and who he is. And then there's this. There's misinterpreting God's dealings with us.

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