

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS
CHAPTER 1
LET'S KNOW FOR SURE

Many people who have invited Christ into their lives do not know for sure that they have eternal life. They attend church, are members of a Sunday School class, have been baptized, give to the church and, yet, do not know whether they will at last go to heaven.

A Christian may be absolutely certain of his salvation. God wants us to know we have eternal life. In 1 John 5:13, it states "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life...".

The verb "to know" is in the perfect tense of the Greek text in 1 John 5:13. The perfect tense signifies a completed action. This means in the light of the believer's past committal to Christ, he is now saved.

In Ephesians 2:8, we have the same thing. It states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith..". One man has translated this, "By the grace ye were saved and as a result are in a saved state at the present time." (Wuest. "Golden Nuggets. p. 120) If you put your faith in Christ as your Savior in the past, whether last week or fifteen years ago, you are presently saved. Your faith has an abiding effect upon you to this very hour.

Many people feel they must have an emotional experience comparable to the Apostle Paul's to be sure of their salvation. Paul or Saul, as he was called then, was on his way to the city of Damascus when the Lord suddenly spoke to him audibly. At that time, he saw a great light which was brighter than the noon-day sun. This blinded him, and he remained this way for three days until Ananias, a disciple of Damascus, came to him and laid his hand on Paul. This was a very dramatic conversion experience. However, many forget that in Acts, chapter 8, it tells of the experience of an Ethiopian eunuch who simply believed and was baptized.

Experiences of conversion vary today as well. I have personally seen people weep and repent bitterly for the sins of their past lives when they invite Christ into their lives. But, I have also seen people quietly bow their heads and pray to be forgiven of their sins and invite Christ to take control of their lives. One experience is very emotional; while the other is very calm. I have witnessed changes and spiritual growth in both cases. The conversion

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS
CHAPTER 1

experience does not make one bit of difference in the spiritual growth and assurance the person might have.

Look up Reference Group Number 1

- A. 1 John written so might know. 1 John 5:13
- B. We are saved by faith. Ephesians 2:8
- C. Conversion experiences:
 - 1. Paul's Acts 9:1-18
 - 2. Ethiopian eunuch's Acts 8:26-39

Paul' conversion was one with a high degree of emotion; whereas, the eunuch's conversion was simply a matter of quiet belief. Emotions come and go. I have experienced times of great joy and enthusiasm as I have been aware of God's hand of blessing upon my life. I have also experienced times of sorrow and disappointment., Though my feelings vary, my salvation does not. It remains the same.

Our salvation does not rest upon our feelings at the time of conversion or afterward. The Westminster Confess of Faith says that:

"Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hope and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; which hope shall never make them ashamed."

Our salvation rests upon at least six unchangeable truths.

First of all, it rests upon the unlimited and universal scope of the love of God. God's love reaches men wherever they are and without partiality as to their intellectual, social, racial, or cultural states.

Many people lack an assurance of their salvation in Christ because they lack the information about the truths of God.

Look up Reference group number 2 now

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

CHAPTER 1

to see some of the truths about God's love.

1. God's love for the world John 3:16-17
2. God's love for sinners Romans 5:8
- 3 God's love expressed in His mercy Titus 3:43 & 5
Ephesians 2:4 & 5

John 3:16 is possibly the best-known verse of scripture, but there is still a lack of assurance of salvation among many. It states, "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Think of the extent to which God loved us--so much so that He would send His only Son to die for us so that we, through faith in Him, might have everlasting life. The 17th verse plainly tells that God does not want to condemn the world; but save the world. These verses declare this salvation is provided through "whosoever believeth." Anyone who believes will be saved.

Someone may feel that this is alright for someone who has cleaned up his life but God really hasn't saved me because I am having difficulty yet with various sins. Romans 5:8 and Titus 3:4 and 5 makes it clear that God's love is not dependent upon our goodness, it is manifest simply because He loves us. Note the phrases that God commendeth or demonstrates "His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinner, Christ died for us." In the book of Titus, it tells us His love was manifest down out of His mercy, "not by works of righteousness which we have done." Again, in Ephesians 2:4 and 5, it explains God's great love made us alive "even when we were dead in sins." It is the grace of God which saves us and not our goodness. This grace is manifest through the love of God which is revealed through Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we can be assured of our salvation because of the unconditional promises of God. God's Word is true, and it is enduring. It will last when all else has failed. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Mark 13:31) Doubt is then excluded when the believer is able to walk with confidence in the faithfulness of a righteous God.

Look up Reference Group Number 3.

1. God's Word endures. Mark 13:31

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS
CHAPTER 1

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| 2. <u>Security</u> in Christ. | John 6:37; John 10:7, 9, 15
John 10: 26-29 |
| 3. Protected in <u>His Love</u> . | Romans 8:38-39 |

In John 6:37, Jesus states that if He receives someone from the Father, He shall not cast that person out. This security is made even more sure as we see by moving through John 10 the relationship between the Great Shepherd and His sheep. In verse 7, Jesus identifies Himself as the door to the sheepfold. In verse 9, He states that if anyone enters into the sheepfold through Him, he will be saved. This is because He lays down His life for the sheep according to verse 15.

Finally, He gives to them eternal life in verse 28. the reason they shall never perish is because He will not allow anyone to pluck them from His hand. According to verse 29, we find we are not only held secure in the hand of Christ, but we are also held in the Father's hand. This, my friend, double security!

In case one might have any doubt about the security of the Father's grip upon His own, the Apostle Paul draws up a list of the things which cannot separate us from the love of God. Can death separate those who have been justified by His grace? No! Can life, itself? No! Can the angels step in to separate us from His love? No! Can other principalities or powers separate us? No! How about those things we face at the present time in this evil world? They cannot! How about those things which are to come upon us and the world? Cannot! Is there anything in the height above or depths beneath which can separate us from the love of God? No! Can any creation of God separate us from His love? No!

These are the promises of God to His children. These are truths that should give to us security. We can know we are saved if we have put our faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His promises are unconditional following our faith in Him.

This leads us to the third truth about our salvation. It rests upon the finished work of Christ as a sacrifice upon the cross for us. Faith in this finished act of Christ places us within the shelter of His redeeming grace.

Reference Group Number 4

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS CHAPTER 1

1. We cannot add to our salvation. Ephesians 2:8-9
2. Christ finished the act of redemption Hebrews 1:3
3. Christ needed to offer Himself only once for our sin.
Hebrews 7:27 Hebrews 10:10-18
4. Christ condemned sin which condemns us. Romans 8:1-3
5. God planned to sacrifice His Son for us. Peter 1:18-20
cf. Acts 2:23

Earlier in this study, I pointed out that Ephesians 2:8 and 9 states you are saved by faith and are presently in that state. Now, I would like to emphasize the last part of verse 8 and 9, "That not of yourselves, it is the gift of God--not of works, lest any man should boast." We cannot do anything to add to our salvation because Christ has completed or finished the work of redemption by Himself. In Hebrews 1:3, you noted that when Christ has purged our sins, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." A man does not sit down until his job is done. Christ died for our sins, and He rose again to give us life. Now, He is seated at the right hand of God; having completed the work God sent Him to do.

In Hebrews 7:27 and Hebrews 10:10-12, we are given a contrast between the ministry of the Old Testament priests and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the Old Testament economy, the priest offered up sacrifices every day for the people on the altar at Jerusalem. Although these were blood sacrifices of bulls and goats which were slain, they could never take away sin. It was evident that the sacrifices of the Old Testament could not take away sin because it was necessary to continually offer the sacrifices. When Christ came, however, He offered up "one sacrifice for sins forever." This "one sacrifice" was the sacrifice of Himself. This sacrifice was offered once forever. With this one sacrifice, He was able to "perfect forever" them that are sanctified. The term "sanctified" or "sanctification" refers to the state into which God, by His grace, calls sinful men when they begin their lives by faith in Christ. In other words, we are made perfect or declared righteous by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. God holds no sin against us forever.

It is sin which condemns us. We are guilty before God because of our sin. Christ became the sacrifice for our sin according to Romans 8:3. God sent Christ for our sin. Because He died for our sin, sin cannot lay any claims on us anymore. In fact, Christ condemned that which condemns us.

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

CHAPTER 1

He condemns sin. Is there any more condemnation upon us if Christ took it upon Himself? No! We are free from the law of sin and death.

This was no accident that Christ was put upon the cross for us. This was a planned act of God. According to 1 Peter, God planned to send Christ to earth as a sacrifice for man's sin before the world was even formed. At that time, He knew that His Son would be the lamb of sacrifice. When Christ came to earth, things did not just simply turn against Him until they were out of control, and then he was crucified. God used wicked men to fulfill what He had determined to do because of His love for the world.

Christ then was the sacrifice God used to put away sin for those of us who have put our faith in Him.

A fourth assurance we have of our salvation is the continual intercession Christ makes on behalf of believers. It is not a mere figure of speech to say that Christ is our Intercessor. He is, as a special activity, securing on the basis of His sacrifice every blessing which comes to us. He is our legal "advocate."

Reference Group Number 5

1. Our legal advocate in Christ. 1 John 2:1
 - a. Satan continually accuses us of sin. Revelation 12:9-10
 - b. Christ's blood continually cleanses us from sin. 1 John 1:7
2. Christ continually intercedes for us. Romans 8:34 Hebrews 7:25

The word "Advocate" is translated in another place "Comforter." It refers to one who appears on behalf of his client; as a lawyer would appear before a jury of a man accused of some crime. In the New International Version of the Bible, 1 John 2:1 reads, "If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." Jesus does not offer Himself again as a sacrifice if we sin again after we are saved, but He does represent us before the Father when we do sin. According to Revelation 12:9-10, Satan accuses us before God "day and night." Satan points out our sins whenever we fail. Christ is our righteousness, and He is our personal representative before God to plead our case. His blood cleanses us from all sin.

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

CHAPTER 1

Satan is the one who causes us to sin, and then he is the one who accuses us before the Father. He knows God cannot tolerate sin. He wants God to pour out His judgment upon us. This is like the boy who pushed the boy with new clothes into the mud and then made fun of him for getting his clothes dirty!

But Jesus Christ has cleansed us from all sin. He ever lives to make intercession on our behalf.

The fifth assurance of our salvation is the inner witness the Holy Spirit gives to the believer. Every believer is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. That is, the new life which we receive at the moment we receive Christ is given by the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. The Spirit of God then indwells the believer and seals him until the believer receives the inheritance God has graciously promised in Christ.

Although the Holy Spirit regenerates us, indwells us, and seals us in Christ; many Christians do not have the assurance of salvation because they do not allow the Holy Spirit to work within their lives to manifest His fruit from the life of the believer.

Reference Group Number 6

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| 1. Regeneration by Holy Spirit | Titus 3:5 |
| 2. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit | 1 John 3:24; 4:11-13 |
| 3. Sealed by Holy Spirit | Ephesians 1:13-14 |
| 4. Fruits of the Holy Spirit | Galatians 5:22-23 |
| 5. Witness of the Holy Spirit | Romans 8:14-16 |

One of the precious realities of our fellowship with God is the assurance that He is ours and His Holy Spirit is changing us into the image of His dear son. The Holy Spirit works from within us to change us. This inward prompting of the Holy Spirit for change is His witness to us. Even if a child of God is grieving the Holy Spirit by walking after the flesh and sinning against God, the Holy Spirit still impresses the believer with the inward need for change. If the believer is walking in sin the inward impression of the Holy Spirit may give him a real lack of assurance, This is as it should be so that the believer may come back to the place of fellowship with God. One man has said, "It is one of the penalties of carnality and sin

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS CHAPTER 1

in the Christian's life that many lose the blessing of assurance and are robbed temporarily at least of this blessing." (Walvoord, The Holy Spirit, p. 222)

This witness of the Holy Spirit differs from the other assurances for it is conditional upon the yieldedness of the believer to the Holy Spirit who is within Him.

It behooves us to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

The sixth assurance of our salvation is found by the changed life we have after we have accepted Christ as our Savior. Our commitment to Christ involves the total person--the intellect, the emotions, and the will. You may have known intellectually for some time that you should accept Christ as Savior. You may have been fully convinced He was the only way for you to receive eternal life. You may have even been moved emotionally by a message heard, or the death of a loved one, or a personal tragedy that came into your life. You were not saved, however, until you yielded your will to Christ as your Savior. It is very similar to the marriage of two people. They may be convinced that he or she is the right person for them. This particular person may have just the qualities they need in a life partner. They may be moved by deep emotions toward one another. They are not married, however, until by an act of their will they commit themselves to one another. So it is with salvation. Your total being was involved in the decision-making process.

The Scriptures teach us that when one comes to Christ, they are changed.

Reference Group Number 7

1. A new birth by agency of Holy Spirit John 3:3-7
2. Word of God instrument the Holy Spirit uses. 1 Peter 1:23 - 2:1

This change is called the "new birth." Old things do pass away and behold all things do become new. In some lives, it is dramatic. It happens all at once. In other lives, the change may be slower; but there is a change. It may not be an outward habit of life. It may be just an attitude, but there is change. 1 Peter 1:23 has been very interesting to me over the years. It states, "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding Word of God." (NASV) I have

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

CHAPTER 1

noticed the new Christians who grow the fastest spiritually are those who are in the Word of God the most. It has led me to believe that the spiritual growth of a new Christian is directly proportional to their study of the Word of God. The more the new Christian studies the Bible, the faster he will change in his life spiritually.

If someone should question your conversion experience, what would you say? In 1 Peter 3:15, the Scripture states that we are to "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you."

As an assignment, would you write out in as much detail as possible your conversion experience. Tell of the people who had an influence in your decision and what each contributed. Tell where you were when you accepted Christ into your life and who was present if anyone. State the date and give an account of your attitude and any other points of interest to help you remember what happened.

As you continue to grow in your Christian life, you will realize how important this event really was. It was not until several years later that I pinpointed the date of my conversion so that I might keep it as an anniversary date as I do the other important events in my life.

On your worksheet I have listed the items I mentioned here to help you to outline your testimony. Do not make it wordy. Just put down a sentence or two to help you remember what happened when you trusted Christ.

I trust this study has helped you to know for sure that you are a Christian possessing eternal life at this very moment. In our next study, we shall talk about our holy God.

Let us close our session with prayer. Simply bow your head.

"Heavenly Father, Thank you for so great a salvation as You have provided through our Lord Jesus Christ. I thank you that I can know I belong to you and have eternal life right now. I praise you for this gift through Jesus' name. Amen."