

Our Ultimate Source of Assurance: The Holy Spirit

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Date: 03 December 2017

[0 : 00] Over the years, I've had people to ask me all kinds of questions. Some people have come to me and raised serious questions about their marriage, continuing or ending it.

I've had people to come and talk about dealing with difficult people in their lives, maybe somebody they worked with or even in their own home, just all kinds of things.

And in those situations, most of the time, if I'm asked a question, and I have a good idea of what the answer ought to be in terms of what the Bible says, I'll just say it.

Some of you, we've had some conversations over the years, maybe about some difficult issues going on in your life, and I've maybe said some things that you didn't want me to, you expected me to.

But I needed to because the Scripture was real clear about it. Well, one of the most important, vital questions that I could ever be asked or that you could ever be asked is by someone who is struggling with assurance about their relationship with the Lord.

[1 : 24] Someone who is just, they're having difficulty knowing, am I really right with God? Am I really a Christian? If they ask you, if they ask me just point blank, do you think I am a Christian?

I'm not going to give them a yes or no answer. And I don't think you should either. And here's why. I don't know what's in a person's heart, and neither do you. We don't know what's going on inside a person.

So I think we need to be very careful about giving a definite answer. But there is a definite answer. It's an answer that only God can give, though.

But when somebody comes to you, and I think if you're a serious Christian, people know that you love the Lord, you seek to live a faithful Christian life, between family, extended family, friends, people you work with, sooner or later people have got to ask you a spiritual related type question. And sometimes it may be in the realm of, do you think I'm a Christian? Or what does it mean to be a Christian? We don't need to put them off.

[2 : 44] We don't need to be afraid. What we do need to do is point them to the Scriptures and tell them, you know, I can't look inside you and I can't tell, but God knows and God has actually given us some information in His Word designed to help us to know if we really are Christians.

And point them to the book of 1 John 1. It was really written, one of the main reasons, not the only reason, one of the main reasons was to give Christians assurance of their salvation.

We've looked at that over the last three or four weeks now as we've been going through this series. Look at it one more time. 1 John chapter 5 and verse 13. John writes, We can, you and I, we can help people who are struggling with assurance by pointing out what John says in this letter about what true Christians believe and how they live.

When it comes to helping someone with assurance, you may, if you know them real well, known them for a long time, you may say to them, well, from what I can see in you, from what I know about you over many years, you appear to be a Christian.

But always be careful because you don't really know. You don't know a person's motive. You don't know what they're thinking. The 11 disciples of Jesus followed Jesus for three years with one, the 12th, named Judas, that from all we read in the Gospels, he appeared to be the real deal.

[4 : 47] He appeared to be a genuine follower of Jesus. But at the end, the end of Jesus' ministry, we know that he wasn't because he betrayed Jesus. Judas, in time, gave evidence that he wasn't really a true follower of Jesus.

But the other 11 didn't know that until he betrayed Jesus. See, at the Last Supper, Jesus said something to the disciples about one of you is going to betray me.

And a lot of you, you remember what they said? They looked at Jesus. They looked at one another. They looked at Jesus and said, Lord, is it I? They didn't know it was Judas until he revealed that he was a betrayer.

That's why we cannot give anyone assurance of their salvation because we don't really know. But God can. And God desires for everybody who is truly a Christian to know it, to have comfort in that, to be assured that their relationship with him is good, is healthy, is right.

And the way God does that, the way he provides comfort and assurance is through his spirit that he puts in every one of us when he saves us.

[6 : 09] I've said it for years, over and over again, and we've looked at it in various messages, various perspectives. But I want you to look very plainly.

The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian as Paul just says it in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 19. Look at it. Do you not know, writing to Christians now, writing to the church at Corinth, do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? Very clear, isn't it? The Holy Spirit is in you. You have received him from God. The Holy Spirit indwells you if you're a Christian.

Next thing I want us to say is the Holy Spirit is the one who actually gives us assurance. The Holy Spirit living within us if we're Christians. He's the one that will give us that assurance that we want, that we desire.

Look at two passages. 1 John chapter 4, verse 13. And God has given us his spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.

[7 : 19] That's in the New Living Translation. And then look at what Paul said in Romans chapter 6, or chapter 8 rather, in verse 16. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

The Spirit lives within us. He will give us assurance. But now I want us to think, how does he do that? How should we look? How should we expect the Holy Spirit to give us assurance that we are children of God if we're struggling?

How can we help someone that we know and care about if they're struggling? Let's look at how he provides such assurance. Number one, the Holy Spirit gives us assurance by affirming that the Bible's description of a Christian is true about us.

The Holy Spirit gives us assurance by affirming, confirming within us that the things the Bible says will be true about a Christian, it's true about us.

I want you to look at how he does that by looking back to some of the things we looked at last week in 1 John about what a true Christian is, what a true Christian believes. Look, number one, a true Christian has a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

[8 : 34] We looked at that last week and sort of expounded on that and what 1 John says. But I want you to understand, nobody comes into the world automatically in a right relationship with God.

When we're born into this world, we are separated from God. We don't know God. We cannot know Him on our own. The Scripture tells us, look what Paul says in Romans chapter 3.

As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God. Now, there is a lot of people who seek an idea about God.

There is a lot of people in this world whose lives are in turmoil and they certainly want peace. There is a lot of people who live in guilt and they want to be freed from that guilt. There is a lot of people who are looking for something to fill the void in their life.

They understand about religion. They understand about various gods. And so a lot of people are searching for a God that they think might can help them, make them feel better about themselves or something like that.

[9 : 42] What Paul is saying here is, no one comes into this world truly seeking the God who is as He is.

And the reason is because we're born with a sinful nature. Every person in here who has had children, who has grandchildren, who's been around children, you know that.

You never have to teach these little kids to fight one another, to not share, to say no, disobey their parents.

It's just who they are. They get it from us. It's an inherited sinful nature. Now, the Bible describes this another way.

Being spiritually dead. Look at what Paul said to the Ephesians. In Ephesians chapter 2, he's going to sort of lay it out to these people, these Christians, who they were before they came to know Christ and how God worked in them so graciously to save them through faith in Jesus.

[10:49] And he begins chapter 2 by saying, as for you, you were dead in transgressions and sins. You were spiritually dead. That's why you didn't care about God.

That's why you would not seek God. That's how we all come into the world. And it's the Spirit of God, if a person is going to become a Christian, if a person is going to be saved, made a child of God, it'll be because the Spirit of God does this supernatural work of regeneration, the new birth, that Jesus described in John chapter 3.

In John chapter 3, Jesus has a conversation with a very religious, upstanding man, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who basically thinks he's right with God because of his good works.

But Jesus is letting him know, no, that's not the case. There's got to be a change that takes place in a person. Jesus referred to it as a birth from above or a second birth, a new birth.

I want you to look at something Jesus said to Nicodemus in the middle of this conversation. It's in John chapter 3, verses 6 through 8. He says, humans can reproduce only human life.

[12:07] That's what we do, isn't it? But the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say you must be born again.

The wind blows wherever it wants, just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it's going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does a mysterious, supernatural work when he saves a person, when he changes a person, when he regenerates a person. Jesus says, unless you're born again, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

It's the Spirit of God who brings this about. And when the Spirit of God does this, here's how we can understand it, how we can think about it. When the Holy Spirit does this work of regeneration, he opens our spiritual eyes, he opens our eyes of faith to really believe, understand, grasp hold of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, that when he died on the cross, he paid the penalty for my sins. It's the Holy Spirit who causes us to be able to believe that, accept that. Everybody does it. The Spirit does not do this in every one.

[13:29] But when he does work this work of regeneration, he will enable us to understand and truly believe. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, 3, Paul makes it very clear, no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit or by the Holy Spirit.

Anybody can mouth words, but no one can truly say Jesus is the God of my life and mean it. No one will ever say, I'm not my own boss.

I'm living under the authority of Jesus. No one will ever say that unless the Spirit of God works in them to regenerate them, to save them, to change them.

Now let's make this personal. I want you to think. If you have been convicted that you are a sinner before God, if you're convicted that you're not right with God, there's something in you that's wrong, you've offended God, you've disobeyed Him, you know you're separated from Him and it bothers you.

I mean, it really disturbs you to know that you are separated from God, a sinner before God, hopeless without Him, if it bothers you to the point that you've admitted that to God and you've really changed your mind about the way you're living.

[14:51] Something has happened and you no longer want to just live for you, you want to live and do things God's way. Well, that's the Spirit of God working in you, making you aware of your sin and enabling you to repent, to change your mind, to turn from your sin.

So if you have those kind of thoughts and desires and that, what I've just said is a description of you, that is a great sign that you're a Christian because that's the Spirit of God working in you. Now, let's go a step further. If you really believe that Jesus Christ, as He is presented in the Bible, in the New Testament, in the Gospels in particular, if you really believe He is the Son of God and He came into this world for the purpose of saving you by dying on the cross and on the cross paying the penalty, taking the punishment that you deserve because you're the one who sinned, if you really believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins, that God supernaturally raised Him from the grave after He was crucified, buried, if you truly believe that this risen King died for your sins, you trust Him.

He is the living Lord and you have committed your life to Him. You love Him. You want to follow Him. That's your desire. We're not talking about milder than words now. If that's how you think, if that's how you feel, if that's real to you, that's the Spirit of God.

You don't think like that. You don't feel like that. You don't live like that on your own. That's the Spirit of God, the supernatural, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit who enables us, causes us to want to turn from our sins and put our trust in Jesus.

[16 : 45] So you need to think. What's the Holy Spirit saying to me about this attitude or desire or thing about repentance and faith?

The second thing we looked at last week is this. A true Christian desires to please God by the way he or she lives. We looked at three things last week. Number one, a true Christian will desire to obey God's Word.

Look at it. And by this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments. Doesn't get any clearer than that, does it? Number two, a true Christian will desire to stop living a sinful life.

Look again, 1 John 3. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning. How clear can this be? No one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him.

He's talking about the Spirit of God as we referred to last week. And he cannot keep on sinning because he's been born of God. It's like this. If the Spirit of God lives within you, He gives you a desire to live a life that pleases God and not sin.

[17 : 57] If the Spirit of God lives within you, He is going to give you a desire to be sexually pure. Doesn't mean you won't be tempted, not be. If the Spirit of God lives within you, He is going to work in you and cause you to not want to lash out in anger every time you don't get your way.

The Spirit of God will work in us. And when we do sin, we won't be able to rest easy until we confess it and seek God's forgiveness.

If you can just lust, be engaged in sexual immorality, cuss people out, be meaner than a snake and look them in the eye and say what you think, cheat, use, say whatever comes through your mind. If you can live that way and sleep good at night, you are not a Christian. The Spirit of God does not live in you. If you think so, you have been deceived by the devil himself. You have a false sense of what salvation is.

I want you to understand that very clearly. A Christian can and will sin terribly. But when I do my sinful things in rebellion, not doing what I know God wants me to do, God whips me.

[19 : 32] I don't want to look you in the eye. I don't sleep well until I confess my sin and agree with God about it and turn from it.

I don't want to live that way. The Spirit of God within me won't let me live that way because He's there. He's changed me. What the Scripture says, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him and He cannot keep on sinning because He's been born of God. It's just an impossibility. Clear as it can be. Number three, a genuine Christian will have a desire to live a pure life and everyone who thus hopes in Him, that's talking about Jesus, purifies himself as He is pure.

So let's make this personal now. Do you have these kind of desires to obey God's Word? To not engage in sinful behavior?

Not dwell on sinful attitudes? Do you have a desire to live a morally pure life? If you have those kind of desires, that's a good sign the Spirit of God is living within you.

[20 : 45] He's the one who does those kind of things, causes us to desire those kind of things. But if that's not characteristic of who you are, the Spirit must be absent.

And if the Spirit's absent, you are not a child of God. We also saw last week that a true Christian genuinely loves his or her brothers and sisters in Christ. Look at what John said.

We know that we've passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. It's very clear the love for our brothers and sisters in Christ is a sign that we have spiritual life.

We've been born again. The Holy Spirit just gives us that love for one another. We went into a lot of detail about that. We may not like everybody, but there will be this love for our brothers and sisters in Christ that's Spirit-given.

Now, one of the major indications of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives will be that we are people who love.

[21 : 50] And that leads us to the next thing I want us to see. The Holy Spirit gives, excuse me, the Holy Spirit gives us assurance by producing spiritual fruit in us.

I want you to think about this. This is found in Galatians chapter 5 beginning in verse 16. What I want you to see first, we're not going to read the whole, most of that chapter, but I want you to see the Holy Spirit will lead us to say no to the desires of our sinful nature.

I want you to look at Galatians 5 beginning in verse 19 here. Now the works of the flesh, the word flesh here is another word for the sinful nature. In fact, some of you are looking at a translation and it says, now the works of the sinful nature.

Let's read it. Now the works of the flesh are evident. That which is not of God, that which is of our sinful nature is evident. Look at it, just a list here. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you as I warned you before, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That's what I was talking about a while ago. If you ever get mad at me for saying something like that, I don't care.

[23 : 15] I won't lose a wink of sleep because I'm just telling you what the scripture says, what the scripture says is what God says, and I don't apologize for repeating the word of God. And you should not ever shy away from speaking the truth in love that comes from God's word.

if you really and truly love your children, your grandchildren, your nieces and nephews, your parents, your grandparents, and they're just what appears to be based on what we're looking at this morning, if you know people that what they call their Christian life is just a sham, there's no real evidence, you need to call them out in love, in a way that lets them know you hate to say it, but you need to let them know what you call being a Christian is nowhere in scripture.

The Bible is clear how a Christian will live, what we will desire. We'll see in a moment, none of us does it perfectly. We still have this sinful nature and we still fail miserably, but there's a difference in when a Christian fails and when an unbeliever fails.

A Christian cares, is broken, feels guilt, guilt. Now, look at those things. We have such desires as Christians.

We battle such temptations, sometimes we fail and give in to them. But if we are indwelt by the Spirit of God, as we saw just a moment ago, we'll be broken, we'll be guilty, and we'll not be able to rest easy until we confess and repent and seek God's forgiveness.

[24 : 58] forgiveness. Now, our true desires as children of God, because we're indwelt by the Spirit, will be to cooperate with the Spirit and develop the fruit of the Spirit that Paul talks about in verses 22 and 23.

Look at it. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there is no law. If we're truly Christians and dwell by the Spirit of God, those character qualities are things that we desire, that we admire, that we want to develop, and we want our lives to demonstrate them, because the Spirit of God causes us to desire this.

Now, we'll never demonstrate these qualities perfectly, but we should be making some progress in them.

It's a lifelong process. As the Chuck Swindoll book title goes, a true Christian will desire to live this kind of life, will desire to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, but will never do it perfectly.

But over time, we should see that we're making three steps forward, even though there are times that we take two steps back. But over time, over years, three steps forward and two steps back, we're still making a little bit of progress, and we should be able to see progress in our lives.

[26 : 31] If you've been a Christian for ten years, there ought to be more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in your life now than there was ten years ago, or five years ago.

That means you've arrived, that none of it is full-blown perfect or anything like that. There should be evidence of the Spirit of God working, developing this character of Christ in you if you're a Christian. So look at yourself. Quickly, one more thing the Holy Spirit does in the life of a Christian. He creates within us a loving relationship with God as our Father.

Now I want you to look at what Paul says in Romans 8, 14 through 16. Paul writes, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons or daughters, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Paul is describing here how the Holy Spirit gives us an inner sense of closeness with God.

[27 : 44] The Holy Spirit works in our lives as Christians to enable us to understand we are children of God and to feel this sense of closeness that we can call him Father.

That word Abba is an Aramaic word that means Father and was used in the home, in a home by children. Maybe even like our word dad.

Or maybe even if you have a close relationship with a grandfather. Pop. You know, those really are special words, aren't they? The fathers in here.

If you're, you've got a child that has, does, call you dad. That signals something special, doesn't it? There was only one man in my life that I called dad.

I had two grandfathers on both sides. I call them both Pop. I never was around them together. So one of them away from each other, they were Papa Stone, Papa Williams, but in person they were pop.

[28 : 46] They were special. We should have a special relationship with God. It's nothing forced, it's just natural.

It comes from within. Sometimes as you read the Bible, as a Christian, the spirit of God in you should just help you to understand God is speaking to me.

This is God's word to me. Sometimes as you pray as a Christian, you just sense, I'm just really in the presence of the Lord. I'm just really talking to him.

Sometimes as a Christian, you may just be out in the woods one day, riding down the road one day, and you're, for whatever reason, you just sort of, your mind's, you know, you're not occupied about something else, and you're just thinking about your relationship with God, and you just sense this closeness with him that the spirit of God is enabling you to experience.

You ought to know what I'm talking about if you're a Christian. You know, it may be that you are lacking this kind of assurance right now because you're not close to God, and you know why.

[30 : 09] Let's just wind it up right now. Do you have assurance of your salvation? Are you sure, confident that you are a child of God?

If you are, you need to thank him because that's his spirit working in you. That's a real blessing.

God has affirmed you, maybe as we've gone through this message, as you think about what a real Christian is according to scripture, is you just know the spirit of God has confirmed to your spirit that you're one with him.

Thank him for that. Enjoy that. It's not because of who you are, what you've done. It's all because of who Jesus is, what he's done. And when you trust Jesus, God accepts you, and you know that, so just thank God.

But it could be that you don't have assurance of your salvation right now. But your thought process is this. I know what you've been talking about this morning.

Most of my life, I have had assurance because most of my life, well I've never been perfect, I've never whole, I've never just, you know, been totally faithful, but all my life I have sent, sought to please God, to turn from sin, to study his word and do it.

[31 : 27] But for whatever reason right now, you just feel distant from God. And it could be that you know why. It could be that there's something going on in your life, maybe no one else knows about it.

But you've allowed something sin, selfish, something that you know is just totally wrong, you've embraced it, you're participating in it. You know you shouldn't.

God can, God's been whipping you about it. But you're just stubborn and you're holding out and you, you're not ready to give it up yet. And as a result of that, you don't have good assurance.

I'm glad you don't have good assurance. You should be glad you don't have good assurance.

Because that's the spirit of God not letting you have assurance. But he will if you'll confess it as the sin that it is.

If you'll turn from it. It could be that there's no one thing. It could be that you've just allowed the busyness of life to cause you to drift away from the Lord and closeness with him.

[32 : 34] And the Lord is convicting you of that right now. Come back to him in real confession, repentance, renewing your commitment, your love to him. Ask him to return to you the joy of your salvation.

But if you know, you say, there's no matter about assurance. I know I'm not a Christian. Maybe you're a member of this church or some church. Maybe you've even been involved in the life of the church.

But as you compare the way you are, the way you think, feel, and live, the way the Bible says the Christian will, it's obvious you're not. And if that bothers you, if that really disturbs you, and you don't want it to be that way, give it up.

Admit to God, I am not a Christian, even though people think I am. Repent of your sin. Change your mind. Turn. Do an about face right now. Put your faith and trust in Jesus truly.

Trust that he died for you when he died on the cross. Call upon him to save you. Surrender your life to him now. The Bible says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[33 : 39] And when we truly are, become children of God, the spirit will give us real assurance. Call upon him now. Let's pray together.

Dear God, show us how we should respond now. Each one of us, in light of what you've said through your word, through your spirit, and in an attitude of prayer, listen to the Lord and do what he's saying.

If I could pray with you during this time, I'd be happy to do that. I'll be here at the front. But you do what it is that you know God's calling you to do. Maybe just give him thanks. Praise him for calling you to be his child, for giving you good assurance.

Maybe you need to come back to him. You know you're a Christian, but you're not close to him now. You're not enjoying real fellowship with him. Deal with whatever it is that's causing that.

Come back to God. If you know you're not a Christian, the only thing, the only way you're ever going to find relief and hope is to come to Christ in faith and commitment.

[34 : 45] Pray, obey the Lord during these next few minutes. Do we? Do we think about tune and preaching? Doing this right whenever the Bible doesn't exist. You're not. The only thing about ■s that you are when you're on the Lord is saying, listen to the rightklars class, it is a great day when you're on the earth, ■■■■■■ that you never could share it.

And theingeness of Time Grizzly has been perfect. The Metiff comfort on Truth as one another life that of was being said before the Lord. If you met this at Teams in first■ would then serve an ongoing■■■■■ which was about being taught in January. What measure? How was that du Air?