

Salvation Certainties

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to turn to John chapter 20. John chapter 20, we're going to go several places in Scripture this morning, but we're going to start there. And I just want to begin by saying how humbled and honored I am to be your pastor.

It is a joy to stand in this place and look forward to see what God's going to do in us and through us for his honor and for his glory.

I want to begin our time together by telling you what drives my passion in ministry. The gospel is the foundation. The grace and mercy of God makes up the hope in which I preach and the glory of God is the goal.

However, if you really want to know what stirs me, what I see again and again in Scripture, what raises to the top in the midst of my study and what I find is a pattern again and again in my life, what motivates me to pastor with all that I've got, it's the matters that I want to share with you during the month of May.

For four weeks in the month of May, with the exception of Mother's Day, a day to honor godly ladies, I want to be sharing a series entitled First Things First.

[1 : 31] It's a sermon series about priorities. And today, I want to speak particularly about salvation certainties.

That is certainties about salvation that will help you become certain about your salvation. It is an important matter.

I know from my own experience, I was saved and baptized at a very early age, and I had a zeal for the Lord at an early age. I wanted to do what I could do for the Lord, and I wanted to honor Him and to make His will certain and clear in my life.

And salvation came early. And at 16, I decided that I wanted godly men to pray about what I felt was a pulling toward a call. I got deacons in the church.

Those men that I revered, some of them I didn't well know, but I revered them because of the position that they held in the church, because other people saw them as a witness.

[2 : 41] And I went to them and asked them to pray for me at the age of 16. Will you pray that God will show you if I'm to be in ministry? And when He tells you, won't you let me know? That's what I said as a 16-year-old.

Two years later, I had a burning bush type experience of all things in the shower when God revealed to me, in fact, that desire that I had within my heart to do ministry had been placed by Him, and it was time to pursue that.

I went back to those men to share that God had given me clarity, and they said, we knew the day you asked us. To the man, they said, we knew the day you asked us that God had called you to ministry.

I have known since that day without a doubt that this is what God wants me to do. However, shortly after that call, I began to have doubts about my salvation.

Not doubts about the call, but doubts about my salvation, because I was so young when I made the decision. I couldn't remember all the details.

[3 : 56] I remember being baptized. I remember how it was a glorious spiritual feeling and how I wanted to do it again. Not just for the fun of the water, but for the real experience. And so as a 19, 20-year-old, I began to struggle with all those things, and I began to pray.

I began to seek scripture and just think through some things as I prayed through that. And God brought me back to what's often entitled the Roman Road.

It was what I used to lead people to Christ before that time in my life. I was reminded of how Romans 3, 23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I knew I had sinned, and I

knew that I had acknowledged that before the Lord.

Romans 6, 23 says the wages of sin is death. The cost, the penalty of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. I knew that that was the gift, and I knew that I had asked God if I could receive that gift from Him.

I knew that what Romans 5, 8 says is that God loves us, and He demonstrates His love for us, that while we were yet sinners, even though He knew everything we had done wrong, He still died for us.

[5 : 04] And I knew of all the plans I've ever heard of how someone can come to know the Lord, that Romans 10, 9 stands out among all of them, as you read a little while ago, that it's really a two-step process, regardless of what Vacation Bible School tells you.

That if you confess with your mouth, and that is not a quiet confession to the pastor in his study, it is an open confession before the Lord, the context of which Paul spoke of was one where they risked their lives to speak of Christ instead of Caesar.

That if you confess boldly and abundantly with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised you from Him, not a historical belief that Jesus was a real guy, but instead a heart commitment belief, that you surrender your life to follow His will and His way, and to live your life for His cause, that if you do that, you will be saved with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth confession is made.

I had done that, and I knew that, and I believed it unashamedly. I had shared my faith. Refrigerators years ago used to come in a big box, a refrigerator box.

Greatest gift a kid could ever get was a refrigerator box, man. It was awesome. Too bad they only wrap them today. We got that refrigerator box, cut a hole in the side of it, threw a bean bag in there, man, and I had a clubhouse.

[6 : 32] We had the basketball goal in the neighborhood, and so people would come play ball in the neighborhood, and I'd get one of those fellows to come to the refrigerator box clubhouse, and we'd hang out there.

It might have to be pretty tight quarters, but we'd hang out there, and I'd ask him in some form or fashion as an 8, 9, 10-year-old, Have you ever asked Jesus into your heart?

I knew early on in my life I'd had a passion for that, and God revealed that to me and showed that to me again and firmed that up within me. Thank God that Romans 10, 13 tells us that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So having gone through that, I don't ever want anybody else to have to deal with that. We don't serve a raise your hand when nobody's looking kind of God.

That's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, come follow me, and I think he turned around and started walking. They had to drop their nets and leave their businesses, leave what they were going to inherit in order to follow him and trust him with how it was all going to shake out.

[7 : 40] I don't believe it's something where we simply repeat a prayer after somebody. Just say the words. Just repeat after me. Baptists have made it so easy to get saved that you don't even have to think about it anymore.

Just say it. No wonder people are confused. I'm telling you, it's a burden to me. I'm going to be a burden to me. I'm going to be a burden to you. I'm going to be a burden to you. I'm going to be a burden to you.

I'm going to be a burden to you. I'm going to be a burden to you. That if you're 99.9% sure you're saved, you're 100% lost. If you've ever had a doubt, you're lost.

There's a Greek word for that, and it's baloney. It's not true. It's not true. James tells us that there'll be doubts along the way, and they ought to be red flags for us, and we ought to check them out.

We ought to deal with it. But when there is a doubt, we ought to sure up our faith because the Lord wants you saved, and he wants you absolutely sure of it.

[8 : 52] Lostness will haunt you for all of eternity. Doubting your salvation will haunt you for all of your life if you don't get a handle on it. I want you to, it's not just my burden.

I want you to listen to what John's burden was. He closes out his gospel in John chapter 20, verse 30 through 31 by saying this. Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written.

In other words, the things that are written in the gospel of John, these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his

name.

That's his passion. That's his burden. And if you look at the New Testament, you'll find one big John and three little Johns, and in 1 John, where he wrote that, he ended that book by saying in chapter 5, verse 13, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

So I want to give you this morning some salvation certainties to help you become more certain of your salvation. To know that beyond a shadow of a doubt.

[10:12] You say, well, preacher, I already know that. Well, inform your face then, okay? Not other people know about it, you know? Let's be sure enough to share this thing.

How can you know? Well, we have to agree on something first. Because if we can't agree on this, I can't help you a whole lot with it. We have to agree in our hearts that the Word of God is the truth. That the Word of God is the decider. It's not our memory. Thank God, because our salvation is more sure than our memory.

It's not our mindset. Even in the moments when I do not have the mind of Christ, I have Christ. It's not in our feelings.

I want you to hear me, church. Your salvation is not based upon your feelings. I've had people come to me and say, I don't feel like I'm saved. Okay?

[11:15] There's a lot of certainties in life that I may not feel like. If I'm driving down the road and there's blue lights that pop up behind me, I don't feel like I was going very fast.

But when I get the ticket, I find out different. Because it's not based on my feelings. And you may say, well, I don't feel like I spent a whole lot on a credit card.

But inevitably, every month, American Express lets me know, you've spent plenty. It'll let you know. Just to be clear, just because a male may not feel like a male, that does not make him a female. And you do not vacillate between the two. Your gender is not based upon your feelings. I don't say that with hatred and bitterness.

I say it with biblical clarity. God made you as he made you. And those things don't change. It's not based on your feelings.

[12:28] Neither is your salvation. Now, there tends to be two different extremes with this. One of them is that someone's always uncertain.

Like a fish out of water, flipping back and forth. Real salvation is not that fickle. It's not that unsettled. I remember years ago when I was a very young pastor in my first church.

There was a man, I was blessed to live in a parsonage in the parking lot of the church. What a blessing. I could unlock for anybody that came by. They even offered to string the phone line over the parking lot so that I could answer the phone for the church 24-7.

What a blessing. I told him I'd sacrifice and pay my own phone bill. I had a man knock on my door one Saturday afternoon and said, preacher, I must be lost.

You can't think the way I think and feel the way I feel and be saved. I must be lost. I said, well, praise the Lord. Let's talk about this. So we talked about it. I led him to Christ. I baptized him.

[13:43] I baptized him. Had a little bitty pool. Had stairs going down on both sides. The bottom of that pool wasn't no bigger than the top of this platform. And these stairs went to a wall.

There was nothing there. But it was just, I guess it was on sale. So they brought the fellow down. He stood before me. And when I baptized him, he kind of curled up on me. He just kind of curled up. I didn't train him like I do now. And he curled up on me. And the top of his head was sticking out of the water because he had done hit the steps. What do you do? I mean, I didn't know what to do. They didn't teach me that in seminary. And so I thought, well, if I splash some water on his head, that'll make me a Methodist. So if you see a guy in glory that's missing half his head, not that you have to be baptized to get there, but I know his name.

But anyway. The next week, he came back to my house. He said, preacher, I must be lost. I said, what?

[14:49] He said, to feel the way I feel must be lost. Come to find out he was on medication. He didn't like to take the medication because of the side effects to it.

But when he didn't, wasn't on the medication, he felt lostness. I'm not poking fun at him. I'm just telling you, your salvation is not based on your feelings.

And if you think everything's okay, it may not be. And if you think nothing's okay, it may be. It seems to vacillate between either always uncertain, struggling like that, maybe due to other causes, or

either a false assurance.

Church, I want you to hear me this morning. Salvation does not come from your family tradition. I know your granddaddy loved the Lord and your mama loved the Lord. That's not where you get your salvation from. Salvation does not come from your political persuasion.

I assume you have one, but it will not get you to glory. Your salvation does not come through your moral conduct. Although if you're saved, you ought to act like you're saved.

[15:58] It does not come through your church membership. Although you shouldn't be a member of a church unless you're saved. Salvation only is found in Christ. And many times, your feelings have little to do with reality.

So if you're not willing to put God's word before your feelings, I can't help you a whole lot. But when you know scripture's truth and you believe it, you can rest in what he teaches.

Well, let me share with you some certainties. Salvation is certainties. First is this. Salvation starts with Christ. Starts with Christ. John 14, 6 says, Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and life.

No one comes into the Father except through me. It's the only way. Now, have you received life from Christ? First John 5, 14 and 15 says this.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him. That if we ask anything according to the will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we ask of him.

[17:00] You know what? That includes salvation. Because listen, if you feel drawn to salvation, you didn't come up with that on your own. God gave you that, drew you into that.

And then Romans 10, 9, again, is if we confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart that God raised him, you will be saved. People love to talk about the reality of heaven.

We don't like to talk about the reality of hell. But the reality is, we base what we understand of heaven on scripture. We ought to base what we understand on hell upon scripture as well. If you leave this life without surrendering your life to Christ, you will forever be separated from God.

However, when one sincerely surrenders his or her life, a change happens. And it's not just eternal destination. It is spiritual transformation.

I want you to listen to how John describes it. In 1 John, chapter 4, verse 15 through 17. He said, whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God, God abides in him and he in God.

[18:07] So that we've come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love. And whoever abides in love, abides in God. And God abides in him. By this in love, perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment.

Because as he is, so also we are in the world. Our confidence is not in what we've done. It's in what Christ has done in us.

And our salvation starts with Christ. Second truth is this. Salvation rests in Christ. It's not based upon our action.

It's not based upon our thoughts. However, our action and our thoughts ought to be based on our salvation. If we're in Christ, we must be different.

First John chapter three, verse 16 and 19 says, by this, we know love that we, that he laid down his life for us. And that we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

[19:14] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and truth.

By this, we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him. I just want to remind you this morning.

I didn't write that. Don't get mad at me. John says, there has to be a change of heart. It's a heart matter. Christ brings change.

We sing it all the time. What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart. I have light in my soul for which long I have sought. Since Jesus came into my heart, we have to have him to be saved.

Our salvation rests in him. And if we are saved, there ought to be evidence. A life of a Christian reflects Christ. Not perfectly, but fruitfully.

[20:15] I like the way Donald Whitney put it. He said this, make sure that your impressions of being a Christian are confirmed by expressions of being a Christian.

In other words, as I said earlier, if Christ has changed you, change your heart, inform your faith. Let others know it and how you respond to them. Christ ought to be the most, Christians ought to be the most joyful people on the earth because their salvation rests in Christ.

But not only that, our salvation, thank God, remains in Christ. It remains in Christ. It begins with Christ.

It's because of Christ. It remains in Christ. It has not changed. You may have changed, but his hold on your life has not changed.

As Christians, Christians who are certain in their security may wonder, preacher, why are you so burdened about this? Of all things, you could have talked about the first Sunday you was here.

[21 : 20] Why this? Listen to the words of Jesus. In John chapter 10, verse 27 through 30, Jesus says this, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the father's hand.

I and the father are one. Friend, listen to me today. if you're saved, Jesus wants you to know it. He wants you to be certain of it and your salvation is as steady as the hand of God.

Apostle Paul put it this way in 2 Timothy 1, verse 12, I'm not ashamed for I know whom I believe and am convinced that he's able to guard until that day which has been entrusted to me.

If you're not saved, I want you to know Jesus came and died for you to be saved and he invites you to come to him today. I want you to listen to the plea of the greatest Baptist preacher since the penning of the word, Charles Spurgeon.

[22 : 39] Charles said this, I can understand a man doubting whether he's truly converted or not but I cannot countenance his apathy in resting quietly till he has solved the riddle.

How can you give sleep to your eyelids till you've known it? Not know whether you're in Christ or not? Perhaps unreconciled?

Perhaps condemned already? Perhaps on the brink of hell? Perhaps with nothing more to keep you out of hell than the breath that is in your nostrils or the circulating drop of blood which any one of 10,000 haps or mishaps may stop and then your career closed.

Your life story ended. I entreat thee. I beseech thee. Shake off this sluggardness. Ask the Lord to say unto thy soul tonight I am thy salvation.

He is able and he is willing and he will do it for you when you eagerly seek it for him. First things first.

[23 : 55] Listen if we don't get this right we're in trouble. You got to get this right.

have you ever asked the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sin to come into your life and to save you?

Have you ever come to the point in your life where you know for certain that you have eternal life and you'll go to heaven when you die? If not you need to.

If you're not sure let's get sure and if you are sure but you say but take God at his word.

Take him at his word. He's good for it. I promise. With every head bowed and every eye closed I ask today if you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ today's a day of salvation thank God.

[25 : 11] Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If you have done that but you've struggled in your faith you've struggled in your faith I encourage you to take God at his word rest in that.

If you can't find rest in that let's nail that down. Let's nail it down. No way you're going to share your faith with folks if you're not sure about your own. Let's nail that down today. I don't know how God's speaking to you today but I know you'll never be satisfied unless you're obedient to follow him.

Several were baptized last week thank God. Have you ever publicly admitted that you're Christian through baptism?

If you've never done that you've missed the first step of salvation and I encourage you to be obedient today and follow the Lord. I'd love to guide you in any of those matters or pray about a matter that's burdensome to you.