

For Christians Who Struggle With Assurance

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Good morning. It really is a delight to be here again. When you come to these conferences it's really a taste of heaven everywhere you look you're thinking, he's there and she's there. You know it is so wonderful when you see all brothers and sisters whom you have not seen for some time. If you would open your bible with me please to Philippians 3:3

Philippians 3:3 I came here wanting to preach the Gospel this morning, but I was strongly led last night to change my message. And so what I want to speak to you on this morning is assurance of salvation. What I am aiming at here is to help believers who struggle with assurance. I want you all to be wise in some of the ways in which Satan, our ancient foe, attacks and tries to take away the believer's assurance and the joy of our salvation. So then if you are a Christian who struggles with assurance. If you are tossed about with fear and doubt, and are struggling with if you are saved on a periodical basis. Or perhaps you're not now but you get like that from time to time, then this message is especially for you. But even those who don't struggle with assurance this message is also for you because you will certainly come into contact with other believers that do struggle. So what do you say to them? Do you just write them off like Job's sorry comforters?

So let me begin by making sure we all have a correct understanding of what assurance is. To give you some dictionary definitions of the word "assurance" it means: full confidence or trust; a firm persuasion; a certain expectation; freedom from doubt. If you think of someone assuring someone else that they love them, or think of a young child who is scared. The mother or the father may say things to assure that child that they are okay. So then when we speak of assurance of salvation what we mean is a confidence in God, a firm persuasion that God is for you, that God loves you and has saved you. As the apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." You see, the idea there is that Paul, he knew the character of his Redeemer and he had no reason to doubt His care. Paul had committed his soul and all his trust into the bank of Heaven, of which no thief can break in

and steal. And he knew the character of God. So he had no reason to doubt that God would be faithful to His promises. So then a firm confidence in God, a confidence that you are saved and secure, is what we are talking about when we speak of assurance of salvation.

Let's all pray before we look now at why having assurance is so important. Heavenly father, I thank you that you have brought each of us to this place together. We thank you Lord that You can speak to us now. And we ask this, that by your Spirit I pray for anyone who has been struggling here, that You will set them free through this sermon. That You would help them to be wise to the schemes of the devil, to the deceits of the evil one. Bring people a confidence before God in which they can serve You and can approach You boldly. In Jesus name. Amen.

Let me give you one reason, at least, as to why having assurance is important for the Christian. You generally serve God better, far better, with assurance. With assurance, you become bolder in your witness for Christ. Because, without it you tend to go on a downward spiral. Let me give you an example: when a Christian begins to lack assurance you might not pray as you should; because you can start thinking, "what is the point of me praying for others when I don't even know if I am saved myself?" I mean, think of the difference between a child asking their father or their mother for something when they are confident that their parents love them and accept them. Think of the difference between that and asking someone you hardly know. So lack of assurance, number one, is going to affect your prayer life. And without assurance you're not going to evangelize as you should. Thinking, "How can I tell others the gospel when I don't even know if I'm saved myself?" So, you're not going to be as bold for Christ if you don't have assurance. And if you lack assurance you're going to lack your joy in Christ. Now the devil, he cannot take away the Christian's salvation; but he can take away the Christian's joy of salvation. He can take away his assurance, if he deceives you. If your joy is gone, then what do you have left? A miserable Christian. And a miserable Christian is a bad witness. It says to other people, "Why should I follow your God if all it will make me is as miserable as you?" Whereas if you have assurance of salvation you can have great joy, even in trials! And that is a great witness. The world cannot explain that one.

Now the reason why I wanted us all to turn to Philippians 3:3 here is because before we look at some of the various ways in which the devil tries to take away the believer's assurance I wanted to first make sure that we all have a correct definition and understanding of what a Christian is. You see what I do not want to get from this sermon, what I do not want to happen, is for someone who is completely lost listening to this and they say, "Ah the

devil is trying to take away my assurance" when the person is not even saved in the first place. So, if you look with me in your bible here in Philippians 3:3 let us make clear what a true Christian is. And so Philippians 3:3 here begins: "For we..." 'We' there meaning the Christians. Paul the apostle and the people he is writing to. He says, "...we are the circumcision." Now, 'the circumcision' was a name for Jews. What Paul is saying here is we are the true Jews. Now, let me remind you that Paul is writing to Gentile converts there in Philippi and he includes them as the true Jews. "We are the circumcision" we are the true Jews is another way of saying that we are the true Christians. We are the true people of God. Now, what we are concerned here with is what does this look like. And Paul continues, "...and worship by the spirit of God" Not in all outward rights and ceremonies. And it is the Holy Spirit that made us a Christian by circumcision by changing our hearts. Verse 3 continues, "...and glory in Christ Jesus." The word glory there means to boast. That's where our confidence is, in Christ Jesus. In Him is where the Christian's hope lies. "...and put no confidence in the flesh." Now, by 'flesh' here, by our flesh, Paul means anything other than Christ that we might put confidence in to recommend ourselves to God with as far as justification goes.

Because if you notice in the following verses from verse 4 onwards, Paul then gives us a list of things. "Though, I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh for boasting in the flesh also if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh I have more." And then Paul gives examples of things that, before he was saved, he wrongly trusted in to try and recommend himself to God with. So let's consider just a few of these. In verse 5 there, he says that before his conversion he was trusting in his circumcision. Now, in our day, of course, a modern equivalent of this would be someone trusting they are saved because they have been baptized, or they have been christened, or they gone to some kind of confirmation service. Well, if that's you, if you think "I am Christian because I have been baptized," then you most certainly are not a Christian if that is where your hope lies. And also in verse 5 Paul says, "of the people of Israel". Before Paul was converted, one of the things he was trusting in was that he was born of Jewish decent. Now in our day, this is just like someone thinking they are saved because they have been born to Christian parents; because they had a Christian upbringing. Listen, and especially you children, if you think you are saved because you had a Christian upbringing, because you have Christian parents, if that's where your hopes lies then you are not saved.

And then in verse 5, Paul tells us that before his conversion he was trusting in that he was a Pharisee. Now, when we tend to think of a Pharisee today we tend to think of the bad

guy in a film. He walks on and everyone thinks “boo!” An obvious hypocrite. But it was not like that in this day. You see, the Pharisees were, albeit wrongly, considered to be the elite of the Jews in their day. So, in our day this is just like someone who is trusting in that they are saved because they go to what they consider to be a good church or hear good sermons. These are all good things, just like baptism, or being brought up in a Christian family. But listen, your hope for salvation must not lie there. And in verse 6 we see that Paul, before he was saved, was trusting in that he was zealous. And this is very similar to someone in our day who's confidence in God is based on that they are busy serving in whatever way. Or that they are passionate about some part of Christianity, but not Christ. Your hope must not lie there in your zeal. And then in verse 6 Paul says, “As to the righteousness under the law, blameless.” So before Paul was saved another thing he was trusting in was his works. He was thinking that God would accept him because he kept the law. He thought he was good enough. Again, if you think you are a Christian, if you think "Of course I'm going to Heaven! I'm a good person. I mean I believe. I'm not like one of those drunks or rapists." Well, if you think like that, if you have a 'Jesus plus something else' you are trusting in your works then you are not a Christian.

So then, this is my point: 'confidence in the flesh' here refers to anything in themselves that one might put confidence in apart from Christ to recommend themselves to God with as to why God should accept them. Notice here, once again, in verse 3 the truly saved person, the true Christian, is someone who glories in Christ Jesus. That means Christ is his or her boast. The true Christian's confidence of eternal life of his acceptance by God is in Christ Jesus alone. The believer realizes they have come to a place where they realize they have nothing meritorious in and of themselves to recommend themselves to God with. Like the hymn we sang last night goes, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness” So, a true Christian is not trusting in his works. He or she is not trusting in their own performance or things they have done in order to recommend themselves to God with. A true Christian is someone who realizes they are a guilty, vile and helpless sinner who had nothing to offer God in and of themselves to recommended themselves to God with. And instead, they are trusting in Christ alone. They realize that their acceptance with God is through what Christ has done on our behalf.

And as I said, I wanted to make that clear before going on because I do not want someone to take this sermon on how the devil attacks assurance and think, 'the devil is attacking my assurance' when the person is not even saved. And so, just quickly, what do you

do? If upon hearing that you suddenly realize and think, "I've never been a Christian"; you suddenly realize you've always been trusting in something else other than Christ. Well, as Paul says, count them as rubbish as far as your justification goes. Realize you have nothing to recommend yourself to God with and make Christ your boast now. Put your hope and trust in Him now. Don't try to have a righteousness of your own when you can receive as a gift the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

You know, many people... If I was to tell you from this book and I had verses to prove it, that salvation was: that you got saved and justified before God by walking from Texas to California, then many would take it for exactly for what it said and begin that journey tomorrow. But man and his pride is always looking for something to do to try and bribe God. In those verse there when Paul says, "I count these things as rubbish" it literally means 'dung'. If you think of when someone is trying to work to earn their salvation, they are effectively trying to bribe the Judge. But you are not bribing him with money, you are bribing him with a bucket of dung Paul says. Imagine going to a judge and holding that up. See your works just as that when you're trying to earn your justification. Don't look for something inside of yourself to try to be saved! You must look outside of yourself and away from self and to Jesus Christ hanging on the cross for your sins. See His finished work, that He has paid your debt, and put your trust in Him. It is that simple.

Now then, if you can please turn with me to 1 John 5:13. Because the next thing I want to make clear this morning is that you CAN have assurance. This is a biblical doctrine and it is a right for every Christian. There are some circles today, it's unfortunate that I have to address this, but there are some circles today who say you cannot have assurance. There are some who claim that you cannot know that you are saved; and if you tell them that you are saved and going to Heaven they say, "Well that's being presumptuous." In fact some of them even take it as far as to say that if you're confident that you are saved, then you're not because they say you're not being humble enough. They say, "If you were truly saved you would be more miserable like me." They say, "If you were truly saved you wouldn't be so proud. You would be humble like I am." But let me make it clear here, the believer's confidence is not in himself but in Christ. So when a believer has assurance they are saved, that is not being arrogant or proud. You see, it is not being presumptuous to believe God at His word. So I want to make it clear in everyone's mind here that a believer can have assurance of salvation. Let me show you from this verse that this is a biblical teaching.

So, look with me, 1 John 5:13 says: "I write these things to you who believe in the

name of the Son of God that..." So, the Apostle John is writing to believers here and is telling us one of the reasons why he wrote this letter of 1 John. "That you may know..." That you may be assured you have eternal life. So then, one of the primary reasons the book 1 John was written is that Christians may have assurance of salvation. Let me also point out here from this verse that assurance is not just for "super Christians". It is not just for apostles and pastors. Not that a pastor is a "super Christian". You see, John is not writing to a select group of apostles here, is he? But every Christian can have assurance. And also consider some of the other statements of Paul. He said, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," He said, "To depart and be with Christ is far better." Now that to me sounds like Paul had assurance. So then, it is clearly a false doctrine that says you cannot know you are saved.

Now, another point here also from this text in 1 John 5:13. Listen carefully because this one is important. Many get confused on this and that is that it is also false to go the other extreme that says if you do not have assurance then you are definitely not saved. There are many today who equate salvation with assurance. They think that they are inseparable and they wrongly think you cannot have one without the other. But that is wrong and I can prove that very easily from this text that it is possible to be a Christian and not have assurance. If you look with me again at 1 John 5:13 he says, "I write these things that you who believe in the name of the Son of God..." that sounds like a Christian to me, "that you may know that you have eternal life." That you may be assured. I want you to notice here, John is writing this letter to people who are already believers. He is writing to people who are already saved. Their hope is in Christ, but he is writing that they may have assurance. In other words, these believers do not already have assurance. So then, it is possible to be a Christian and not have assurance. A Christian, as well, can lose their assurance.

Now, all that said, of course do not be content without assurance. It is a Christian's right, you will serve God better, you will have more joy and so forth with assurance. So I don't want anyone who has been struggling to think from that, "Well I don't have assurance so it doesn't matter because I may still be saved." I mean, would you not rather live your life knowing your Father loves you? So then, for the remainder of the sermon this morning I want for us to consider some of the various ways in which the devil tries to deceive the Christian and take away their assurance and the remedy for these.

Number one, when a Christian falls into sin the devil will tell you that you have no right to go back to God now and ask for forgiveness. Satan may say to you with subtle and suggestive thoughts, he may say, "You have blown it this time. You have done it too many

times now." And then he may tell you, "You're not a Christian otherwise you wouldn't have sinned." Now, what is the devil doing there? What is his tactic? What is he trying to do, he is confusing in your mind the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He is causing you to look back at your works as far as your acceptance before God is concerned. Satan is trying to trick you, he is trying to tell you that you are not saved by faith alone in Jesus Christ, by His blood. You see, by his lie that you cannot go back to God and ask for forgiveness when you sin, Christian, the devil is insinuating to you that your works have some merit in regards to your justification. Now the remedy with this lie of the devil -as with all of them- is truth. As Ephesians says, "put on the belt of truth that you may be able to withstand the devil's schemes"

Listen Christians, number one: you must realize the truth of adoption. Believer, listen to me, being saved is more than just forgiveness. Let me give you an example: there is a huge difference between a judge that merely pardons someone and a judge who not only pardons the criminal but adopts you into his own family and brings you up as his child. Do you know this truth believer? From the moment that you believe the gospel and are justified before God by faith alone in Jesus Christ, God is no longer your judge as a punitive sense. But from the moment you are saved you come into a whole new relationship with God. You become a child of God for the first time; and so He is now your Father and that is how God relates to you. Now this is important to grasp, believer, because when a Christian sins you are no longer dealing with God as a Judge who is about to throw you in hell. But you are dealing with the injured Love, wounded love as a Father whom you've sinned against. Whom like the father of the prodigal who is just ready and waiting to embrace you once again.

To give you another example, there is a huge difference between when you offend your father or mother then if you break the laws of the land. Because one is a relationship of law, the laws of the land; where the other is a relationship of love. From the moment you are saved you are in a relationship of love. So when you sin Christian remember, you are not going back to a judge hoping that he will acquit you again. But like the prodigal you are going back to your loving Father, Who is waiting to embrace you. I mean, how many of you parents if your child offends you do you say to them, "You are not my son, or you are not my daughter anymore."? If you being evil know how to treat your children, how much more God? You see, the point is, our actions as Christians do not affect how we are related to God. If you believed Christ alone for salvation then God is still your Father, no matter what state you are in. Justification is something that happened in the past. The moment someone gets

saved, it is once for all time. You do not get re-justified every time you sin and repent. That is a Catholic doctrine from the pit. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not count his sin against him, Romans 4 says. Because the Lord has paid for it.

Now if you look at 1 John 1:9 here with me. This is what you do when you sin, believer. This is what you are told to do. You have it on good the authority here. , "If we confess our sins, He is faithful" -God is faithful- "and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So do not believe the devil's lie that because you've sinned that you cannot go back to God now when the bible says the opposite. Because His word promises here, if you confess your sins to God, and other people if necessary, then God is faithful to forgive And He is just, meaning He's already paid for your sins. He's already dealt with it. "There's a thick cloud, I have blotted out your sins. There's a thick cloud, I have blotted out your transgressions," He says in Isaiah 44:22, "so return onto me for I have redeemed you." But also here notice He is just to forgive your sins, because He paid for it. So when you believe the devil's lie that you have gone too far this time and cannot go back to God, then what you are doing there is you are questioning the faithfulness and justice of God. What you're saying is that God is imputing sins to you that have already been paid for. Because if the penalty of your sin has been paid for the Judge is not going to come after you again for it. So by believing the devil's lie, you are saying that God is unjust and that He is unfaithful. But also notice it does not say, "If we confess our sins after we spent a few hours or "x" amount of time trying to earn our way back to God by reading so many chapters of the bible or by being miserable or whatever." Nor does it put a limit on the number of times the believer sins and can be forgiven. God does not say like Peter suggested, "Shall I forgiven you 7 times?" No, 70 times 7. And that's not a literal number there, you keep on going. As I heard brother Ryan preach the other week, love never fails. The love of God for the believer never fails.

Now let me also let me make clear here that he is not telling you this here to give you an excuse to go on in sin. As he says in just a few verses in 1 John 2:1, "My little children I am writing these things that you may not sin but if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous." You see believer, realizing these truths and acting upon them gives the believer a confidence and assurance before God that He is your Father and this helps you walk closer to Him. Realizing this grace helps the believer sin less and less; because you will always struggle trying to walk at a distance from God. It is realizing you are justified that gives you the power to live the Christian life. I mean how you respond to a truth like this is really a test of salvation in and of itself. You see, if an unconverted church member hears

truths like this: that they can keep going back to God and be forgiven and their response is "Oh great this means I can just sin as much as I like and enjoy my sin and so long as I keep on repenting and confessing it then great!" Listen, if hearing wonderful truths makes you think like that then you are lost. But whereas the true believer, on hearing truths like this, they think, "What wondrous love is this?"

Now then: way number 2 in which the devil tries to take away the Christian's assurance of salvation, and that is misunderstanding or misinterpreting how God deals with us. What I mean by this is when trials come upon you. There are a lot of people (especially with so much prosperity, health, wealth and false doctrine out there) who have the false idea that when you become a Christian everything will go wonderful for the rest of your life. And so when a fiery trial comes upon you, you are surprised by it and your faith is shaken. And the devil, the accuser, comes to you and says, "Look what you're going through. If God was really your Father, if He loved you then He wouldn't let His child go through this." Again the remedy here is once again truth. You must have a correct understanding of the Christian life. That as Paul said in Acts 14:22, 'Through many trials and tribulations you must enter the kingdom.' Philippians 1:29, 'It has been granted not only for you to believe, but also to suffer with Him.' You see, God does not keep the Christian free from the fire of trials; but He promises you that He will be with you in it and sustain you. You must understand Christian that whenever a trial, whenever something seems to go wrong and comes upon you that it is Romans 8:28, that God is working everything in your life for your good.

But also, in regards to a Christian misinterpreting how God deals with them, God sometimes withdraws His smile from the believer and brings conviction in order to chasten them. And the devil twists this and says, "God doesn't love you anymore." But the answer is the word of God which says, 'whom the Lord loves He chastens.' If a child is not doing what he should then his parents-or her parents- may first sit down with that child and exhort them and explain to them so they understand the need and how to do it correctly. But if they are still being disobedient then a loving parent will bring out the rod. To quote Martin Lloyd Jones-he had a lot of good to say on this-he said, "When we won't read His word and apply it to our lives (apply the things you've read in His word), God has to use His chisel to take off our rough edges." He says, "You're going to a place where you will be without spot or wrinkle the Sculptor, believe it or not, has of work a lot to do." So then, if God is chastening you, if when you sin He is bringing you to conviction and repentance than that is not an evidence that you're not a Christian, that is evidence that you are a Christian. Whereas, if God just lets

you go on in sin and never bothers you then Scripture says you can be sure you are not His child. And also, of course, God may bring a trial into your life like He did with Job. Not because you sinned, but because He knows it is best for you to make you more like Jesus Christ. And to quote Martin Lloyd Jones again, he said, "When a Christian despises the Lord's chastening we are being very childish. It is a childish attitude that always wants to eat sweets and never what is best for you."

Now then, way number 3 in which the devil tries to attack the Christian's assurance (and this one is quite common-as with all of them I suppose), he tries to convince you that you have committed the unpardonable sin. This is what is commonly known as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. We see it in Matthew 12, Hebrews 6 and 10, and in other places where it speaks there of an eternal sin that cannot be forgiven in this age we live in now or the eternal age, the age to come. Now, there are various interpretations of what this sin is; but you can almost guarantee Christian, that whichever interpretation of it you hold to the devil will come along at some point and try and convince that you have committed it. In fact, I've seen it before, where a Christian will hold to one interpretation of it and the devil will convince them they have committed it and they'll be... it's like they are in a prison for a while, and then when they are released they later change their interpretation and then the devil convinces them again they've committed that. So what is the answer to this one? Well, those people in Matthew 12 and Hebrews 6 and 10, that have committed this sin, they were not troubled in their conscience; they were proudly mocking the Christian faith; they were laughing at the gospel; trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, saying it is nothing. You see those passages there are not dealing with a Christian who merely falls into sin; but they are dealing with someone who completely renounces the gospel. They were ridiculing the spiritual realm there saying Christ was doing his miracles by Beelzebub. So then, my point is this: is that any time someone is troubled that they have committed this sin, it logically follows they have not. Otherwise, you would be laughing about it and not be so worried. Now you may say, "But what about Esau? I mean, he sought repentance with tears and could not find it. He was troubled it sounded like he has committed this sin?" Well, he was troubled with worldly sorrow for one, but I think Esau is more of an example of someone who rejects the gospel and plans to enjoy their sin and then except Christ on their death bed. To quote Lloyd-Jones one more time, he said, "If you can say 'Lord it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint' then you are a Christian." Those guys in Mathew 12, Hebrews 6 and 10 their desire was not to love Christ more.

So then, let us move on. Way number 4 in which the devil tries to take away the Christian's assurance: He tries to convince you that you cannot have assurance until you reach a certain level of perfection. You see, you sometimes see a Christian who is believing upon Christ's work for justification, when they sin they are broken they repent, but they have this false idea, this false idea creeps in that they cannot have assurance until they completely quit a certain sin and have not done it for 'x' amount of months or years. And then of course, when the Lord gives them victory over it-when the Lord gives you victory over it- the devil then says, "Well what about this?" And then another sin and so on. So you are deceived to believe that you cannot have assurance until you reach a certain level of perfection. Now let me make it clear here, you should see growth in a Christian life; but this happens over time. You must remember Christ justifies the ungodly. The Christian is completely right with God once for all, for all time while he is still ungodly. Romans 5:1, "And therefore having been justified by faith..." It doesn't say, 'And therefore having been justified by growing over time we can have peace with God.' Therefore having been justified by faith, having a correct understanding and believing justification we can have peace with God. So you don't have to get to a certain level of performance before you can have assurance.

Now, let me clarify here because this is a good question. Someone may say, "Well what about those in 1 Corinthians 6, 9 and 10?" I mean those professing Christians there, you have professing Christians practicing certain sins who Paul says quite clearly that they will not inherit the kingdom of God. So THEY should not have assurance! Now that is correct. But listen, there is a huge difference between someone like that who is stubbornly carrying on in sin they know is wrong and is just shaking their fist against God saying, "I don't care." There is a massive difference between that then someone who is struggling hard against something, who is broken when they do sin because they have grieved God and will gradually gain victory.

Now, way number 5-just a few more-in which the devil tries to deceive the Christian and attack their assurance: he convinces you that have to have a certain experience exactly like some other person. Now he is lying to you there. He is saying the word of God is not enough to give you assurance; that God must give you a special sign and some sort of experience. It was a wicked generation that saw the sign before they would believe. Now the answer to this one, of course, is many people have great experiences who later prove to not even to be saved. And among true Christians there is great variations in the realms of experience. Every believers walk and the experiences believers have are not the same. Now

someone may say, "What about Romans 5:1, the verse you just mentioned? 'Now therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God.'" "Peace is experiential," they say, "so therefore you must have a certain experience." Well what I say to that is a correct understanding of justification by faith should lead to assurance but it is not automatic; because otherwise 1 John would not have been written. I mean the devil sometimes... I mean you read in a wonderful Christian biography and you should be being blessed by it. You're reading about someone like Amy Carmichael or Leonard Ravenhill and the devil says to you, "But where are you? Why aren't you praying 10 hours a day?" Well, maybe because you have a full time job.

Way number 6 in the way the devil tries to attack the Christian's assurance: he tries to convince you to spend all your time looking at your emotions and your feelings. This one hinders a lot of people so listen closely. Instead of your assurance being based on Christ and grounded upon what the word of God says, you fall into the devil's trap of being assured on the basis on how you feel from day to day. So when you are feeling low you don't feel saved and when you're feeling high you do. Typically, this person will go to church with little or no assurance one day and then they will try to work it up in a worship service. And they're always trying to work up the feelings and emotions by various means. But the answer is base it on truth, no matter how you feel. Your salvation in... Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Base it upon how the word of God says He feels.

Way number 7 in which the devil tries to attack the Christian's assurance: and that is introspection. This is where the devil takes a good thing like self-examination, which Christians are to do periodically, but the devil he gets you to be constantly looking inward. So you are so focused on self and examining, constantly examining every minute detail you stop looking at Christ and when you stop looking at Christ your assurance goes. Now the answer to this is as Paul said, "rejoice in the LORD always, and again I say rejoice." Not rejoice in your feelings! Not rejoice in self! You see, you may hear that command from day to day and you may think, "Well it says rejoice in the Lord but I don't feel like rejoicing." You may say, "I've had a bad day. I've not done as well as I should." But you're not told to rejoice in self. That's not what it says. You see, when your works come into it you're either a Pharisee or a failure, so you lose your joy in Christ. But no matter how this finds you, Christ had a perfect day so rejoice in Him. Charles Spurgeon gave a good example. He said that... it's in a sermon called 'By His Blood' I think. It is very good. I mean you can say that with all of Spurgeon's sermons, it's very good. But he gives an example there, one of the conditions of salvation God

says, "When I see the blood." When God sees the blood He will pass over. And he points out there that the Israelite is in the house. He can't see the blood when the plague comes. But he says there, supposing instead of putting blood on the door we put jewels on the door. Would God's judgment had passed over? The answer is no. He has to see the blood, a picture of Christ there. But you see, this was Spurgeon's point, is that sometimes God gives us gifts of the Holy Spirit, He may give us experiences, our sanctification. He helps us in those things. But Spurgeon says if we put the Spirit where Christ should be then God will take away our assurance. Why? To chastise us if we put the Spirit's works where Christ should be. You see, you should look at your works and periodically examine yourself from time to time as the bible tells you; but you are not supposed to look at your works and then trust in your works. Rather you're supposed to say, 'Ah God is in work in me.' And I encourage you believers, be like the apostle Paul. He is thankful for every little bit of grace he sees in people, even the Corinthians! Every little bit of grace you see in someone be thankful. Tell them that you thank God. Because that will give them the confidence before God that will help them to walk closer to God. For anyone whose lost, God said, "When I see the blood I will pass over." When God saw the blood flowing through Immanuel's veins, He passed over my sin. See that also.

Now one more, I think this is number 8. Sometimes I've had people come who struggle with their thought life. Godly men. Godly women. They're struggling because they are tempted. Well, we must know a distinction. This was a wonderful lesson for me to learn: that temptation is not sin. It's not a sin to be tempted. How do we know this? Well, Christ was tempted in all things yet without sin. You see the devil he throws those fiery darts at you: thoughts, temptations. Well, it's not a sin when he throws them at you. Let me give you example: you open your bible to read in the morning and straight away maybe a lustful thought, maybe an angry thought, some kind of impure thought comes into your head. Do you really think that's yours? You were reading your bible. Or you go to pray and that happens. Well it's not as if you're going out to be angry or whatever or to lust you're going to pray. Well that's the devil attacking you. So reject those. Realize this and reject it. Realize sin is not temptation. Temptation only becomes sin when we start to embrace it and we start to enjoy it. But the devil, you see, he puts those thoughts into your head then he says well you're not a Christian otherwise you shouldn't be having those thoughts.

Now there are many other ways, of course, in which the devil may try to attack a Christian's assurance. These are just some common examples. But always stand upon truth of God's Word. You see all those attacks are based upon believing the devil's lies above what

God's word says. So you must be girded about with truth Christian. And do your utmost to most believe God. Realize that your justification before God stands by faith only in Jesus Christ. 'Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling.' And again I say these things to you this morning not that you may sin; not that you may use them as an excuse to sin, but that you may see that salvation is by grace. It's all of grace. My hope is that this will give you a confidence to walk closer to God, to sin less. The self-righteous Pharisee hears this and it makes him angry. But the humble hear it and are glad.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I just thank You for Your glorious grace which is greater than all my sin. I thank you Lord that even on our best days we are deserving of hell, but Christ has put away our sins. We thank You that He who is faithful to begin a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. And I pray You would set people free. Those who struggle back and forth, help them to know these truths and set them free so they may serve You, so they may sin less, so they may grow in holiness, so they may press on to know the Lord. Help us in all of this. What wondrous love is this? Oh my soul, oh my soul. Your gospel Lord is so glorious, all these truths. So hard to believe. We wouldn't believe it Lord unless Your word said it. But You have said it and that settles it. We praise you. We thank you. We magnify you. We glorify you. In Jesus' name. Amen.