

Salvation: Once Saved, Always Saved?

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Tim: If you weren't at our church on Sunday, let me just tell you. I preached from Romans 13:11-14. And in verse 11, Paul says, "and this, knowing the time..." And the thing that he says about the time there is that our salvation is closer than when we first believed. Well, one of the things that I brought out is the fact that we tend not to think about salvation biblically. We typically talk about salvation past tense. Like I emphasized then, we live in this "once saved, always saved" era. Somebody's probably wondering, well, hey, I thought once you were saved, you're always saved. No doubt about it. The problem is the Bible doesn't typically - for one thing, the Bible never says that. That doesn't mean it's not true, but the Bible never says it, and it never emphasizes it that way. And what most people mean when they say that is I said a prayer, I walked an aisle, I went to church, I believed in Jesus, I was saved - now no matter what happens and no matter how I live, I am going to get to the end. That is an error. That is absolutely erroneous to the Scriptures. The Bible says - Jesus Christ Himself says very plainly that only if you endure to the end will you be saved. What does that endurance look like? Well, the Bible describes it in a lot of places.

What I've done - I've done this before, and I encourage you guys to do it too. Go through your entire New Testament. Look at every place where "saved," "saving," "salvation," "saves." Any of the words "salvation," "saved," type of words, and guess what you find out? You find out that only maybe not even a handful of times out of all the many times that it's used does it ever speak about salvation as a past tense thing. Most of the time, salvation is looked at as an ongoing process or future. Your salvation is closer than when you first believed. Why do I emphasize that? I emphasize it for this reason, if we talked; if we spoke the way the Bible speaks, we would talk about: Hey brother, are you being saved? But we don't talk that way. But listen, just one place that just shoots to my mind right now is found in 1 Corinthians 15. "Now, I remind you, brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the Word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." You know what he doesn't assume there? He doesn't assume that your past faith is worth anything unless you endure; unless you persevere in this truth. And he says, in fact, "You are being saved." That's just like Paul says over in Romans 13. Your salvation is closer than when you first believed. Peter talks about a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Well, okay, what does that have to do with creation? Well, it's got a lot to do with it because what it's got to do with, it's got to do with our Bibles. It's very important that we talk the way the Bible talks. Like I say, you and I typically talk about salvation as a past event. Which the Bible does. Look, to do that is not erroneous. But folks, generally heresies are not just a total turning from all truth. Heresy typically is when you exaggerate a certain truth to the point where it becomes no longer truth. Like, imagine a human face. If all of a sudden, my eye starts getting bigger and bigger until it's about that big, and I walk in here. Suddenly, something seems very wrong, right?

If somebody came in with about a four foot eyeball, we would all notice. And it would not be beautiful, right? We would look at it and we would say that's hideous, that's grotesque, that's abnormal. Something's wrong. Well, that's what heresy is. (Incomplete thought) Typical heresies comes when people find one verse or two verses and they so jack them out of proportion that you end up with something that's no longer truth. And see, when you and I, we get into the mold where we talk in a certain way, but the emphasis is not biblical. Well, then, we're beginning to depart from truth, even though what we actually say may in the concept itself and in the statement itself be accurate. I mean, there are places that speak past tense about us being saved. "You've been saved by grace through faith, that not of yourselves." We know the Bible talks that way, but not often.

I mean, I would challenge you folks right now. Any of you, other than the text that I just mentioned, Ephesians 2:8-9, find somewhere in your Bibles where salvation is past tense. I challenge you guys to do it. Most of you have your Bibles. Most of you know your Bible to some degree. Can anybody even think of another verse or produce anything or look something up? Now look, if you've got a concordance - some of you might be turning to a concordance in the back - but even so, that's legitimate. Go ahead. Learn how to use your Bible tools. (unintelligible) Say it. (unintelligible) 2 Timothy 1:9 "Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." Okay, we've got two now. Anybody think of another? Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness..." Okay, we've got three. Now, if I were to ask you how many times do you think that some form of "save" or "salvation" is found in the New Testament, what do you think? You think like six? So, like half the times it's past? No, it's found there a lot. A lot. It really is. I don't have all the statistics.

And this isn't something I really meant to go with, but it's something that I want to encourage all of you, when you read your Bibles, think about what your Bible's saying. Ask yourself, because like I said before, if we're going to be biblical; if we're going to talk like the apostles talk, we ought to talk about being saved, and we ought to talk about a salvation yet to be revealed. And that we're closer to it. Because this is how Paul sought to encourage Christians. This is how Peter did. They talked and they set our hope on a future salvation.

(from the room) Excuse me, on this verse in 1 Peter 5, it says we're kept by the power of God through faith.

Tim: That's right. No question about it.

(from the room) But you said that God would keep us in salvation sometimes and sometimes not?

Tim: No. No, no, no, no. We are kept by God. We are kept by the power of God through faith. The power of God is demonstrated in our lives by the faith He keeps us in. The bottom line, folks, if our faith is real to begin with and it is indeed the powerful, the power of God sustaining

faith, that we're kept by, then all you folks know what James 2 says, right? James 2 says, "faith without works is dead." Bottom line is we find that if we say we know Him and we don't keep His commandments, we're liars and the truth isn't in us. Bottom line, if we are those who practice unrighteousness according to 1 John 3 - you can read about the first 15 verses of 1 John 3 - the Bible's pretty explicit. Jesus Christ says you're only going to be saved if you endure to the end. The fact is there are people that have faith; there are demons that have faith, and their faith doesn't save them. Bottom line is in John 2 there were people who believed in Jesus, and you look at the last couple verses there, it says Jesus didn't commit Himself to them because He knew what was in men.

And the bottom line is this, there is a faith that saves, and there is a faith that does not save. The Bible's pretty explicit about that. The faith that does not save is a faith that's no better than what the demons have. The demons believe Jesus Christ was a true historical figure. There's no question about it, when God saves us, we are born again, and nobody plucks us out of the Father's hand. I'm not saying that speaking about salvation as a past event is wrong. But because the Bible is so aware that multitudes that claim to know Christ, in the day of judgment for one, are going to say, "Lord, Lord," and He's going to say, "I never knew you." Well, what happened there? Did they not believe? Well, certainly, they believed He was a true historical figure. Certainly, they even believed He was Lord. They called Him Lord. And yet there was something innately wrong with their faith because they're being cast away in that day.

And by the way, Jesus doesn't say it's just a few. He says multitudes, many. In fact, He says in another place that we need to strive to enter into the straight gate or the narrow gate because many are going to seek to enter in therein and are not going to be able to.

Brethren, the way the Bible lays this thing down is we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. And there are people that fall out and make shipwreck all the time. Now, what do we say about those people? Well, we can say that basically it's the type of soil where the plant began to grow and there were no true roots and it rejoiced and received the truth for a season. But we know, basically the Bible tells us that God keeps His own. But what the Bible also makes very clear is if we don't persevere to the end, we give the definite proof we never belonged to God in the first place. And there's a whole lot of people that believe they belong to God, claim they belong to God, make testimonies of such, go to church, but they fall out and make shipwreck or they make it to the end, but then there on judgment day, they find out at the judgment bar itself, He didn't know me. What happened? What was wrong there? Did they not have any faith at all? No, they had a certain type of faith. But there is a certain type of faith that doesn't save us.

There's no question about it, when somebody truly comes to faith, that true faith is a gift of God. God doesn't repeal it. By His power, He keeps that individual in that faith. But I'll tell you this, the reason Jesus says you've got to persevere and endure to the end in order to be saved is because the true faith that is energized by the true power of God will always declare itself by

persevering till the end. And if you fall out shy of the end, you give the greatest evidence that it wasn't a God-given faith.

And the only reason that I even brought this up is really not to get into any debates over the nature of salvation. The reason I brought this up is because we need to talk like the Bible talks. We need to talk about being saved. And we need to talk about a future salvation. And you see, this was the very point Paul made to the Corinthians. He said you're being saved by this Gospel unless you've believed in vain, which he's acknowledging they did believe. But it's possible people can believe in vain. And the way it demonstrates itself is when they fall out of the race. (incomplete thought). Look, a faith that is not connected with works is a dead faith James says. (incomplete thought) Are we saved by our works? No, but true faith is always accompanied by works because it's always accompanied by regeneration. Regeneration is being made a new creation in Jesus Christ. That's the truth that comes right out of 2 Corinthians 5. If we're not new creatures in Christ; if we haven't been born again, we will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Lay it down, folks. You must be born again. Born again means radical transformation. New creations in Christ. Old things passed away. All things become new.

The problem is that as much as all that's true, the Bible does two things. It looks at salvation from the standpoint of God in some places, right? In some places, salvation is viewed from God's power, God's responsibility, God's protection, God's saving grace, God's saving power. For instance, anybody think of one? I think of Philippians 1:6 right off. We have this guarantee, right? That if God begins a work, He's going to finish it.

(from the room) Ephesians 4:30, we're sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Tim: That's true too. We're sealed with the Holy Spirit. Nobody takes that seal off.

In other places, salvation is viewed from man's responsibility. And that's why we have places in our Bible like Hebrews 6, Hebrews 10, that actually describes people who fall away. Paul distinctly speaks about people making shipwreck of the faith. Christ specifically speaks about enduring to the end if you'll be saved. Well, why those verses? Because brethren, when the parable of the soils is given, only those who bear fruit are the true deal. Those who don't bring forth fruit aren't the real deal, and they fall out.

Why do people fall out? We know it. This has been true of Christianity for 2,000 years. People start the race and they fall out. Why? You've got Demas. What type of soil was he? I'd say he's a pretty good indicator of the third type. What happened? Cares and riches. What did he do? He loved the world. He fell out. Paul talks about others that made shipwreck of the faith. Why do people make shipwreck? What about Judas? He made shipwreck. People right in Paul's own company made shipwreck. Brethren, it's been that way throughout history. People don't make it till the end. Christ says if you don't endure...

So you have it from both standpoints. You have the truths that God gives to us that are meant to encourage us. Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. My faith sinks its teeth in that. But you know what? There are some people that when the allurements of the world come along, they look at that and they look at the world and they'd rather have the world. It doesn't mean anything to them that the Bible says nothing can separate them from the love of Christ. They don't care. They don't have faith to even lay hold on that. They're looking at the worldly things over here and they weigh it out and they go.

There are the people that are the second type of soil. What happens to them? Boy, they receive it gladly for a season, but then what happens to them? They can't endure persecution. They can't endure trial. Why is that? (incomplete thought). I'll tell you what it always is. There may be a number of answers, but it always comes down to this. You know why the true Christian doesn't bail out when the trials come? Because He wants Christ more than anything else. He wants Christ. He loves Christ. And when trial comes, he doesn't like the trial any better than the other guy. But he wants Christ more than he wants ease. He wants Christ more than he wants money. He wants Christ more than he wants anything else. And so no matter how hard the trial gets, even Paul getting beat by the rods and scourged and in the sea and false brethren and all that came upon him, he never bailed out of the race. Why? For him to live was Christ and to die was gain to be with Christ. Be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Folks, when Christ is your all, you'll hold the line. No matter what comes, no matter what riches you're tempted with, no matter what trials come, no matter what persecutions come, no matter what pain, sufferings, sorrows, you'll toe the line. Why? Because it comes back to faith. Faith believes in a Christ we have never seen. Bottom line, the only way people will hang on to Christ at the expense of everything else is if they have a faith that really believes, if somehow in their faith, they've seen in their mind's eye the beauties and the glory and the preciousness of Christ, that in their estimation outweighs everything. We love Him, folks, not having seen Him. We believe in an unseen Christ. You and I haven't seen Him. There was Thomas, "My Lord and my God." And Jesus said to Him, "You believe you've seen. Blessed are those who believe and they haven't seen." Right?

The fact is people fall out of this race all the time. And if they do, it's because they don't endure to the end. And the reason that Paul would have the Corinthians in one place examine themselves whether they be in the faith is because you can believe it, there's a number of them that weren't in the faith. Why? You had all sorts of wickedness going on there. Paul never came along and assumed that everybody that said they were a Christian were actually a Christian. He doesn't assume that. Now, he deals with people based on testimonies they have. If people claimed to be Christians, he would deal with them on that level, but he would also tell them, examine yourself whether you're in the faith. In the pastoral epistles, he calls men out by name. He talks about men that made shipwreck. And the writer of Hebrews is pretty straightforward.

Let me tell you this too. Peter's pretty straightforward as well in 2 Peter 2. He says you know what? We've got some people in the church. They're pigs. They go back to the mire. They're dogs and they go back to their vomit. What does that tell us about? It tells us that there was

something wrong. These men had professions. You look at the context there, very likely even those that may have been teaching the Gospel. But what happens? They fall out. And then they prove to be what they always were, which is what? Dogs and pigs. And how are they proven? They go back. They go back.

Brethren, this is serious stuff. When Christ says, "strive to enter in," many are going to seek to go in there and will not be able. What do you guys do with that? Do you just write it off? Well, once saved always saved. For one, the Bible doesn't speak like that. Number two, the way the Bible speaks is the violent take it by force, strive to enter in, many are going to seek to enter in and will not be able. What's this? This isn't what you hear in many pulpits. But this is most certainly what you read in the Bible. You say, where's that come from? Well, that comes in places like Matthew 12, Matthew 7, Luke 13. Brethren, the Bible talks about violence, force, striving, pressing in, narrow gates, narrow ways, few there be that find it, many in that day saying "Lord, Lord," and He says "I never knew you." Few there be that find it. We live in a country where, what, 40-some-odd percent claim to be born again Christians. And yet the Bible says, "few there be that find it." Amazing. You know what? It's not amazing that on judgment day, Jesus Christ is going to say to many, "Depart from Me. I never knew you." Why isn't that amazing? That's not amazing because 45% of Americans claim to be born again. That's why it's not amazing. We see the very fruits of what the Bible says already, do we not? I mean, come on, folks, when you look around at the 45% that claim to be born again, and their abortion rates are just as high as the rest of the world, their divorce rates are just as high as the rest of the world, they watch the same filth that the rest of the world watches, immerse themselves in the same garbage, and what? What are we led to believe? Well, the church isn't much different than the lost world out there? No, folks, that's not what we're led to believe.

Look, the Bible says this. In Romans 8, it says you are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. Guess what it says in Ephesians 1? It says that before the very foundation of the world, we were chosen. God chose us. It doesn't say we chose Him, by the way. It's amazing how many people flip that thing on its head. It says - what does it say? "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Him in the heavenly places, even as He chose us..." Not as we chose Him; as He chose us. "...In Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Holy and blameless. We're chosen for that. Predestined to be conformed to the very image of Christ.

Folks, the church of Jesus Christ is very healthy and holy. Fighting? Yes. Striving? Yes. Having to cut off hands? Pull out eyes? Is there all-out battle? Yes. Are they pressing? Striving? Is there violence? Yes. But just like with the verse you brought up, listen, folks, if it wasn't for the power of God, we'd fall out of this race in a second. Because the violence it takes, the strength it takes, the plucking out of eyes it takes, the lopping off of hands, the tears and the groanings and the fighting and by the Spirit of God putting to death this sin, the all-out battle, if it wasn't the power of God keeping our faith a reality, keeping us locked onto Christ, keeping us in the midst of the heat and the battle, keeping us believing that Jesus Christ is more precious than anything else - we would fall out of the race. We'd fall out of the battle. The race would be over. We'd be all

done. Folks, the Bible says that fornicators and adulterers don't inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Bottom line. We've got to fight against this. We've got to overcome this. Basically, we are people who walk in the Spirit. We are people who we oppose the deeds of the flesh and we put them to death by the Spirit. And it's battle. And folks, listen, if you're here and you've become a Christian, and all of a sudden, you've encountered battles against sin that you never thought you would ever come up against, and all hell seems like it's raging against you, don't think: "Oh no! I must not be a Christian!" What you ought to be thinking is praise the Lord! He's brought me into this thing. He's given me a hatred for sin. And there is all-out battle here. What does Peter say? Peter talks about these lusts. He talks about these things that wage war against the flesh. What does he call them? What wages war against us? What is it that's all-out against us? Anybody know? What is it?

(from the room) Powers and principalities?

Tim: No - I mean, no doubt. Principalities and powers are against us. But Peter talks about something that wages war against us. Fleshly lusts. They wage war. Folks, when you become a Christian, fleshly lusts wage war against us. Principalities and powers wage war against us. And in the midst of all of it, Spurgeon likened the Christian life to a dove flying through a literal cloud of arrows. And that God guides us against all odds through all the arrows to a haven of rest. And that's what it is. And I'll tell you what, if you don't have God supporting you; if you don't have God holding you up; if you don't have God moving you through; God giving you grace; God giving you strength; God giving you power; God keeping your faith real; God keeping you repenting; God keeping you mightier than the sins that are trying to overtake you; keeping you in a walk in the Spirit, a walk that does have the aroma of holiness, of righteousness. How does that happen with everything against us? It happens one way. God predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ. And against all odds and against all enemies, He is going to work that fabric into the very character and being. 2 Corinthians - I brought this up on Sunday, but 2 Corinthians 3:18, folks, as we behold Christ; as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are degree by degree transformed into the same image. That's the reality.

So, why do we have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Where's the fear? Where's the trembling? The fear and the trembling is this: unless you work out your salvation to the end, unless you endure to the end, you won't be saved. And believe me, in 20 years as a Christian I've seen people start well and fall out. Why? The same thing Christ said. The cares of this world. Riches - they ensnare.

(from the room) So then, for the sake of speaking biblically, you would change it from: "once saved, always saved" to "if saved, always saved"?

Tim: Well, like I say, I'm really wanting to encourage us to speak biblically and speak to one another - brother, sister - you know, you are being saved if you hold fast to this Gospel. And I'll tell you this, the Gospel is essential to this whole thing.

In fact, let me tell you something. We are so programmed in our thinking that I think oftentimes, we miss probably the truth in the first chapter of Romans. Romans 1:16-17, so often because we are so programmed to think about salvation past tense, we tend to think about v. 16-17 as having to do with when sinners are saved the first time. I don't believe that's the case at all. Somebody want to read those two verses? I heard a couple Bibles open to it. Somebody read it.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..."

Tim: Okay, wait. Anybody ever get that? The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Not just to everyone who doesn't believe and then hears the Gospel and believes. It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes... keep going. "To the Jew first and also the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.'" Tim: You see that? It's how the just live. How do they live? They live by faith. Not just faith at one time, but from faith to faith. You see, folks, and this is exactly what he said in 1 Corinthians 15 as well. Is it not? You are being saved if you hold fast to that Gospel I delivered to you.

You see, folks, what is it that keeps our faith? How does God keep the power - we are kept, no doubt about it, 1 Peter 1:5 - "kept by the power of God through faith." That's how the old KJV says it. Where does that faith come? It doesn't come out of nowhere. It comes by constantly looking to the Gospel. What's the Gospel? The Gospel is all about Christ and my salvation and Him taking my sin to the cross; Him living a perfect life; Him doing everything that's required for my justification. Beloved, that's where your meat is. Don't ever think the Gospel, yeah, we outgrow that, we get past that, we move beyond that. Brethren, the very Gospel is the very meat upon which your faith thrives. It's the very heart, it's the very core upon which we live.

Brethren, let me tell you something. Churches where maybe some of the people sometime came to the Lord, but now you get in this church and all they want to talk about is how long women's dresses ought to be, or whether the ladies ought to wear head coverings, or whether we ought to dance, or whether we ought to smoke, or whether we ought to drink. Brethren, legalistic churches that become all hung up in all sorts of stuff, look, does the Bible have things to say about whether I drink? Or how much I drink? If my drinking causes a brother to stumble? Or whatever it is, whether I eat meat? Whether I drink? Whether I observe a day? I'm not saying those things aren't important in their place, but I've been in churches and I know of churches, and there's lots of these fundamental churches out there that they just want to press all these little things.

Brethren, I'll tell you what - I'll tell you where the sweet aroma of the real thing exists is where people talk about Christ, they sing about Christ, they hear preaching about Christ, where everything is coming back to Christ all the time - that's where the life is. That's where we move from faith to faith. We're not ashamed of that Gospel, folks. It's the power of God unto salvation - unto salvation! You see, if we think about salvation all the time as a past thing, then we miss

what he's really saying there. The Gospel unto salvation. Faith to faith. Yes, God preserves this faith, but it's faith to faith. I keep going. I don't live by bread alone. I'm living by the Word of God. I'm living by this Gospel. I keep going back to it. I keep going back to the cross and to the risen Christ and to His victory and to the payment of sin. And brethren, you know how it is, when we sing about it, when we hear about it, when we go back there, this is where our strength to live comes from. This is where our strength to survive, this is where our strength to move on... Justification. Brethren, we have to have works with our salvation or it's dead stuff.

Look, if you say you know Him and you don't keep His commandments, you're a liar! That's not me, that's John. But if we get to the place when we go to the mirror and we're looking: okay... how well am I keeping the commandments? How well am I doing that? I'll guarantee you not one of you in this room keeps them well enough to merit your salvation with God. And not one of you has done it perfect in the last hour. You say, well, what does that mean? (incomplete thought) Brethren, it's like we talked about before. It means that bottom line, we're people that are producing the fruits of God. Is that not what Ephesians 2:10 says? Anybody know what that verse says? Some of you have memorized it. What does it say? "For we are His workmanship..." What does it say? "...created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God beforehand ordained that we should walk in them." Good works. We've been ordained to produce good works. We've been ordained. Anybody think of any verse in all the Bible that says that we ought to be producing righteousness? Anybody think of somewhere where it says we're a people for His own possession? For what? Anybody know where it says that? Titus. A people for His own possession for what? Zealous for good works. Folks, He gave Himself up for us to purchase a people for His own possession who would be zealous of good works. He saved us.

Listen, the book of Romans starts with this: What is it? Romans 1, about v. 4? It says that Paul went forth preaching the Gospel to bring forth a people that are going to be obedient. Or he talks about the obedience of faith. You guys ever heard that? He starts the book of Romans with the obedience of faith, and he ends the book of Romans with the obedience of faith. I think it's Romans 1:4 and then it's at the end there, about Romans 15 - it's right at the end of Romans 15 if I reckon right. But he starts and ends the book that way that there is an obedience of faith. Brethren, if your faith doesn't have obedience, if your faith doesn't have works, if your faith isn't accompanied by a zealousness for good works, if your faith isn't accompanied by a regular demonstration of commandment keeping, what does John say? His commandments are no longer grievous. Doesn't he say that? Anybody think I'm making that up? That John would say that His commandments aren't grievous? Which means what? The desires of the flesh have been crucified. And God gives me new desires. Anybody think of anywhere in the Bible where it talks about me actually having new desires? Where is it?

(from the room) In Isaiah where He says He'll give you a new heart?

Tim: That's Jeremiah - he does say He'll give me a new heart. That's under the New Covenant. And that's good. Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah 32, Ezekiel 36. We get these pictures - Ezekiel 11,

Ezekiel 18 - we get these pictures of the New Covenant. And he says He's going to cause us to keep His statutes and walk in His judgments. According to the old KJV.

I'm thinking somewhere in Philippians 2. What about verse 12-13? He says we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is... God who does what? To will and to do His good pleasure. Isn't that amazing! If you're actually in Christ, God works in us not just to do what we need to do, but to will what we need to do. This is salvation, brethren. It says they would call His name Jesus and He'd save us from our sins. Don't think that that just means from hell. Yes, it is that. It is from hell. But He promised to save us from our sins, from the power. Brethren, Romans 6:14 says sin will not have dominion over you. You're not under the law. You're under grace. Do you know what it means when you're under grace? It means sin will no longer have dominion. Why? Because according to Romans 8:13, by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body. Brethren, if you don't put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, you're not going to make it to heaven. You say how do you know that? Because Romans 8:13 says if you live according to the flesh, you die. If by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. This is life and death. This is always the case. It always comes back to this. Life and death. Is there righteousness? If you're practicing righteousness, you're born of God. If you're practicing unrighteousness, you're of the devil. If you are one to whom God causes you to will and to do of His good pleasure, His commandments are no longer grievous, He causes us to walk in His statutes. You say, perfect? No, brethren, not perfect. But in the eyes of God, perfect. Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ has atoned for every one of our failings. And so, John would say, I write to you, little children, that you sin not. But if you do... if you do, we have an Advocate with the Father. And how does His advocacy work? Well, because of His shed blood. There's been atonement made.

But brethren, what I was getting at before is as much as all this is true, we don't live on looking at ourselves. We live on looking at Christ. And listen, if you ever get to the place where you're running to the mirror all the time, and you're looking at your performance to try to draw your assurance out of, you'll look at yourself for 10,000 years and you can look at yourself till you're blue in the face, and it is not going to do a thing for your faith. Brethren, we need to live on the doctrine of justification by faith. In all of our working, in all of our good works, in all of our seeking to do good, in all of our seeking to keep His commandments, in all our seeking to perform as righteously as we can, and work out our salvation in fear and trembling, brethren, what is it that's revealed in the Gospel that we live on from faith to faith? The righteousness of God is revealed in that Gospel. Wait! What's that? If you look over at Romans 3, what? About v. 22? Right in there somewhere? It says that the righteousness of God which is for those who believe in Jesus Christ. It's a righteousness that is for us. What does that remind us of? Maybe like 2 Corinthians 5, last verse there, which says what? "He who knew no sin became sin," that what? "That we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Brethren, you know what message is kept in that Gospel that we live on? The Gospel that is unto our salvation, that we live on and feast on from faith to faith - it's Christ satisfying all the demands of the law in our place. And paying the penalty in our place for every violation and transgression of that law. And now, a righteousness has been bestowed upon me legally.

Brethren, that's where we go back all the time. Because I guarantee you, no matter how righteous the life of the Christian is - and it is - it is. You have to deny all of the New Testament to say it's not. But no matter how righteously you might be living right now, and no matter how much of a new creature you may be, and no matter how much old things may have passed away and all things become new, I guarantee you this, you are not glorified yet. And until you are, you know what the problem is? We have been renewed on the inside, and day by day, we're being renewed, but this outside - we still live in the same fallen body. And we have not experienced the resurrection of our bodies. We have not experienced the glorification of these. These things belong here. They're of this place. And because they are, we still tote around the flesh. The flesh.

The word "flesh" - that sinful part of us sounds a whole lot like what I've got right here. Why? Because it's connected. Sin seeks to reign in my mortal body. Why? Because that's where the flesh is. That's the only place sin can any longer find a seat. And that's why even on our best days, we find this struggle. We find this battle that goes on. Why? Because these things wage war against us. Sin wages war against us. Fleshly lusts wage war against us. No matter how righteous your life might be - and I guarantee you this, if you're truly saved, your life looks a whole lot different than it did before. It's not yet what you want it to be, but it is certainly a whole lot different than it used to be. That's the picture of Christianity displayed before us. We're still putting sin to death. And I'll tell you, once in a while, while we're putting it to death, it lashes out at us and knocks us in the jaw good. And if you want to go over to your little mirror and gaze in that mirror and try to draw out of that confidence in your standing before God, you're going to fall right on your face. And you'll get about as much assurance out of that as you can out of a very imperfect performance.

What you want to go over and look in the mirror at and gaze at is the glory of Christ working and sweating and laboring out a salvation in our stead. Working out a perfect righteousness. Fulfilling all righteousness. Born of a virgin; born under the law. And keeping that law so that His Father could say, "This is My Son, in Whom I'm well pleased." Well pleased. And by the obedience of one, the many are declared righteous. And you have a very similar truth come at us in Isaiah 53.

Brethren, who can bring charge against us? It's God who justifies. There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ. That's where our confidence is. That's where we look. That's where we trust. And I'll tell you this, brethren, you're only going to be saved if you make it to the end. You're only going to be saved, if you stay locked into that Gospel to the end. Isn't that exactly how we started when we read out of 1 Corinthians 15? Brethren, I'll read it to you again. "I would remind you, brothers, of the Gospel I preached to you which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the Word I preached to you unless you believed in vain." Brethren, faith to faith. The just shall live by faith. We live in faith of the Gospel now. In it, the righteousness of God is revealed. That's our hope.

Well, we'll get to creation next week. Any questions or comments or observations? (unintelligible) To the Thessalonians on several occasions, he said, "more and more." They were loving already, but more and more. Love characterizes the redeemed life, but more and more, pressing on, pressing upward, towards Christlikeness, onward, upward, inward. We do believe in progressive sanctification. No question about it. Progressive sanctification, and yet, the new birth is so radical that when a person is first born again, they become new creatures in Christ. Although they are not what they'll be even in a year, old things have passed away. And there's something drastically different and new. Sometimes if you're looking from the outside, we don't always see it so much because the body doesn't hardly change, but that's a reality. It's kind of like this, we live way down here in the doldrums of total wretchedness and depravity, all the way down at the bottom of the barrel. We're born again and we fly way up to this level. And then now it's kind of this... and we have our ups and our downs, but it's constantly upward. And the Spirit of God takes us through that sin-killing, walking in the Spirit more and more adventure going on to perfection. That's kind of the picture we get in the Scriptures. And the thing that the Bible warns about is no matter what this thing looks like, if you return to the vomit and the mire, you show yourself to be a pig. Never a lamb.

(from the room) It's heartbreaking how many churches don't teach this.

Tim: It's heartbreaking how many churches have abandoned the Scriptures. You know what? The danger in all of this is what we're talking about is the Gospel. If we were talking about ecclesiology, maybe the forms of church government, or if we were talking about eschatology, maybe the end times, we could have some happy debates maybe. But we're talking about the Gospel. We're talking about if people are wrong: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord.'" And He's going to say, "I never knew you." This is life and death. This isn't marginal. This isn't optional. Folks, people can get bent out of shape. They can get all worked up. But if they're wrong, they're wrong. They can be so confident in this world - blindly confident; unbiblically confident. If you're wrong in that day, you're wrong. And it's going to cost you your soul. We can be wrong about lots of things. Brethren, it's supposed to rain tomorrow. If we're wrong, if you think it's not going to, you don't take your umbrella, you get rained on. I don't carry an umbrella anyway. I don't care if I get rained on. Bottom line is you can be wrong about the weather, it doesn't really matter. If you're wrong about this, it's all that matters. If you're wrong about this, there's hell to pay. We don't want to hide anything. We just want to say it like the Bible says it. Brethren, the thing is none of us should be embarrassed about any of this. This is what the Bible says. We're open to examination from anybody and everybody. We're not like the Jehovah's Witnesses that have to come to the door and be subversive and not really tell our agenda, not really tell what we believe. We can lay it out there. This is what we believe. Bottom line, if somebody looks to Christ, and it doesn't radically change the life, they're going to hear words on judgment day of such horror and fear that they do not want to hear.

Brethren, think about it, if this wasn't true, what in the world advantage do I have to emphasize this? None at all! You know what, if the truth was that we could be saved and live like hell, I'd tell you that. But the Bible doesn't say that.

And you know the thing about it is anyway, brethren, God gives us new desires. Don't you guys agree? I don't want to live like hell. I don't. The two things I want more than anything else in the entire universe is to see Christ face-to-face, and to be done with sin forever. Those are the two greatest longings of my heart. Even if I found that you could live like hell and get to heaven, I wouldn't want that. I don't want that. Even if I could find out I could live here forever living like hell and never have Christ - that would be hell to me. I want Christ. And I want to be like Him. That's what the Gospel produces.

And that's our hope, right? And as it was brought up before, we read this in Ephesians 1. The Holy Spirit - He's the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. What does that mean? Well, where the Holy Spirit is, He puts sin to death. Where the Holy Spirit is He works love, He works joy, He works peace - you know those fruits of the Spirit. Where the Spirit is He assists us in our prayer, does He not? Where the Spirit is He bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God. Where the Spirit is He's the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father." Those that have the Spirit are led by the Spirit. Those that have the Spirit walk in the Spirit. You see, having the Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance is not a blind thing. It's something that's real. It produces fruit. And if the fruit of the Spirit isn't there then you give the very evidence that you don't possess the guarantee of salvation. You see where I'm coming from? There's no question the Spirit is the guarantee. But the way that's a guarantee to us is we see the manifestations of the presence of the very Spirit - the Spirit Who leads us into truth; the Spirit Who convicts us of sin; a Spirit Who can be grieved. And when once you've been given a love for Christ, a love for truth, a love for righteousness, and you grieve the Spirit, you feel it. Any of you that have known the smile of Christ and then had it disappear, any of you that have known that, you know what that feels like. For the Christian, that's the worst thing in this life. Give me trials, just don't hide Your face from me!

Any other comments, questions? Okay, what would you guys say? What verse would you go to to absolutely solidify to somebody that you cannot lose your salvation? (unintelligible) He's the guarantee of our salvation. You can't guarantee salvation by giving the Spirit of God if the Spirit of God can be taken away and it's no guarantee. There are any number of places that we could go to, but it was brought up by the New Covenant. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days declares the Lord, I will put My law within them; I will write it on their hearts; I will be their God; they shall be My people. No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each one his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. I will forgive their iniquities. I will remember their sin no more."

And then over in v. 32, He says this, "They shall be My people. I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear Me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them, I will make with them an everlasting covenant. I will not turn away from doing good to them. I will put the fear of Me in their hearts that they may not turn from Me." I will put My fear in their hearts that they will not turn from Me. And I think grandmother back there

brought up 1 Peter 1:5, "We are kept..." the ESV doesn't bring it forth as clearly, but the KJV: "We are kept by the power of God through faith." And we are kept. He will complete that work - we've got Philippians 1:6. But the very tenets of the New Covenant - nothing's left up to us. God says, "I will, I will, I will, I will..." And He says, "I will put My fear in them that they not turn away from Me. I will rejoice in doing them good." Ezekiel 36 - we can go there as well and just carry on all the "I will's" that He says He's going to do. In Ezekiel 36, He says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from your idols, I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh, and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules."

And if somebody comes along and says, well, yeah, He said He'd do that for the house of Israel, I would say, whoa... did you never read that a true Jew is one inwardly? And circumcision is a matter of the heart? And to the Gentile Philippians, he says we're the true circumcision. What is that? Philippians 3:3. We are the true circumcision. And it doesn't matter if we're Gentiles or not. Who is a true child of Abraham? According to Galatians. They're those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Bottom line, a true child of Abraham are those that believe in Jesus Christ. The true circumcision are those that what? Put no confidence in the flesh. They make their boast in the Lord. If they want to say, well, that's speaking about Israel, well, we are the Israel of God. We're the true Jew. Who? All of those who are children of Abraham. All of those who by faith have trusted Christ.

Do you guys believe that? That's what the Scriptures speak. Have you ever read in Ephesians 2? It says that middle wall of partition has been taken down. How? He's created one new man from the two. And what? We used to be at one time called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which was made in the flesh by hands, right? At one time, we were. At one time, we were what? Separated from Christ. You were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. We were separated from the covenants of promise. But now, that's not true. Now we're not. We're no longer on the outside. Now, we're fellow citizens. We're heirs, folks. We're on the inside. We all - those who were near and those who were far - have been all brought and accepted by God through the shedding of the blood of Christ. He's done this, folks. We Gentiles by faith in Christ are true Israel. So don't ever let anybody disarm you of the New Covenant just because they say that promise is for the Jews. There's no question about it. But have you never read in Romans 9? "Not all Israel is Israel." There is a spiritual Israel to whom the promises have truly been made. And in fact, when Paul realizes some of the Jews are going to take issue with that, he said, whoa, wasn't it even said way back to Moses, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will show compassion to those to whom I will show compassion." And it says God shows compassion and God hardens. There are vessels of mercy and there are vessels of wrath.

You know, the problem is we make God out to be a very small God when we say we can lose our salvation. Yeah, He's not strong enough to keep us. But, He's not only strong enough to keep us, He's strong enough to keep us doing good to the end. He's strong enough to keep us

persevering all the way. You see, you make God weak either way. If you say, "God can't keep us," you make Him weak. And if you say, "We're going to make it, but we're not going to make it doing good works," you make Him weak too because you're saying basically He's going to drop the ball.

But He says, Philippians 1:6 - let's read. Do you have your KJV over there? Somebody read the KJV. Philippians 1:6 I never memorized it in the ESV, so I'm not sure exactly how it reads. Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Paul was confident. God was going to perform it to the day of Christ.

Any other questions or comments or observations?

(from the room) I think what I'm hearing though is that you don't know if you've really been sealed unless you persevere to the end. It's like saying that the narrow way is more like a narrow plank. I can walk sincerely believing on Christ for 15 or 20 years and fall off. But the fact that I fell off proves that I was not in Christ. So what churns in my heart is where's the peace that Christ leaves with us? So I feel that the only assurance is if you persevere to the end. It's not that there's faith in Christ... (unintelligible)

Tim: Well, actually, that's exactly what I wasn't saying as far as the mirror thing. And that if we keep going back to that mirror and we keep gazing in that mirror at our performance, that basically that is not where the power of God is dispelled into the life of the believer. It is looking to what Christ has accomplished for us. But there's no question about it, the Bible is replete with texts that tell us that we've got to endure to the end, that there's got to be a keeping of His commandments, that there's got to be a practicing of righteousness, and so, Paul can come to the Corinthians and say, look, fornicators, adulterers, thieves, effeminate, homosexuals, whatever... they don't inherit the kingdom. Bottom line, the Bible never is going to give confidence to a person who's walking a wicked life to believe that the power of God has ever transformed them. They shouldn't expect to have any hope.

But bottom line is this, the Spirit of God is distinctly said in Romans 8:16 to bear witness with our spirit that we're children of God. And in fact, if we go back before that to about Romans 5:5, we've got the truth that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. And if you read, you see where that love's coming from. It's coming out of the cross. And I would say this, that bottom line, if somebody is truly saved, they love Christ, they believe Christ, they trust Christ, they look to the cross and they find hope in Christ, and the Spirit of God energizes that look to the cross and floods that person from one degree to another with assurance. And that Spirit is the Spirit of adoption that is bearing witness. And it's the Spirit of adoption that brings an inner compulsion now to look at God not as a far and a distant God, but as a God Who's very close and Who is a Father. We cry, "Abba, Father." And so, bottom line is the Christian feeds and finds his strength in Christ. Christ said that He was going to send a Helper or a Comforter. And He said that "He's going to glorify Me."

I guarantee you this, no matter what operation the Spirit is involved with, Christ is the focus. Christ is always the focus. Not the Spirit - Christ is the focus. And in our assurance, in our strength, in our persevering, Christ is always going to be central to that. And the Spirit is going to bring that assurance, bring peace, bring that confidence, bring a sense of that shedding abroad of the love of God into my heart as we gaze at Christ. And that is a real, vital manifestation of the Spirit of God that the true Christian is going to experience.

And so, I think what happens is we end up creating a straw man if we're not careful. And what I mean by that, the man doesn't exist who has true assurance from the Spirit and no works. It's a straw man. The man who, in the end, falls out was a man maybe who in self-righteousness was striving to please God in his own merits. He's a man who maybe was a Pharisee and he put up a good outer shell show. He had confidence in a lot of things, maybe in his church-going, maybe in his efforts, but like Demas, he ends up falling out. But I guarantee you, whatever confidence he had was a vain confidence. And it wasn't a Spirit of God-wrought thing. And so, no, I would adamantly say that's not true. The true Christian doesn't all of a sudden find out at the end of the race that he's true. The true Christian had that Spirit of God indwelling, and there was true, living manifestations of His presence that gave the believer confidence. And where the Spirit gives confidence, the Spirit also works love and works the fruits of the Spirit and works these works in us, giving us desires, giving us the compulsion, giving us a love for God that compels us and constrains us by the love of Christ to carry this out. And the two go hand-in-hand. Where men and women fall out of the race, they didn't have that. They had confidence and they believed certain things, but in the end, it was a vain confidence. And I believe the truth is the flags were always there, because Jesus Christ says this in Matthew 7: "Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness." And bottom line, it was there. There was lawlessness. The Spirit of God was not communicating with them the way the Spirit of God does. Because they weren't children. And in the end, it wasn't true. It wasn't right. We have a lot of people with vain confidence. A lot of people believing that everything is okay, but it's vain. And so, yeah, if that's what it sounded like, definitely I don't think that's anywhere at all the flavor that we feel coming from what the Spirit of God does in the life of a believer.

(from the room) 1 John 5:13 also says, "I'm writing these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life."

Tim: Right, and you know, think about 1 John. What are the proofs in 1 John that we're true believers? We keep His commandments. We walk as He walked. We have answer to prayer. We love the brethren. Basically, you go through all these proofs and you get to the last chapter and he says I write these things that you might have assurance. And there's no question about it. Folks, I don't know how it is with you. I look at the cross and the Spirit of God assures me I'm His child. Then I look at my life and I see I'm not what I used to be. And that gives me assurance. And then I find out that when I stray, the Spirit of God - my Father comes for me and He lays the rod on my back and He brings me back. I have found that the corrections of God in my life, they give me assurance like few other things do, that I see His faithfulness to me; that if

ever I begin to stray, bang! He's there. He's on me. And He pulls me back. I mean, sometimes that has caused me to go to tears more than anything. He is so faithful. That gives me such confidence. He's not going to let me go. I'm in my Father's hand. If I start drifting, He puts the clamps down. This thing is real. It's living. I look at this thing and realize I need to make it to the end. I pray, "God, get me to the end!" "Help me to the end!" Because I feel that if God let me go, I would run away. I mean, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. I feel it. If You let me go, I'm going! Not that I want to, but I feel that. I feel the battle. But at the same time, I feel this confidence. Do I expect that God's going to take me to the end? Yes. I don't feel like I have to wait to the end to figure out whether I'm truly saved. I believe with all my heart God has truly saved me. And I've seen a massive transformation in my life. And I think that's exactly what the Bible tells us we should see.

And on top of that, I've known repeatedly the floodings and the sheddings abroad of the love of God in my heart at sights of the cross. I know that He has caused me to will in a way that I never willed before. I have a desire now to do things I never had a desire for before. I know I don't love the brethren perfectly, but I love the brethren. I want to be around Christians. I want to be where they are. I want to talk with them. I love the same Christ they love. I love being at church with them. I love hearing preaching. I love hearing about Christ. I mean, the simple Gospel - there's times that when I'm studying for a message and I'm looking at just the old truths, and they flood over me again, and then I find myself falling out of my chair on the floor. Can you guys relate to this? This is Christianity. This is the living reality. This is life in Christ. This isn't make-believe.

(from the room) One last thing in regards to what the brother said I think about assurance, on that day when the Lord said not all those who call Me Lord shall enter the kingdom, and there was that one worker of iniquity that said, Lord, we cast out demons in Your name. And they stood before Him and questioned the Lord about His works (unintelligible). I've never seen assurance described that says that you must place your trust in the fact that you prayed the prayer and you believe. That doesn't guarantee assurance. Assurance is by what pastor brought forth in the Word and that is by the work of your life. (unintelligible) That worker of iniquity never once said, "But I was sure! You gave me assurance."

Tim: No, He was drawing it out of the fact, He was there with God's people, did some mighty works, we cast out demons, we spoke in tongues. (Incomplete thought) And you know, you get at the end too, and you've got judgment day in Matthew 25. Isn't it interesting? "I was naked. You clothed Me." "I was naked, and you didn't clothe Me." I was pointing past you, brother. He doesn't care. He's not even listening. Anything else before we stop? Okay.

(from the room) Just to finish it off, Paul talks about you were delivered by grace through faith - you were saved by grace through faith. That same thing that you were saved by, continue in that same thing as well. (unintelligible) It's not about the reflection of who you are, but who He is. It's Who God the Father sees, which is Christ in His righteousness upon your life, and not your own self.

Tim: And I still have faith to this day 20 years later that I don't know anywhere else to go when I'm in trouble. And I'm in trouble pretty regular - like hourly. Amen. Good night.