

# Salvation & Sanctification

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Date: 22 February 2026

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[ 0 : 00 ] Up until this point, we have been looking at matters which can be discussed in a historical context. Matters which have their rootings and findings in things that are even testified to and acknowledged by the world.

When we studied the composition and construction of the Bible, for instance, there are Bible scholars, there are Bible teachers that are not necessarily believers, some of them agnostics. Even others who profess atheism can still acknowledge the writing and the historical context of Scripture. When we begin looking at the church, we can see church history and we can see its foundations and the beginnings and the matters that take place very early on in the formation of the church.

When we begin looking at historical Baptists, much the same way, while it is harder to pinpoint where the Baptists actually began, we can look and see what Baptists are, what their distinctives, as we call them, what they are that seem to stand out throughout history.

Not necessarily defined by a particular denomination because we do know even in Southern Baptist life or Baptist life, there are many variances because the umbrella can get very large.

[ 1 : 15 ] But we can at least keep it to a concept that we can say, yes, this is something that we can see and we can validate and we can look at the history books and we can understand that this is what this is. The topic this morning, while it is the most basic of them all, is probably the most difficult and can be one of the most controversial.

We would seem to think that it shouldn't be, but it absolutely can be. Many church splits and many church arguments have really centered around the matter of salvation.

Many of us, if I look across the room, because I know your stories and some of you know my stories, come from varying backgrounds of how this one central matter was taught.

How we were instructed in how we can live. And because of that, it is also one of the hardest to pinpoint and to pin down and say, this is what we're going to do.

It is probably the hardest one for me to prepare for, the hardest one for me to put slides together for. And therefore, you're going to be a little bit more subject to a little bit more teaching in what I've worked out in my own thought process, as opposed to work it out to its fullest measure.

[ 2 : 25 ] I haven't been able to do that with any of them, and my aim has been to at least start us thinking. That we would be a thinking people. That we would not just accept things because, ah, well, that's what we think they are.

That's what someone told us. But rather, we would have to think through these matters. One of the matters that we have to think deepest about is salvation and sanctification. But let's start it out very quickly.

Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, 3, A little bit later, he says in the 8th verse, So from this, we see that salvation is a necessary event.

It's something that has to happen. You cannot see the kingdom of heaven without it. We also see that it's something that bears evidence. It is something that we, as he says, you can see the effects of the wind.

So you can see the effects of salvation. It is testified to by the effect it has on the individual's life. But you see, the salvation event itself is a mystery.

[ 3 : 31 ] He said the wind blows where it wants, and you may see the effects, but you don't know where it came from. You don't know where it goes. So this, in essence, is the mysterious element of salvation. Why is one person touched by the word while someone sitting right next to them is not touched by the word?

Why can people sit under the same exposition of scripture or read the same text before them? And some are moved to repentance and salvation. Others walk away from it with no feelings whatsoever.

It's because it is a mysterious event. And we see that salvation is the work of the fullness of the Trinity. We know that. He says they are born of the Spirit. Paul testifies to that reality.

We must believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. But we're also told elsewhere that it is the Father who draws. So the question that we have to try to answer, and the one that really gets us in more trouble than any other, is what are the means of salvation?

That is, how is an individual saved? What is really the road map, if you will, to get to it? Is salvation something that we must work to obtain? These are the questions we have to ask ourselves.

[ 4 : 36 ] Is it begun at our baptism? As some faiths teach, that baptism is not only your entrance into the church, but it is also the beginning point of your salvation, and therefore your involvement within the congregation and the church throughout the remainder of your life, and your faithfulness to adhere to that throughout the remainder of your life, will eventually lead to your full and final salvation.

So baptism introduces you into the aspect of the taking of a Eucharist or communion, which is a continuation of the work begun at baptism, and your faithfulness and adherence to all the creeds and doctrines and teachings of that particular church may and can eventually lead to salvation. Is it a reward for anything we may do? Is it a work? And since we do this work, we are in turn given salvation. That is an aspect that I grew up with.

There's something you must do to be saved. Is it something that we partner with God in? Is it that we, is a combination of faith and works? These are matters we have to think about.

Does God pick up where we fall short? When we've done all that we can, then is God there to step in and to fill in the gap and to bring us to the fullness? These are things that historically Christians have wrestled with.

[ 5 : 55 ] And know it or not, you've wrestled with it in your own mind and wrestled with it in your own thinking. Or is salvation completely by and through God's gift, a free grace, a free gift received by faith alone?

Is it completely his work accomplished by the person or in the person of Jesus Christ? And are all of our efforts, as Paul would say, filthy rubbish, or in our goodness, counted as rubbish in his sight? What aspect do we have in our means to salvation? Why is that so important? And I get this a lot of people say, well, I don't, why are these matters important?

Why do we have to talk about them so often? And at times, I mean, I don't mind saying this. My family has been bored when I've had another brother around me that wants to talk about these things. And sometimes they're like, man, this is kind of, this is too much.

I don't really want to think on these things. But why are they important? Why do you need to know not only you are saved, but the means of your salvation? And why does it have such an influence? Because how you perceive salvation dictates every other aspect of your Christian life.

[ 6 : 58 ] It just does. There's no other way around it. How you understand the salvific event and the moment of your salvation dictates how you live the rest of your life, knowingly or unknowingly.

How we perceive salvation determines how we understand the work of Christ on the cross. What exactly did he accomplish there? The work of faith in the believer. Why do we do good works? Why are works evident in our life?

How you perceive your salvation dictates how you see your works. The security of your salvation. Can you absolutely be secure to know that you are saved?

And along with that, the assurance of your salvation. Can you know for all of eternity? You say, pastor, those are the same thing. No, assurance is the confident acknowledgement that I am always going to be saved.

Security is the fact that I know in this present moment that I am saved. My salvation is secure. So how we understand the salvific event, how we understand salvation, and the means of salvation really dictates all of that.

[ 8 : 03 ] Because this is how we get into all these great questions. There's a book in my office. If you were to go look at it, it's written by a pastor. It's a very small book.

And it seems really kind of offensive in its title. But the title is Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart. And it seems very offensive.

Now, he's got great theology. He's got great doctrine. And I understand the premises of why he wrote that. But the necessity to write such a book is because we have such a weak understanding of salvation.

And I'll give you the premises of that in just a little bit. Why that title is really offensive on the front end, but why it really means so much. By the way, I gave that book to my wife to read at a point, okay?

I just did. And I've given it to other people to read. And not so she could look at it and say, okay, I think it's right. But it's not just a matter of a personal opinion there.

[ 9 : 06 ] But it is something that has to be settled and you need to know it. So we need to understand the starting point of salvation. Where do you start with salvation? Ah, so the starting point of salvation is with a prayer and raising of my hand or filling out a card.

No, really it's not. It's why theology matters. When we start talking about theology or systematic theology and things like that, people's eyes start to glaze over and their brains start to go numb. And they're like, I don't want to talk about that. That's boredom. But theology, which is just the study of God, absolutely matters. It absolutely matters. It is essential. It is a matter that you work through in your mind.

It is a matter you work through in your heart. It is not something that you necessarily have to work through in a book. But it is kind of the root and the cause for this eight essentials class. It is because we want to lay kind of the bedrock for theology to make people start thinking through things so that they can write out this is what I believe and this is why I believe it.

This is what I believe about these aspects. Some have said, well, Baptists are very weak in theology. And I would disagree with you very wholeheartedly in that because historically Baptists are the strongest in systematic theology than any other denomination.

[ 10 : 14 ] Baptists are weak in creeds. They are weak in church councils because they do not put a lot of adherence to creeds and councils. And so they do not have many statements and professions and all of these written out creeds.

But Baptists have historically written more systematic theology than any other denomination in any other faith. Your greatest works right now. If you were to go back into my office, I could give you probably about four to five different volumes of systematic theology written across different genres, written across different ages.

And we have to be careful. I looked up one denomination's book of systematic theology and it said, well, we don't necessarily have one. But if you just adhere to these prayers and you follow these observances and you do all of the things that we tell you to do and you repeat these prayers and you're about 90% of the way there.

And that's a Christian church. It's a Christian faith. I'm not going to call it out here because it's not the place and time for that. But if you just follow this book that we give you and you walk through all these rituals and you're 90% there, you don't need to know why you're doing it.

Just do it. Well, be careful there. Okay? That's really misleading. So, Baptists, because they've placed such adherence to biblical, and I don't necessarily mean Southern Baptists.

[ 11 : 24 ] I said Baptists. The words matter. They've placed so much emphasis on Scripture that they have walked historically through so much systematic theology. And why does it matter?

Because salvation always begins and is limited by our concepts of who God is.

We don't really have time to flesh all of this out. But your salvation, like it or not, is rooted in who God is in your eyes.

Is he the thrice holy, holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? Is he both just and righteous and loving and merciful?

Is he the sustainer of it all, the creator of it all? Who God is is the starting point of salvation.

Immediately following that is the creation of God.

What is man's purpose? This is why some catechisms are very important. What is the purpose of man? And some of you can answer that immediately because the greater catechism, the first response to that question, is what is the purpose of man?

[ 12 : 28 ] And it is essentially in a nutshell to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all your soul, with all your being, all your mind, all your strength, and to serve him in all of our ways and acknowledge him in all of our living. So your purpose and God's reality, who God is and what is your purpose, to worship him and to serve him, that is straight out of the book of Genesis, really matters.

Okay? It absolutely matters. What effect did the fall of man have? This is essential. When man, Adam, took from Eve and ate of the fruit of the tree of the garden, we call it the fall of man, what effect did the fall have?

Did it just give Adam and Eve the consequence of sin or was that an inherent sin now? Some of the questions we answered Sunday night kind of dealt with this. What was the really grand effect of the fall of man?

Are you a sinner because you do bad things? Are you a sinner because you inherited that from Adam and Eve? Is it a generational issue?

Or is it just because of the bad things you do? See why this matters? Because if you are a sinner because you do bad things, well then if you stop doing those bad things, you're not a sinner. But if you're a sinner to the very core of your being because you were born in sin, because you inherit that generational sin because of the fall of man, now all of a sudden salvation is not just about stop doing bad things.

[13:49] Salvation is something I need to be changed. Something in me has to be transformed. So it is, the next thing there is what effect does that sin have on mankind?

What did the work of Christ on the cross accomplish? What exactly did he accomplish on the cross? You need to think through those things. Again, I'm not trying to answer all of them for you here. It would take me more than eight weeks just to work through this list. But what did the work of Christ on the cross accomplish? And what role does the spirit play in salvation? How does God work out salvation?

Theology matters. And as we think through these things and as you read scripture, it matters. It matters. We don't have time to go over the biblical teaching. We don't have time to go over all of this.

I will tell you just a little bit of my story as I make my way through this. When I was about 19 years old, I guess it was around 19 years old, I got challenged by an individual asking me.

[14:54] Later on, he would become my mentor in the faith. Some of you know that. But he asked me, made me really mad. I was a 19-year-old husband. I was a father by that time. And I was sitting at a church retreat. And he looked at me.

He said, Billy Joe, do you know that you're saved? I said, yeah, I know I'm saved. He said, no, do you know that you're saved? I said, yes, I know. He said, no, I'm asking, do you know that you know? I said, yes, I did this. He said, wrong answer. He said, you're telling me something you did. He said, do you know that you're saved? I said, well, I think so. He said, well, I want to move you beyond think so. So he challenged me. He says, what do I want you to do? He said, I want you to open up the Bible. I want you to start reading the Bible.

And I want you to pay attention to every verse that talks about salvation. I just want you to read it. And I said, OK, well, being a 19-year-old young man, my motives weren't necessarily pure. My motives were that I was going to prove him wrong. So I said, well, I don't really understand scripture, but I can read it. So I started by the time, fast forward a little bit, by age 20. And I've still got this Bible.

[15:50] It's back there in my office right now. He told me to start in the book of Romans. Some of you know that in my story. So I started in the book of Romans. It's not where I tell doubters to start right now, by the way. So start in the book of Romans. Wanted me to jump into the deep end really quick.

And so if you were to go back there now and you were to take that Bible, and it's red. It's on the shelf. I've had it since I was a young child. And if you were to pull it off the shelf, the book of Romans would fall out. As a matter of fact, all of the writings of Paul would fall out.

But if you were to look at it, and there's also a green spiral, one of those little note beds that's in my desk drawer. And you were to pull it out, you would see all the writings and the highlighting and everything. And all the scriptures I would write down.

What does the word of God actually say about salvation? And this is how God began to work in my heart. It's how God began to work in my mind. It's salvation. Again, working through those things. Is this something I do?

Is it something that I receive? Is it something that God partners with me in? And really quick, we see that in the book of Ephesians, it says, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

[16:47] It is the gift of God, not as a result of work, so that no one may boast. So my testimony of this, well, I did this. That was the problem. I was boasting. Salvation was rested upon something I had done.

And so when I come across this verse, it says, so that no one may boast. I'm like, wait a minute. That means I have no part in it. And therefore, it says in Romans 5.1. Romans 5 is a great chapter. We don't have time to get into this. You can go look it up on the church's website as we preached through Romans years ago.

And maybe the Lord allowed us to come back to it. But as we make our way through the book of Romans, Paul sets up so much the first three chapters. And then the fourth chapter begins to introduce it. And then the fifth chapter, he throws this out here and says, Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So what we see in just really the entirety of biblical teaching, and I know I can be questioned on some of this. I got questioned on it Sunday night. And the question Sunday night came from the book of Acts.

I believe it was the 26th chapter when Paul is giving his testimony. And in giving his testimony, Paul says that he was commanded by Ananias who came to him and said, Get up and be baptized for the washing away of your sins.

[17:59] And so he was obedient. He got up and he was baptized for the wording there is for the washing away of sins. So the question was, Paul says that his sins were washed away at baptism. So there was something he did. Now my response to that was, well, let's let the man himself talk about how salvation actually happens.

Now we have one instance where Paul in context is talking about baptism. And in his context of Jewish culture, to wash away sins means something totally different than it does in our English and Western mindset of thinking.

But if we really want to see what Paul thinks about salvation, just turn to the book of Romans. And what you find in the book of Romans is nowhere in the book of Romans does Paul say anything about the necessity of baptism for salvation.

Nowhere does he say, and you were baptized, then you were saved. And so if it is his testimony that we're basing our argument upon, that we have that work for salvation, then let's let the man himself really get into this discussion about salvation.

And we find it in the book of Romans and over and over again. As a matter of fact, Paul tells us salvation is completely by faith in Jesus Christ and from any work of man. He does in every one of his letters.

[19:09] It is a free gift of God given, not earned. In fact, it says there in the fifth chapter that man cannot do anything for it since, in verse 6, we were still helpless.

In verse 8, we were still yet sinners. And in verse 10, it says we were God's enemies. That's where salvation found us.

Right? It is absolutely essential we understand that. These are big rock issues. And we'll see why in just a moment.

And we'll understand why this is such a big rock. Now, am I so narrow-minded as to think that some people who came different paths and different ways in the Christian faith, and maybe their doctrine is a little bit different than mine, are they absolutely lost and condemned to an eternity in hell?

I'm not going to go that far and say I send that. I think that some people have misconstrued their salvation event, and therefore they have lived with the results of that the rest of their life. And the results we'll see in just a moment.

[20:13] Okay? I believe true individuals that are in the Scripture, in the Bible, looking to find salvation through Jesus Christ, that we will be amazed at those people that we find around us.

We're not going to be saying, oh, well, we've got it all figured out, because again, salvation is a major doctrine, but we're limiting it to our finite understanding.

But what is faith? Salvific faith is so much more than just a mental acknowledgement of a fact. It is not saying, yes, that's true.

And we know that because it says the demons believe and tremble. Okay? The demons believe that Jesus is who he says he is, so much so that it causes them to tremble, yet we also know that demons are not saved.

Over and over again in Scripture, we find people who give mental acknowledgement to the reality. We will be confronted with that this morning. When we look at Mark chapter 11, starting in verse 27, we'll see that the priests and the temple, all the temple leaders say, by what authority?

[ 21 : 23 ] So they acknowledge Christ had authority. They give him mental extent, acknowledgement that he definitely is doing something different, but there is no salvation there. It is rooted, salvific faith is rooted and rested in the person of Jesus Christ.

Faith is not in facts. Faith is in a person, and that's totally different. The position of your faith is different. It is a turning away from sin and to Jesus.

It is doing something. Salvific faith is faith that takes actions, and it admits one's inability and inadequacy to save oneself.

So salvific faith is this acknowledgement, true salvific faith is this acknowledgement that I cannot do anything to be saved. And it admits that reality.

Since I'm helpless, I'm an enemy of the Lord God Almighty by who I am to the core of my being, I can't do anything, and salvific faith says, but I put my faith in Christ.

[ 22 : 33 ] Faith is not in my abilities. Faith is not in the work I can accomplish. Faith is not in my connection to any church. Faith is not in... Now, how all of that works, it would, again, take us weeks to work it out.

One of the Baptist distinctions is we believe in a regenerate church membership. The word regenerate or regeneration means to be made new. Well, how does regeneration happen? Regeneration is an act of the Lord God Almighty where he regenerates or he makes new the individual, and at the same time that regeneration is taking place, and also there's this moving of the heart, an individual responds in faith.

So, I mean, I don't have time to get into how all that takes place, but these are matters you can think through. You know, is faith the first... Is it the work of the individual, or is it the drawing of the Father?

Is faith the first work that the believer does? So, without faith, I can't be saved. So, do I take the faith? Well, the short answer to that is, well, no, you would never have faith because none are righteous.

No, not one. The heart of every man is desperately wicked. Again, Romans chapter 2 and 3 and following, that there is nothing within us that longs for God. We have no drawing, but we are drawn by the Spirit to the Father through the love of Jesus Christ.

[ 23 : 45 ] So, the initial act of salvation always, again, has to be rooted and rested in the fact that it is God is the initiator of salvation.

These are important. He starts it. You say, well, no, no, pastor, for you to understand, I heard a word that was preached, and I jumped up, and I responded to the altar call, or I opened up the word of God, and when I was reading the passage, conviction settled on my heart.

Right, but who moved the pastor to deliver the message? Who authored the book of Scripture that you opened up? Who stirred your heart? Naturally, natural men, this is, again, your understanding of man, if we agree with Paul that the heart of every man is desperately wicked, that naturally we have no inclination towards holiness, we have no inclinations towards reading the Scripture, but we are drawn, and we are compelled.

That drawing and compelling is from the Lord God Almighty, and therefore, he is the initiator of the salvation event. This is important, because now we get to the second reality.

We don't have time to go through all of it, but absolutely no work of man involved in salvation. Now, I'll show you why in just a few moments, but sanctification, on the other hand, is something totally different.

[ 25 : 10 ] Salvation is what positions us for security and eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sanctification is what prepares us to be with him.

It is where Paul says that I am not yet what I should be, but I am pressing on towards what I will be. It's the not yet, but pressing on. We use the book of Exodus, and when we went through the book of Exodus, we talked about this, that one cannot properly understand their salvation event without a grasp of the book of Exodus, which seems strange to us, but when we look at the book of Exodus, we see that God took notice of the nation of Israel.

God took notice, and he sent a man to the nation of Israel and Moses. God provided atonement for the nation of Israel through the Passover lamb, and then God delivered the nation of Israel through

the parting of the Red Sea.

So in a moment, he took them out of Egypt, and so we understand that's salvation. In a moment, they walked out of there. In a moment, they plundered, and the captives were let free. In a moment, they were saved because God took notice of them.

God called Moses. God provided a sacrifice. God did all the work, and if you remember the story, they were going, what's wrong with you? You people are making this hard on us, and it was difficult, and they were working out, but all the time, God was doing something, and in a moment of time, they walked out of Egypt, and they were absolutely free.

[ 26 : 32 ] But what does it say in the book of Exodus? He brought them out that he may take them in. Remember that? I said, don't lose that sight. He brought them out of Egypt that he may take them into the promised land.

So the salvation was the beginning of the work. They were saved in a moment, but it took 40 years in the wilderness before he could bring them in. Sanctification is the wilderness.

Right? Sanctification is what goes on when we are not yet, but we're pressing on. Sometimes we're walking in circles. So scripture is clear that salvation is a gift from God given fully and completely in a moment.

I believe in instantaneous salvation. And I've got scripture we can look at that that I am saved in a moment. However, sanctification is the gradual process in which both God and the believer work as one grows in Christ's likeness.

So now here's our responsibilities. It is progressive by nature. I believe in instantaneous salvation and progressive sanctification. That is, I believe in the moment when God redeemed me and saved me.

[ 27 : 46 ] He set me free for all of eternity. But I also believe that in that moment he did not make me instantly what I should be. And the reason I understand that is because there's still this flesh nature that's beside of me.

Romans chapter 7. We've got other writings of Paul. Paul refers to the saints at Corinth and then the whole book of Corinthians. First Corinthians, he's admonishing them. So if they are saints, it's positionally, but he's also trying to sanctify them practically, right?

Get rid of this. Don't do that. You shouldn't be doing this. Why are all these things going on? So we understand that. So it is progressive. The believer is not what they once were. We are positionally something different.

And equally so, we are not yet what we shall be. Listen, friend, this is why this is important. If all you were ever meant to be as a believer, it happened to you at the moment you were saved, then there would be no spiritual growth.

This is why discipleship is important. This is why, you know, sitting under proper teaching is important. This is why surrounding yourself with great teachers and great mentors and great leaders of men and women around you, people that would influence you is important.

[ 28 : 56 ] It's also why it's important that you do that for others. It's because we are pressing on. We find our fulfillment and sanctification process only and finally when we're in the presence of Jesus Christ.

Only then will we be made perfect and whole and complete and new. It is, in a nutshell, what Paul says, to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. It is working out your salvation. I am thankful.

You've heard me say this before. I am so thankful that sanctification is a gradual process. because if the Lord God Almighty had told me in the moment he saved me everything that he has done to me since that moment, I probably would have ran away.

There are matters that I didn't want to give up then, but the longer I'll walk with him, the more I'll walk with him, there are things that I choose to give up and there are some things that he takes away. Right?

It is the working out who I am positionally. This is why we have to be careful when we have new believers, that we ought to continue to challenge them and encourage them.

[ 30 : 06 ] We ought to remember them in their walk, but we also ought not to expect them to be where the mature saint already is. So while Paul could say, I can eat whatever I want to eat and praise the Lord for it.

You know, if you put a steak before me, I don't care if that steak was a part of some meat that was offered to an idol. It doesn't matter to me because that idol is not important. I know there's no such thing as false gods and I'll be thankful God gave me that T-bone.

He said, but, if there's a weaker brother in front of me, I'm going to do without. I'm not going to judge my weaker brother because he can't do it. I'm going to choose not to do it and wait until he can because Paul says, he's not where I'm at yet.

And so this is why we have to understand this sanctification process. There's a lot to be worked out. There's a lot to be fleshed out there. Again, I'm just starting the thinking on this. Okay?

I'm starting your mind. So when we look at this, salvation happens instantaneously. Sanctification happens progressively. You ought to be maturing and you ought to be growing.

[ 31 : 11 ] I ought to be maturing and I ought to be growing in Christ-likeness. Each and every day there will be times of growth, times of stagnant, times of growth, times, it's kind of like a step, but we should never backslide.

We are given the position of the Holy Spirit to help with this. Almost done and we'll have questions. I told you this and it's a little bit more condensed. What about assurance of salvation?

And this is something that's a big one. Is it possible to genuinely know that you're saved? Now before I get into this, let me go ahead and admit, let's go ahead and confess this.

Doubts are a reality in every believer's life. If you read scripture, you'll find that John the Baptist was a bad, a big time proclaimer of the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming.

He said, he must increase and I must decrease. He was baptizing before, but you also know that when John the Baptist was put in prison, he sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was the long expected Messiah. John the Baptist had a moment of doubt.

[ 32 : 23 ] Are you the one we're looking for? I mean, at his baptism and even after that, John the Baptist says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Just a little bit later, he's in prison and John the Baptist sends his disciples, those who had sat around his teaching and said, go ask Jesus if he's the expected one.

Jesus didn't chastise him, didn't rebuke him, said John, what's happening with you? What's going on with you? He says, tell John what you've seen. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the sick are healed, the dead are raised to walk in newness of life and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

What Jesus is saying is I fulfilled every command of scripture, I'm doing everything scripture said the Messiah would do. Go assure John with the fulfillment of scripture. And then, it is after that, after John's doubts that Jesus declares that John was the greatest man born among women.

After he doubts. That's astounding. When we read history, we know that some of the greatest people and individuals that have ever been used by the Lord God Almighty have had seasons of doubt.

Charles Spurgeon used to refer to them as those dark moments of the soul. He would say the darkest hours always proceed the brightest dawning of the day. That as a pastor, he preached, he's got more recorded sermons, more written sermons than any other preacher in history.

[ 33 : 48 ] He's called the prince of preachers and yet he had moments of doubts. Over and over again we find that individuals have that. To doubt is to be human. It is to understand.

It is to be limited in understanding. You say, Pastor, have you ever doubted? Yes, I'll just go ahead and let you know that there have been moments where I have sat in this pastor's office with everything around me and say, Do I really believe everything I proclaim publicly?

The enemy sits on my shoulder, he whispers in my ear and there are moments of self-inspection, if you will.

Do you really believe this? And so what I do is I go back and I don't say, Well, what do I feel like? What do I think? I go back and I open up the word and say, What does the word say? And he say, Yes, I believe this.

So is it possible to know? To know does not mean that we will never question. To know is to have an assurance. So how do we have that?

[ 34 : 54 ] John writes in 1 John, this is where, by the way, I point people who are looking to know if they are saved and people come to me and say, I'm doubting my salvation. I always point them to the book of 1 John. John's favorite word in 1 John is that you may know that you may know that you may know that you may know.

He's always talking about knowing. 1 John 5, he says this, These things I have written that you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

So evidently, it is possible to know you have eternal life. John liked to conclude his writings that way. In the Gospel of John, he concludes, I've written these things so that you may believe in Jesus Christ and believing in him have eternal life.

In the letter of 1 John, he says, I've written to these things who have proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ that they may know. Now, if you were to go back and read 1 John, you would see that he says a lot of things, that those who believe in Jesus Christ do not sin.

Then he says, Wait a minute, you mean we never sin? Well, I sin, so I must not be saved. But read the next chapter. If you say you have no sin, then you're lying. The first one is that they do not have a habitual practice of ongoing sin and they do not live out the same sins over and over and over again.

[ 36 : 05 ] But they are not saying that they never fall, they never stumble because if you do that, you're calling God a liar because God says all men are sin. If you believe in Jesus Christ, then you will love your brothers and sisters.

The love of the Father will resound within you. So if you cannot say you do not, you don't love your brother and yet love the Savior. So he says, there's all these proofs, if you will, these testimonies. So many have been asked throughout the ages the question regarding their salvation. Are you saved or do you know that you will spend eternity in his presence?

And all too often, the answer to that question is, I hope so. Now there's the problem. I hope so.

Hope so is a bad, bad, bad place to live. Because hope doesn't answer the longing of your heart.

[ 37 : 08 ] Adrian Rogers says, if one small part, and I added the parentheses because you have to read it in context, if one small part of your salvation depends on you, you will never live with assurance.

Think about that. This is why it's important to understand by what means are you saved. If just one small part depends on you, you'll never have assurance.

Just one. Mine was, well I went for it at the age of 15 and I was baptized. I was baptized, I went through some water and since I was baptized, I was declared that I would be in heaven forever.

And so what I did is I'd walk down the aisle, I had heard a sermon that day, I'd walk down the aisle and I went up there and I got wet and after I got wet then I said, well I'm saved now because I've been baptized. But that was depending upon me because then the doubts come in.

But did I do it for the right motives? Was I just scared? I mean did I do it because I didn't want to go to hell? I mean what 15 year old do you know that wants to go to hell? Did I do it because I didn't want to go to hell or did I do it because I love Jesus?

[ 38 : 23 ] But just to give you a testimony, I didn't want to go to hell. If you say, well if you get baptized and you go to heaven where the streets of gold and everybody lives in mansions, if you don't you're going to go to hell where their worm does not die and fire does not quench.

Well I'm going to go get wet. I'll get wet for a few seconds so that I can spend eternity in the streets of gold, right? So what are my motives? Why did I do that? What was the reason behind that? So then all these doubts came in.

Why? Because it was dependent upon me. Why I did it. I wasn't doing it out of love for Jesus.

I'm just giving my testimony. I didn't love Jesus. I hated the thought of hell. That's just a testimony.

But scripture does not speak of that, right? We are not saved because of our fears of places. We are saved because of our love for the Savior. So independent upon me, all of a sudden there was a problem.

[ 39 : 24 ] So if one small part depends upon you, you will never live with assurance. Friend, I promise you, go to any denomination that has a works-based salvation and ask the adherents of it, do you know that you will spend eternity in heaven?

And their answer will be, I hope so. If I can do all these reads, if I can do all these confessions, if I can repeat, I hope to be faithful, I hope that in the end my life will be counted worthy, I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope, you will not live confidently in that hope because tomorrow you may stumble and tomorrow you may fall and what answer are you going to have when you mess up?

And if you say you don't sin, then you're calling God a liar. I have sinned this week and I almost, I'm not going to almost, I guarantee you everyone in this room has sinned this week.

Every one of us. Because that's the testimony of scripture. So what then? Hope doesn't answer it in that moment, right? Assurance in scripture is never rooted in a past event.

So if someone says, well I know I'm going to spend eternity in heaven because I repeated a prayer. Nowhere in scripture do you find that. This is a danger in the Baptist world.

[ 40 : 53 ] Let's pick on the Baptist for just a moment. The danger in the Baptist world is we have made salvation a one time past event and we have bypassed the sanctification process and discipleship process and we say, well if you repeat this prayer for me or if you pray this prayer or if you raise your hand or you fill out this card, friend, welcome to heaven.

You're going to spend eternity and we're glad you're there and we leave them there. And that's the responsibility. That's our responsibility, right? We leave them there and they never grow, they never are sanctified and so the remainder of their life they're going back and say, well I did this, I did that and they're pointing to the back.

But the problem is what happened back then may not make much difference of what happens now. It is always, in scripture, assurance is always proved by a present reality.

Now sure, scripture refers to salvation in three tenses. It is something that has happened to you, it is something that is presently happening to you, and it is something that will happen to you. You were saved in a moment in time in the past, you are being saved through the presence of Christ in your life and there will be a day of full salvation where you see him face to face as he is.

But the only assurance and the only security that a believer will ever have is if they can answer the question, am I trusting Christ as my hope of salvation today?

[ 42 : 17 ] That's the only assurance. Am I trusting Christ and Christ alone today? Am I not trusting in my works? Am I not trusting in my effort?

Is my only hope and my only confidence and my only trust placed in Jesus Christ alone? Nothing apart from what I am doing, regardless of how good I may be, is my hope.

Friend, when the doubt comes, we open up the scripture, Jesus says, he who believes in me has eternal life. Am I believing in him? Then the word of God promises that I have eternal life.

Has already passed out of death into eternal life. And it's the testimony of scripture. It's taking God at his word. You say, well how am I proving that belief?

Well that's a whole different topic. We don't have time to get into that. But is my hope and is my confidence and is my assurance rooted completely and solely in Jesus Christ?

[ 43 : 27 ] Is Christ alone what I'm longing for, what I'm hoping on, what I'm counting on? Listen, if Christ fails, I have nothing else. I've put all my eggs in that one basket.

Everything is there. And because I know that he does not fail and because that I know this brings assurance. Those that the Father has given me I have lost none.

You say, oh I believe you could lose your salvation. Well, what does it say in Romans? Let's go back to Romans 8. I believe in security of salvation. I really do and I don't have time to really work it out. But neither death nor height nor depth nor anything nor powers nor principalities there were able to statue out of the hand of the Savior.

We can get into all that. You say, oh, nothing can take me out of his hand but I can jump out of it. Listen, if the angels in hell can't pull you out of his hand then you're not strong enough to jump out of it.

Because he's got you. Your hope is in Jesus Christ, not in you. He says, oh, you don't know what I've done. Yes, but do you know who he is? See, this is the understanding. What did Christ accomplish on the cross?

[ 44 : 41 ] A full and final payment for the sins of those who put their hope in him. Not just enough to make you good and hope you do better but what did he accomplish?

Is it finished as he declared or did he just do part of it and the rest of it's up to you? Assurance only comes when you can answer the question, am I trusting in Christ and Christ alone today for salvation?

If not, you have no assurance and I would venture so far to say you have no salvation because the word of God is clear.

He's the only one that can save us. Any questions? I told you that one was going to get deep. Any questions?

Any questions? Making us think a little bit. All right. We will address the questions. We will do the same thing we did last time.

[ 45 : 48 ] We'll cover another three sessions or we may do four sessions and then we'll have a Sunday night where we do Q&A.; Yes, ma'am. Go ahead. I don't think there's anything wrong with raising up Ebenezer's stones of remembrance and help and say, okay, on that day I made a decision.

The danger is when you're trusting in a date that you made a decision in history and that's where the danger comes in. I can point to the place. I can point to roughly about the time frame. I know how old I was. I know it was a little bit before I turned 21. It's a marked memory in my life. It was a dramatic change. I know exactly where I was at. I know everything that was going on in my household.

I know what I was struggling with and I can point to that. I can't tell you the exact date. I know it was late at night. I know it was after it was about 1030. Everybody else in the house was asleep. I can acknowledge all of that.

But my assurance is not rooted in the fact that I hit my knees at 201 Canova Drive in Shelbyville, Tennessee probably July of 2001. That's not my assurance. The only reason I know that is I turned 21 in August.

[ 47 : 03 ] My assurance is not rooted in that. I know other people who cannot tell you the date they were saved. They struggle with this reality. Am I saved? I can't point to this time. I can't point back to this event.

There's no time in my history. They grew up in church and God gave them grace and mercy where they grew up in it and they said I've always believed Jesus was who he said he was. They had this mental acknowledgement this mental assent to it.

I mean for all of the overwhelming majority of my kids lives our kids lives I've been their pastor. They've heard these things their whole life.

Hunter was a few years old Hunter and Ethan were both a few years old when I became pastor. They've just heard these things all their life. They've grown in it. There's never been a time of rebellion that I would say.

They're like I can't remember a date. They wrestle with this assurance. That's where you have to say it's not rooted in an event in the past. It's rooted in a present reality. I think that is okay. The danger in that is we begin to be too confident in that date.

[ 48 : 13 ] It's good to raise that Ebenezer in my own life. I can say I was struggling and God answered my prayers. He did. That's a testimony that I can share with other people. But the greater question is what about today?

Am I trusting him as much if not more today as I was then? If I'm not giving it all because that prayer was Lord I'm going to give you my life. If I'm not giving him my life as much today as it was then then was that really valid?

salvation in scripture always produces fruit. We didn't have time to get into that but works come out of salvation.

By their fruits you will know them. And so if someone tells me I prayed this prayer and I repeated this prayer or I signed this card and we're not the final judge of people so I'm not their eternal judge but Paul does say that we judge one another.

So we can say by their fruits do I know you? And so I can look at this individual and say wait a minute I don't see love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, all the fruits of the spirit. I'm not seeing these in your life at all.

[ 49 : 22 ] I'm not seeing these being prevalent at all. And so then I would say you know friend I want to ask you are you really now I'm not going to say did you I'm going to say are you really trusting Christ as your savior?

Because if you do these things will come out. They're put in. to you. You are born. Just a moment ago my grandson was carried out of the room.

How do you know I have a grandson? Because you saw him. There was a moment in time when he was born but you know that I have a grandson because you saw him being carried out of the room. Right? There's visible physical evidence. Salvation always is a new birth.