

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 15- The Affections of the Heart

132. The Assurance of Salvation- Part 1

WAOY Thursday 01/10/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to begin a new section of our study and look at what the Apostle John taught about, "The Assurance of Salvation". So, let's read **1John 3: 19-24** together:

19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Now the greatest theologian that this country has probably ever known is a man by the name of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards lived in New England between 1703 and 1758. He was fifty-four years old when he died and although he lived here in America- he never lived in the United States- because his entire life was spent before we ever became a nation. And Edwards was a tireless Christian and he once said that because he had so much to do that day that he was going to have to spend no less than four hours in prayer.

And our great God used Edwards as the instrument by which- "The First Great Awakening" came forth in this country where an estimated one million souls were converted to Jesus Christ. Now Edwards was

not a physically imposing man- he was not charismatic, and he spoke in a high pitched, monotone voice. So in today's world of clever sound bites and emotional celebrity and technological sound effects and smoke machines- Edwards would probably not be very popular.

Many of Edward's sermons lasted well over two hours and at the height of his ministry- Edwards never had more than 300 people in his Church. But in his messages- Edwards emphasized the Glory and the Majesty and the Supremacy of God. Edwards also stressed Biblical accuracy; soundness of Doctrine; along with very practical helps toward the average person actually walking with God- so once again- by today's standard- which places more emphasis on style than substance- Edwards would probably not be a sought out speaker.

Yet what Edwards said and what he wrote is so deep and so profound and so true and so right that very few who have come after him have even come close to matching his ability to expound the Word of God.

And after 27 years of faithful service- Edwards was fired from the Church that his grandfather had built over the issue of Communion. Only ten percent of his congregation voted to keep him. Edwards taught that it was a horrible insult to God to allow unrepentant sinners to partake of Communion- but at the same time he also believed that all genuine believers should be able to eat at the Lord's table- even the uncivilized Indians. And those who fired him sent him off to live with the Indians that he seemed to love so much.

Now perhaps Edward's greatest and most famous sermon was entitled, "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*" which he preached in Massachusetts on a hot Sunday in July, 1741 and I highly recommend that every serious student of Scripture get a copy of this sermon.

This sermon was all about the foolishness and hopelessness of men who continue to sin against a holy God while they are one breath away from an eternity in hell. This sermon is credited as being the catalyst for the Great Awakening and at the conclusion of his sermon- some two hours and forty minutes after he began- people were so moved by genuine Holy Spirit conviction- that they ran down the aisles toward the altar screaming that they could smell the Sulphur of hell. But once again- I don't believe that many modern church leaders would have even allowed Edwards to preach that sermon in their Church.

God used Edwards to draw countless numbers of sinners to genuine repentance and saving faith in the Gospel- and the sermons that he

preached and the papers that he wrote powerfully called people to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ; turn from sin; embrace the authority of Scripture and live in personal holiness- which Edwards said was the only way that anyone can ever bring honor and glory to God.

Now the impact of Edward's ministry which began to spread throughout the thirteen colonies drew attention to the issue of the assurance that the Apostle John taught about in this very passage that we are examining now that all believers should have about their Salvation.

So in nearly every Church and meeting place and home during those years- the subject of the Assurance of Salvation was on everybody's mind and lips and heart.

Edward's call to completely abandon the world; embrace the Gospel fully; obey the Word of God from the heart; and persevere in holiness regardless of the consequences- absolutely overwhelmed many of the new converts during that time.

People who had been in Church for years began to question whether or not they were truly saved and those who for many years had thought there was no hope because they had "gone too far" began to attend Church and surrender to Christ.

You see, Edwards knew what so many have forgotten today that the purpose of sermons is not to psyche people up; it isn't to make them feel better about themselves; it isn't to build up their self- esteem or to motivate them to be great or to provide them with opportunities for them to spread their wings and fly. Edwards knew that true biblical preaching calls men to come to the Cross and die so that from that moment on- we may live as sold out bond slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ for His Glory alone.

Preaching that builds up Man and empowers Man and glorifies Man is extremely popular and exciting in our day- but I tell you it is the enemy of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Concepts like "self- esteem" and "self- fulfillment" and "self- gratification" are *not* Christian principles dear friends- they have *never* been Christian principles- and you can package them and market them and dress them up any way you want to- but they will *never be* Christian principles. You can't find these concepts taught anywhere in Scripture- except in the Garden from the mouth of the serpent as he cleverly and arrogantly rebelled against God.

So to those who enjoy a bubble gum; feel good; pop psychology gospel- Edward's message- which ignited the First Great Awakening- would seem hard; cruel; legalistic; mean spirited; unloving; and even unchristian to you. But God loved it and God honored it and God used it.

And in 1746- in response to all the discussions about Assurance- Edwards wrote a book entitled, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*. And this masterpiece deals with these six verses of **1John 3** that we just read and argues that the one single greatest cause of Assurance in the believers' heart about his own Salvation was the fact that genuine believers- who have been born from above- possess a life of holy, religious affections which Edwards describes as being, "a zealous and biblical inclination towards Biblical Righteousness which was proved by practical good works."

In other words, Edwards taught that what the Apostle John was talking about in this passage was that confident assurance came as a direct result of the believer witnessing his own love for God and his love for the things of God over and above any love or affection for sin and the world.

Now we have to understand, beloved, that Edwards viewed the Gospel and Church life completely different than many do today. Edwards taught that the greatest harm that any pastor could do to those in his congregation was not to offend them by something that he said, but rather it was for that pastor to offer any eternal comfort at all to anyone who was lost. To Edwards- giving a lost man the false sense of assurance was to doom that man to hell.

Edwards, like the Apostle John, knew that satan could and would come into the Church to bring about false conversions. So Edwards taught like John that it was very possible for a person to have an initial emotional interest in the Gospel and in Jesus and in the things of God and yet still not be truly born again. Edwards knew that satan is so crafty that people could think they were saved simply because they attended Church or because they had "walked the aisle" or "prayed the prayer" or because they had had an emotional experience or because they had mentally agreed with some information about God.

Edwards taught that- while all of these things are good- that *none* of them indicated true Salvation *without a radical internal transformation about who and what these people loved*. And this *internal*

transformation of love and affections and desires would absolutely manifest itself *externally* in how these people began to live their daily lives. Jesus put it like this in **John 14:15**:

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

And in **John 14:23**:

... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

And again, in **Luke 6:46**:

Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

You see, the Bible clearly teaches that genuine Heaven sent; Blood bought Salvation *always* results in a changed nature and a changed nature *always* results in our loves and desires and affections being changed and when our loves and affections are changed- what we do and how we live is also changed.

And that changed nature is internal and it is invisible. The changed loves and affections are internal and invisible. But the changed life- which is caused by the changed nature and the changed loves and desires- is *external* and it is very visible. And this is what Jesus meant when he talked about bearing fruit. Let's read **Matthew 7:16-29**:

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"

17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.

- 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'
- 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; *DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.*'
- 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.
- 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.
- 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.
- 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall."
- 28 When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;
- 29 for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

Just like the Apostle John- Edwards taught that without an *external* transformation- there has not been an *internal* rebirth. And John taught this because Jesus taught it. So we must be faithful, brothers and sisters to make sure that what we are teaching is the very same message that Jesus preached- **“Repent- for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”**

This is the issue that John is dealing with in these six verses and Lord willing over the next several broadcasts- what John taught here will become real and alive in your hearts.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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