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Sermon Notes

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Three Grounds for Assurance of Salvation

Romans 5:3-5

I. Assurance of Salvation

A. The Great Wedding Feast of the Lamb vs. Eternal Condemnation and Wrath

Do you have reservations? Is there a place with your name on it? How can you be sure?

B. Is Assurance Possible?

Council of Trent, January 13, 1547: Sixth Session, on Justification, Chapter 9

"No one can know, with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God."

C. Is Assurance Desirable?

Some teach that assurance of salvation is harmful...it leads to sinning boldly; rather, we must trust Christ today and keep walking with Him today. BUT...

D. God's Clear Purpose: To Assure Us of Final Salvation!!

1. So many passages give us final assurance

1 John 5:11-13 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

2. God wants us to know NOW whether or not we have eternal life

3. Yet many are uncertain and fearful

E. Paul's Purpose: To show the certainty of justification by faith alone

1. 5:1-11 Life of those at peace with God

2. Already seen: three grounds of assurance

- 1) Peace with God
- 2) Access into a permanent standing in grace
- 3) Joy in the hope of the glory of God

Now, Paul adds even more to give us a powerful ground for assurance of salvation

F. Paul's Realism: Facing Threats to Assurance

1. Threat #1: Justification is invisible... "It's all just words..."
2. Threat #2: Am I a real Christian? "How can I know for certain that my faith is real? There are fake Christians out there... how do I know I'm not one of them?"
3. Threat #3: Suffering in life... "How can God be at peace with me if I'm suffering all these trials?"
4. Threat #4: Will I persevere? "I believe in Christ NOW... but how can I know for certain I will finish my life believing in Christ? I've begun... how can I know I'll finish?"

G. The Terrible Threat of Sham Christianity

1. Self-deception

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

2. Jesus' warning

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Modern version: Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord... did we not attend church regularly, and walk the aisle, and get baptized, and pray out loud at meetings occasionally, and read the Bible from time to time, and work on various committees, and sing in the choir? And weren't we deacons and Sunday School teachers, and didn't we visit sick people? And He will say, "I never knew you! Away from me, you evildoers!"

Oh, the terrible threat of false belief!!

H. Sermon Outline: Three Points and a Poem

1. Assurance Reasoned Out in the Mind
2. Assurance Worked Out in the Life
3. Assurance Poured Out in the Heart

II. Assurance Reasoned Out in the Mind

A. Basis: God's Unchangeable Word and Awesome Promises

1. Remember Abraham's experience

Genesis 15:5-6 [God] took [Abram] outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

2. Justified by faith in the promise
3. God has made even greater promises to us through Jesus Christ

John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

B. How This Assurance Works

1. God promised everyone who hears Christ's word and believes God eternal life
2. I have heard Christ's word and I believe God
3. THEREFORE I have eternal life

C. God Labors to Extend Assurance Through Faith-Based Reason

1. Faith leads immediately to HOPE
2. God wants Hope to get EVEN STRONGER
3. So, He reasons with us through faith
4. Romans 5: REASON and LOGIC!!!

- a. listing what we have received

- We have been justified

- We have peace with God
- We have access into grace in which we stand
 - b. adding to the list, reasoning out implications
- “Not only this, but also...” (vs. 3, 11)
- Use of logical words to connect thoughts: “For...” begins both vs. 6, 7, & 10
 - c. “How much more...”

vs. 9-10 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

God is reasoning with us, persuading us to have MUCH MORE assurance, MUCH MORE hope, MUCH MORE confidence of our salvation

“If God gave the ultimate gift of His love when I was at my worst, HOW MUCH MORE while he give a lesser gift of love now that I’m His child?!”

This is faith-based reason, and it leads to assurance!

Illus. Best example: “Jesus loves me, this I know... for the Bible tells me so!”

III. Assurance Worked Out in the Life

A. The “Proving Ground” of Justifying Faith

- “Yes, but how do I know that my faith is genuine... there are counterfeit faiths out there!”
- James talks about “dead faith”, and “demon faith”... dead faith has no works, demon faith merely assents that something is true, but there is no love for God

Answer: the great laboratory of your life!! The “proving ground”

Illus: **Aberdeen Proving Ground**, 72,500 acres in Harford County, Maryland... Army’s oldest active proving ground... weapons systems have been tested in realistic conditions there since 1918.

Automotive Industry has its proving grounds as well: Automobiles are sent, for example, to the **Nevada Automotive Test Center** in Carson City Nevada... more than 3,000 miles of test courses and terrain conditions representing every possible condition found worldwide

What is the PROVING GROUND for justifying faith? It is the character and life of the person!!

B. Basic Premise: Justifying Faith ALWAYS Produces Fruit in the Life

1. Christ's Clear Statement

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Fruitless branches are dead... they may appear to be grafted into Christ, but they have no life in them...

Every truly saved person bears fruit... there is a definite effect of justifying faith on their life

2. Christ's Parable of the Soils

Matthew 13:19-23 **What happens when someone hears the message about the Kingdom of God?**

- Seed sown on path bears no fruit
- Seed sown in rocky, shallow soil bears no fruit
- Seed sown among thorns bears no fruit
- Seed sown on good soil bears fruit

Matthew 13:23 ***"He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."***

C. What Fruit? What Happens in the Heart and in the Life?

1. Attitude Fruit:

what you love, what you hate... what characterizes you

Galatians 5 "Fruit of the Spirit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control

Here in Romans 5: what we exult in

vs. 2 "We exult in the hope of the glory of God..."

vs. 3 “We exult in our sufferings...”

vs. 11 “We exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

Exult means “Rejoice over, boast in, get excited about, thrill over, talk about...”

Illus. Some sports fans can’t get enough of “exulting in” their team’s recent championship; they think about it all the time, brag about it to their friends, read about it, find their joy and happiness in it... during the championship game, they could be found getting all excited about their team’s success

This is a good picture of exulting; the Holy Spirit works in us so we exult in these three things:

vs. 2 “We exult in the hope of the glory of God...”

vs. 3 “We exult in our sufferings...”

vs. 11 “We exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

2. Action Fruit

- a. actual good deeds done by faith
- b. goods given to a needy brother or sister in Christ
- c. gospel shared, spiritual gifts used, prayers offered...

This is how it works:

- 1) Scripture says I will bear good fruit (in my heart and in my life) as a result of my faith in Christ
- 2) I see that fruit in me!
- 3) I am a true Christian!!

D. How God Works This Into Us

1. These changes are supernaturally produced in us by the Holy Spirit
2. HOW?? Almost always through trials... sufferings, tribulations
3. Paul’s Bold Thesis: Sufferings INCREASE Assurance in the TRUE CHRISTIAN

vs. 3-4 *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

E. How Suffering Increases Assurance

1. What trials?

a. James's blanket statement

James 1:2-3 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

b. trials common to humanity

Physical troubles (disease, aging, even the process of dying); financial trials (bills, tax payments, failed businesses, job loss, etc.); relationship troubles (marital or parenting griefs, troubles with neighbors, friends, co-workers, bosses, even total strangers)

c. trials particular to Christians

- Persecution because of Christ
- Temptation

2. How we are different from non-Christians

Any worldly person can rejoice during wonderful circumstances: a promotion at work, a healthy new baby, a wedding day, the purchase of a dream home, a clean bill of health from the doctor

Some worldly persons can rejoice **DESPITE** difficult circumstances: by looking at the bright side, by being philosophical ("I've had a good life;" "Death is part of life"), by being Stoic or tough... the "stiff upper lip"... "Hanging on in quiet desperation"

Only Christians can rejoice **BECAUSE OF** tribulations!!

- a. not rejoicing **DESPITE** the trials
- b. not merely rejoicing **DURING** the trials
- c. rejoicing **BECAUSE OF** the trials

vs. 3 "We boast in our afflictions..."

3. Starting with hope, ending with more hope

Note the progression: vs. 2 we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God

THEN trials come; they work perseverance in us; perseverance works proven character; character works HOPE in us

We start with hope, we end with STRONGER, TESTED HOPE!!

Illus. Like an upward spiral that takes you higher and higher in your assurance

4. What God works in us through suffering
 - a. God not mentioned in this progression, but HE works these things in us
 - b. tribulations WORK OUT in us perseverance

Perseverance is patience under trial... "stick-to-itiveness"

Illus. Ft. McHenry, "Star Spangled Banner"... September 13, 1814; Francis Scott Key

How? God will not let you give up!! The Holy Spirit continues to give you what you need to survive the trial

Illus. **Berlin airlift:** After WWII, Russian Communist troops blockaded Berlin from Allied trucks in 1948. Allied airlift continued from June 24, 1948 to September 30, 1949; on day before Easter Sunday, April 16, 1949, the Allies launched their maximum single day effort, the "Easter Parade"... 1,398 airflights, almost 13,000 tons of food, and supplies... less than one month later, May 12, 1949, the Soviets lifted the blockade of Berlin

In the same way, during a trial God sustains your faith, "airlifting in" everything your faith needs to endure

As a result, you build up perseverance!! Perseverance in faith is the greatest proof of justification... the three types of soils that failed in Christ's parable, all failed to persevere through the trial

- c. perseverance WORKS OUT proven character

This is also a great proof of justification: "I am a different person than I used to be... more patient, more Christlike, more humble, more heavenly-focused!!"

Illus. Tempered steel: when a blacksmith used his forge bellows to heat up a piece of iron to over 200°C, puts it on his anvil and pounds on it with his huge hammer, then quenches it in a bucket of water, he creates a piece of hardened steel... but the steel is BRITTLE; when he does this carefully at just the right amount of time at just the right temperature, and quenches it for just a short time, he can work that steel to an incredible level of toughness... useful as a sword which will never lose its edge

God is a master blacksmith... working in us just the right mix of trials and soothing quenches; the end result is

vs. 4 “proven character”

Character that is godly, Christlike, tested and proved over years of walking through the fires of tribulation

Not bitter or angry, but blended with a humble wisdom that comes from KNOWLEDGE:

“These trials are working God’s glory into me... I need them, they are a blessing to me, and I REJOICE IN THEM!!!”

5. How to behave during trials

- a. not like a robot: Yes, it hurts... we are real, flesh and blood, we weep, we hurt, we groan, we cry out in anguish and ask for the trial to end... but all the while we rejoice in our spirits because of something we know
- b. “knowing” the big picture

vs. 3-4 “What is more, we exult in our tribulations BECAUSE WE KNOW that tribulation works perseverance in us, perseverance works proven character in us, and proven character works HOPE...”

What is God’s ultimate purpose for me?

Romans 8 “conformed to the image of His Son

Ephesians 1 “holy and blameless in His sight”

Without the trials, I will stay immature as a Christian... I will rely on myself, and I will forget God; I will think too much about earth, and I will forget heaven. I will be sinful, worldly, fleshly, and lazy. With the trials, I will show myself to be a GENUINE CHRISTIAN!!

At the end of the trials, we still stand, trusting Christ... loving Him, believing in Him...

Then we can say “I’M REAL!!! I’M NOT A SHAM CHRISTIAN!!!”

Thus, we actually welcome the trials, because we know we need them

2 Corinthians 12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong

THIS IS EXULTING IN TRIALS... not exulting *in spite of* or *during* trials!!

The end result: HOPE

F. A Hope that Delivers No Shame

vs. 5 *“And hope does not disappoint, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has give us.”*

Illus. Hope that brings shame: German soldiers at Stalingrad trusted Hitler’s promises that he would rescue them

1. No shame in this life

Illus.: Testimony of martyrs: total courage, no shame, absolute certainty of salvation

2. No shame on Judgment Day

This hope will not ultimately disappoint us on the day of greatest testing and tribulation: Judgment Day

Summary: we start with hope through our faith in Christ; God brings trials into our lives that perform a strengthening work on our character; the end result is a far stronger hope at the end than when we began

Two types of assurance: what is reasoned out in the mind, what is worked out in the life

The final one is explained in vs. 5

IV. Assurance Poured Out in the Heart

vs. 5 *“And hope does not disappoint, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.”*

A. Direct Assurance from God to Us Through the Holy Spirit

B. God Simply Testifies to Us by His Holy Spirit

Romans 8:16 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

This is the most powerful of all when taken in conjunction with the others...

This is not reason, this is not logic or works... this is an experience of God’s love directly into your heart that you are a beloved child of God

We'll spend all next time on this one!!

V. Application: Do You Know This Love??

A. Do You Know It Through Reason?

"Jesus loves me, this I know... for the Bible tells me so!
Promises to me He's made, on His word my trust is stayed!"

B. Do You See It In A Changed Life?

"Jesus loves me this I know, for His power has changed me so;
every day He transforms me so that I may glorious be!

C. Have You Felt It Poured Out Through the Holy Spirit?

"Jesus loves me, there's no doubt, for the Spirit pours it out!
He has testified to me – I shall live eternally!

If you have, rejoice... and ask God to give you more and more assurance... nothing kills assurance faster than willful sin! Put sin to death, and assurance will rise again

If you do not see these things in your life at all, there's a very good chance you are not truly a Christian... for all the good works done at church, years of church attendance, and dollars given to church work CANNOT PAY FOR SIN...

We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone; ask Him to work a genuine salvation in you, that you may know it through reason, see it in your changed life, and feel it poured into your hearts by the Holy Spirit

Jesus loves me, this I know... for the Bible tells me so;
Promises to me He's made, on His word my trust is stayed!

*Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me
The Bible tells me so!*

Jesus loves me this I know, for His power has changed me so;
Every day He transforms me so that I may glorious be!

*Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me
His power changes me!*

Jesus loves me, there's no doubt, for the Spirit pours it out!
He has testified to me – I shall live eternally!

*Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me
His Spirit pours in me!*

Jesus loved and died for me, when I was an enemy
Now that I am reconciled, forever I will be His child

*Yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me; yes, Jesus loves me
Forever reconciled!*