**ASSURANCE OF SALVATION**

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. *Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day,* and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2Tm.4:6-8). In these verses, Paul makes it very clear that he was ASSURED of his salvation! Let’s think about WHY he (and we) can be confident of our salvation...

**The first assurance factor which God has provided is the *propitiation* of Christ.** The word “propitiation” refers to a sacrifice which allows mercy to be extended. If you and I got what we deserved (apart from any mercy), then we would all die (Rm.6:23). But there is good news! Christ came and died for our sins, and God is willing to accept His death on our behalf. In other words, His death is the means by which God extends mercy to the believer (Rm.3:25). John said, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1Jn.2:1-2). Indeed, without the shedding of the blood of Christ, there would be no remission of sins (Hb.9:22-26). Further, His blood is sufficient for ANY and ALL sin! Paul sets himself forth as an example of such, saying in effect that if HE could be saved, then ANYONE can (1Tm.1:12-16)!

**The second assurance factor that we find in Scripture is the *promises* of God.** Peter indicated that there are many “exceedingly great and precious promises” in the gospel (2Pt.1:3-4). Let’s notice a few of them. *First,* there is the promise of initial salvation from past sins. One who believes the gospel message and is baptized is promised salvation from past sins (Mk.16:15-16). If I have done this, then I KNOW and am ASSURED of salvation from past sins! *Second,* there is also a promise of future salvation on the condition of our continued faithfulness. Jesus said, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rv.2:10). Yes, I am quite aware that this means “be faithful – even if you must die,” but this would most certainly include a lifetime of faithful living! If not, why not? So, if I continue to live a faithful life, then I am assured by this promise that I am saved! *Third,* there is a promise of a way of escape for every temptation (1Cor.10:13). *Fourth,* If I fail to take the way of escape, I can confess my sins, with the promise that God will forgive (1Jn.1:9). It’s pretty hard to fail with all these promises to back me up!

**The third assurance factor revealed in the gospel is the *precepts* of Scripture**. While it is true that we are not saved by perfect law-keeping (Rm.3:20; Ga.3:10), this does not mean that we may ignore law! Law has a very valuable function: it serves as a “guidepost,” telling us what we should and should not do. Simply put, breaking law gets us in trouble; and keeping law keeps us out of trouble. Thus law-keeping is a form of assurance, because I know whether or not I am on the right path. This theme is woven throughout the book of 1 John. Notice a few places where John gives this type of assurance: 1 John 2:3-5; 1 John 3:14-19; 1 John 4:1-6; and 1 John 5:2-5.

**The fourth assurance factor I want to consider is the *prayers* of man**y. *Our own* *prayers* are very helpful – indeed they are essential! They assure to us “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Ph.4:6-7; cf. Ac.8:22; Ps.19:12). We may also solicit *the prayers of* *others* in our struggle with sin (Ac.8:24; Jm.5:16). Above that, we have *the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ,* who “ever lives to make intercession” for us (Hb.7:25). Finally, we have *the intercessory* *prayers of the Holy Spirit* (Rm.8:26-27). Some quibble with this verse, by saying it refers to our own (human) spirit; but this makes the passage nonsensical. How can my spirit intercede for me? The very word, “intercession” (i.e., to petition one on behalf of another), DEMANDS three parties: one interceded for (me/you), one interceded to (God), and an intercessor (Spirit). By definition, one simply CANNOT intercede for himself! While there is ONE “mediator” who died to bring God and man together (1Tm.2:5-6), there are MANY “intercessors” who pray for me (cf. 1Tm.2:1). With so many prayers being offered up for each of us, how can we fail?

The bottom line is this: God has made salvation available, and given us every possible advantage. He has given the **propitiation** for sin, a host of **promises,** the guidance of His **precepts,** and the **prayers** of many. How can we NOT be assured? In the final analysis, our salvation is a strong as our faith – which comes by hearing the word (Rm.10:17). Hence, the stronger my faith in Scripture, the more assured I am of my salvation! If we are unsure, we need to get our noses in the book, and strengthen our faith! What about you? Are you sure?

--Lanny Smith