

The Assurance of Salvation

Sunday, APRIL 5TH, 1987

2 Timothy 4:6-8

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

I'm going to talk to you today about “THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.” I fear that too often and I am guilty of this as well as other preachers, that we preachers feel inclined to do more reproving, rebuking, warning and correcting our hearers instead of giving them comfort. We neglect to encourage true believers and comfort true believers and comfort the people of God.

Our Lord said in Isaiah 40: 1 and 2; *“Comfort ye my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem.”* The Lord Jesus did; He comforted His weak, wayward and doubting disciples. On one occasion He said, *“Let not your heart be troubled.”*

They were so depressed and troubled. He said, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. If I and prepare a place for you; I will come again and receive you unto Myself.”*

He said again, *“I'll never leave you; I'll never forsake you; lo I am with you always, even to the end of the earth.”* Again He said, *“Because I live; you shall live.”* So, He spent much time comforting these troubled hearts and comforting these weak and doubting disciples.

I have chosen for my text today a Word from the apostle Paul found in 2 Timothy Chapter 4: 6 through 8. If you will, open your Bible to 2 Timothy 4: verses 6 through 8. In this text, Paul says; *“I'm ready to be offered; the time of my departure (or my death) is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them who love His appearing.”*

The apostle sets forth in this text an air of confidence. There is no doubting or fear here. There is an air of confidence and an air of assurance. In fact, first of all, he looks downward to the grave and shows no fear. Paul says, *“The time of my departure is at*

hand; I am soon to be poured out like a drink offering upon the sacrifice, the thank offering is about to be poured out; I am about to die.”

He says, “*The time of my departure is at hand*;” I am like a ship standing by the dock, all loaded. All the fuel is on board, people are on board, and the baggage is on board. All that needs to be done for the ship to be set out to sea is for the lines to be cast off. I am ready to depart; I am ready to sail out to sea and I’m not afraid.

Death is a solemn thing, especially if it is close at hand like Paul’s death. He said, “*The time of my departure is at hand*.” The grave is a chilling place. Have you ever stood before an open grave and watch the body being lowered into the grave? That is a chilling place.

Here is a mortal man who is facing death and is facing the grave, he said; “*It is at hand*”. Yet, he is not afraid; He is confident. I want to find out wherein he has this confidence and assurance. I want to know the source of it.

Then, not only does he look downward to the grave without fear, he looks backward to his life without fear. He surveys his past life. He said, “*I fought a good fight*; (I’ve done what I could do like a good soldier of Jesus Christ). *I believed, therefore I have spoken*. I believed His Word; *I fought a good fight*.”

Paul said, “I used all the gifts that God gave me. *I kept back nothing profitable unto the people. I have not shunned to declare all the council of God. I finished my course*, (the course or the way which was laid out for me by God’s predestinating providence and purpose). *I finished my course*. I covered the ground God appointed for me to walk and I have walked the path that He laid out for me and I am in sight of my goal.” He said, “*I have kept the faith*.”

“I held fast to that Gospel of God’s glory which he revealed to me in those early days. I have preached that Gospel which He committed to my trust. I have not added to or taken away from that Gospel of His grace in Christ Jesus. I am not afraid.”

Not only that, he looks downward to the grave without fear and he looks backward to his life and said, “I wouldn’t change a thing. God plotted it, planned it, predestinated it, and purposed it. I walked the course He designed for me.”

Paul looked forward to that great day without fear. Look at verse 8: He said, “*Henceforth there is laid up for me an inheritance, undefiled that fadeth not away, reserved*, (already mine, purchased and paid for by the death of His Son).” In other

words, he is saying; “It is already mine. It is reserved in heaven and it is reserved in Christ.”

“It is laid up for me.” What does *“laid up”* mean for Paul? It means a *“Crown of Righteousness.”* What are you talking about? Are you talking about the works that you have done and that you are going to be rewarded and it will be paid for? Oh no!

Paul never claimed to have any righteousness; he said, *“I am the chief of sinners. O that I may win Christ and be found in Him not having mine own righteousness which is of the Law but the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ Jesus.”*

This *“crown of righteousness”* is his Crown of Righteousness; it is Christ’s Righteousness. *“He is our Righteousness.”* Paul never claimed to have any righteousness. He said, *“I am less than the least of all the saints. I’m the chief of sinners. O wretched man that I am.”*

He also said, *“The things I would not do; I do and the things I would do; I do not.”* The *“crown of righteousness”* is that crown of holiness and righteousness which he has in the Redeemer Christ Jesus. He said, *“The Lord, the Righteous Judge shall give it to me in that day.”*

You see; we are not going to stand before some compromising God and compromising body at the judgment that will find better in us than bad. The Righteous Judge can be satisfied with nothing but perfection. This righteous Judge who sits on a righteous throne with unbending, inflexible justice, if He finds one flaw, stain or mark in you, He will have to banish you from His presence.

He says that this poor old sinner, *“who is less than the least of all the saints, this chief of sinners, this wretched man redeemed in Christ Jesus is going to one day stand before that righteous Judge. He is going to give to me that which He laid up for me from all eternity through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. There will be a crown of perfect holiness and perfect righteousness which He Himself is going to present to me.”*

David said, *“When I consider the sun, the moon, the stars, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?”* God is not only mindful of His people but He loves them. He not only loves them but He redeemed them. He not only redeems them; He is going to receive them. He not only receives them but He is going to receive them in perfect holiness and righteousness.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about the Great White Throne Judgment, the opened Books; think of it. Think of the whole assembled world. Think of the revealing of all secrets. Think of the listening angels, the character of the righteous Judge on the throne. There is an eternal heaven and hell waiting.

None of these things moved this man. None of these things shook him or disturbed him. He sees Christ! He sees Christ as his Atonement, Christ his Advocate, Christ his righteousness and Christ his salvation. Where is he seeing it? He sees it on that throne. Paul says, "God is my salvation and He will receive me. He will give me glory."

He said, "*Not me only but all those that love His appearing.*" Do you know something about His appearing? Read Hebrews 9 and you will find three appearances of Christ. "*He appeared on the earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*" It says, "*He now appears at the right hand of God as our Intercessor. Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin.*"

One day He bore our sins; one day He was made sin; one day He put away those sins and now He appears without sin. Paul says of all those who love that appearing "They are going to get a Crown of Righteousness too."

Here are four things that I want to deal with in this message of "Assurance of Salvation." This may interest you.

First: According to the Scriptures, those who believe Christ may have a strong assurance. Paul had a strong assurance; I read to you of his assurance in our text. We too, can have a strong assurance if we believe Christ in true saving faith.

I'm not talking about you being a church member or if you made a profession. I'm not talking about you signing a card or getting religion in an emotional, evangelistic campaign. I'm talking about you being brought by the Spirit of God to faith in Christ Jesus and having a love for the Son of God.

Second: You can have an assurance of your interest in Christ but I believe that a person may be truly saved, truly redeemed, and yet not enjoy a full assurance of salvation. I'm going to show you that in a moment.

Third: I'm going to show you, (the Lord willing), the assurance of salvation is a great benefit to you and me.

Fourth: I'm going to show you why we don't have assurance (even saved people):

First: According to the Scriptures, those who believe Christ may have a strong assurance of their interest in Christ. When I say this, that people may have assurance, what I then must do is prove it by the Word of God and then illustrate it. What does the Bible say? You who are faithful and have watched this program for a number of years know that this is my style of preaching. I will make a statement and then I will read it to you out of the Word of God. I finish by illustrating.

So, I say that according to the Scriptures, a man can have assurance according to the Word of God. Not an “I hope I hope I hope” or “When the smoke clears away and the dust dies down maybe I will be in heaven”.

No, a man can have assurance according to the Word of God. *“What saith the Scriptures?”* That should be our first consideration, whatever our subject is. If assurance is not taught in the Word of God then don’t say anything about it.

Listen to Job 19: 25-27; *“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”* That is confidence and that is Job writing under divine inspiration.

Listen to David: *“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.”* That is assurance! David is writing under divine inspiration.

Paul said in Romans 8:33, *“Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”* He said in verse 34, *“Who is He that condemneth? Christ died, yea rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

He said in Romans 8:38-39, *“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come nor any other creature can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

John said in 1 John, *“These things are written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”* Again, John says in 1 John; *“We know that we have passed from death unto life.”*

You may call assurance “presumption” but it cannot be presumptuous to believe God. It cannot be presumptuous to believe the Word of God. I like that illustration of the Centurion who came to Christ. He had a servant who was sick back at his house where he lived.

He came to Christ and said, *“My servant is grievously ill.”* The Lord Jesus said, *“I will go to your house.”* The man stopped Him and said, *“Oh no; there is no reason for you to go to my house.”* The man was a Centurion and was a man under authority and had authority. When he would tell a fellow to go, he would go. If he would tell a fellow to come he would come.

He told Christ, *“All you have to do is say the word and my servant will be healed.”* The Lord commended him and said, *“Great is thy faith; be it unto thee as you desire.”* This man believed the Word of Christ. That’s where you find assurance.

Look where Paul found assurance; Paul’s assurance was not in himself or in his works. You don’t find assurance by looking into your heart or looking unto the roll of the church. You don’t look at your deeds. Paul called himself the *“chief of sinners.”* He declared, *“Christ came to save sinners.”* That is where he found his assurance; it wasn’t in himself but was in Christ.

Paul had a deep sense of his own guilt and his own corruption. Do you know what he said? *“Where sin did abound; grace did much more abound.”* The grace of God is greater than all our sins. Paul cried, *“O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this body of death?”*

In the next verse, Paul says; *“I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord; I am delivered.”* When he looked at himself he said, “a body of death; I’m a wretched man.” When he looked at Christ he said, “Delivered.”

Paul knew that he was a frail man living in a frail tent or tabernacle. He said, *“If this tent be destroyed, (and it will), but I have a building, eternal, built by God in heaven. Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not be ashamed.”*

According to this Word, those who believe in Christ may have assurance. I’m going to tell you where you can find it; you will find it in His promise and in His Word and not in your deeds or in your doings. You won’t find it there. The more you look inwardly, the more disturbed, despondent and depressed you are going to be. You won’t see anything in your own heart but evil.

If you look to Christ you will see all the satisfaction of God's Holy Law; you see the cleansing, redeeming, purifying, atoning blood of the Son of God. You won't see it on a mercy seat, here below, but you will see it in heaven itself.

Second: I believe that a person may be truly saved; (I want you to watch this and stay with me); he may not enjoy full assurance of salvation. All of God's people, all of God's redeemed have faith in Christ and they believe Christ. All do not have full assurance.

The reason is because it is not the strength of my faith that saves me but it is the truth of my faith. We are not saved by the quantity of our faith; we are saved by Christ, the object of our faith. Salvation is not in the faith it is in the Person who saves. It is the One who fulfilled all that God requires for us.

You see; a weak, sickly, trembling hand can put food in the mouth. A man may have a frail, palsied, weak, sickly hand, but he can put food in his mouth. Another man may have a strong, muscular hand and puts food in his mouth. The hand doesn't satisfy the need. The hand doesn't nourish the body, the food does.

It doesn't matter whether my faith is boisterous, zealous, strong or weak. If my faith can lay hold of Christ, that is the important thing. The weakest of faith may justify it. You can look to Christ, believe on Christ and rest in Christ and be saved. It is His righteousness that covers; it is His blood that atones; it's His prayers that bring us to God. It is Christ that saves.

Suppose a man falls into a river, a rushing, rapid, river. Suppose I am a big, strong, individual who is standing on the shore. This man has fallen in the river and I come by; I reach out and lock his hand in mine. I lock his wrists and he locks his hand on mine. I have him! Is he saved? Yes, but he is troubled and he has a lot of doubts and a lot of fears, but he is saved according to my strength.

When will he have full assurance? He will have full assurance when I pull him up and he is standing on the shore. Is he safer here or there? He is just as safe there as here because I have a hold of him in both places.

That is what I am saying, our assurance is not in ourselves it is in Christ. Whether I am in the river of life or whether I am standing in glory with my Lord, it is Christ that saves me in both places. It is Christ that holds me here. It is Christ that presents me there. It is Christ that rescues me here; it is Christ Jesus that presents me there.

So, I can be perfectly safe and still have a troubled heart like that man. Just like that man when he said, "I've got you; don't let me go." I'm not going to let you go. The man is scared but I am not going to let you go. The man is afraid but I will not let you go. I'm your saviour; you're not, I am.

Now, the more confidence you have in Him who saved you, the more assurance you are going to have. That is exactly right!

You see; faith is the root, assurance is the bloom. You can have life without a bloom just so long you have a root. You can't have life without the root. You can have life without a flower. Oh yes; I have some flowers out there in my yard; they have roots but no blooms on them. They will bloom one of these days; they have life.

You can go out in the winter and there is that tree that looks like a dead tree. That tree is not dead; it just doesn't have any leaves. It doesn't have any fruit, but it does have a root. The root is where the life is. If it had no roots, I might put some plastic flowers on it. It is not alive.

That is what Job was talking about when he was in such a terrible condition. He was sitting there scraping his boils. He lost everything and it was gone. His friends cursed him and everybody deserted him. He said, "You don't see much out of me but the root is in me." Isn't that what he is saying, "the root in me?" The root is Christ and the root is faith. The root is life.

Let me illustrate this for you: Faith is that poor, trembling, sick woman, with the issue of blood for 12 years reaching out to Christ. That is faith.

Assurance is Stephen standing and surrounded by murderers. While they stoned him as he was lifting up his eyes he said, "*I see Christ at the right hand of God.*" That is assurance!

The faith is reaching out. That woman didn't have much assurance I'm sure; she had faith. Faith is what brought her to Christ. Faith is the dying thief saying, "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.*"

Assurance is Job saying, "*I know my Redeemer liveth.*" Faith is Peter's drowning cry, "*Lord; save me or I will perish.*" As he sank beneath the waves and the water came upon his face; that is faith. He said, "*Lord, save me or I perish.*"

Assurance is that same Peter, several years later, standing confidently and boldly before those Christ crucifiers at Pentecost. Peter said to them; *“This same Jesus whom you crucified, God hath made both Lord and Christ.”* He was daring them to do anything about it. That’s assurance!

Faith is that trembling voice, *“Lord; I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”* Assurance is that strong voice of the apostle Paul who said; *“Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”* That’s right!

When I speak of faith; I speak of life, the root. I’m talking about knowing Christ and being united with Him. When I speak of assurance; I’m talking about privileges, peace, rest and joy. I’m afraid that there are some that do not have this. I am confident that many do have that root.

You see; old John Newton had trouble with this. John Newton wrote:

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now I’m found
I was blind but now I see.

John Newton also wrote this lesser known hymn:

Tis a point I long to know
And oft it gives me anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?

Can a man talk like that and be saved? Yes sir; the root is in me!

Assurance of salvation will be a great benefit to you because assurance of our interest in Christ brings peace to the heart. Assurance of salvation brings joy and rest to the heart. Assurance and interest in Christ helps us to bear afflictions and trials. Assurance will support a believer under the heaviest bereavement.

Like David when his son died, he moped around and he wouldn’t shave, he fasted and he wouldn’t eat. He wouldn’t put on his nice clothes and he cried all the time. He came in and they told him the boy was dead and he straightened up and washed his face and shaved and put on clean clothes and went down to the temple and worshipped God. He said, *“Let’s have a feast.”*

Some of them said, *“What’s wrong with you? While the child was alive, you were weeping and now you are rejoicing.”* He said, *“I can’t bring him back; he can’t come back to me but I can go to him; the will of God has been done and I am confident.”*

Assurance will allow a man to praise God and thank God even in the most difficult circumstances. Assurance will support a believer in sickness and in death. It will release a man to labor and love and serve his Lord.

Here is the last comment: Why don’t many people have assurance? Listen to me; we know that *“Salvation is of the Lord.”* We know that Christ alone is our righteousness, right? We know that Christ is our redemption and our sanctification and our acceptance. Perhaps those, without even being aware of it, entertain notions or thoughts that justification and acceptance with a holy God has something to do with our works. Don’t we?

I know that *“salvation is of the Lord.”* I know that Christ died for my sins. But, there is no but about it; Christ died for my sins. I’m justified, I’m righteous, and my sins are atoned for and they are pardoned and put away.

Nothing I do before or after conversion has anything to do with my acceptance with God. We are redeemed by His blood, clothed in His righteousness and justified by His person. When we have our doubts and fears we are looking in our heart and not looking to Him; that is the reason.

When you look to Him you can’t doubt His sufficiency and efficacious power to save. *“He is able to save to the uttermost.”*