


MIDWEST

Pilgrim News

Summer 2021

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A detailed photograph of a chipmunk with brown and white stripes, perched on a moss-covered branch. The branch is adorned with clusters of bright red berries and green leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of green and orange, suggesting an autumn setting.

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the
man that trusteth in him. (Psalms 34:8)



From the Editor

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Acts 16:30-32 *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*

The question of salvation is one that many non-Christians have pondered. God's prevenient grace has left them disillusioned with sin and anxious to be at peace with God; but like the Philippian jailor, they do not know how to be saved. They need someone to share the Word of the Lord with them. If you are a searching non-Christian, or a Christian who simply wants to share the Gospel with an unbeliever, consider two principles that compose the foundation of God's redemptive work. Without them a seeker of salvation is certain to be disappointed.

➤ One must believe in the Christian God

This step may seem simplistic, but it is critical in receiving salvation. Since there are no gods beside the Christian God, (See Exodus 20:3, Isaiah 42:8, 45:5) it only stands to reason that one must acknowledge the living God's person and authority. To refuse to acknowledge God's person or to distort His identity in any way is to deceive ourselves and become guilty of idolatry-- a profoundly serious sin in God's sight. (Exodus 34:14, Deuteronomy 32:16, Hebrews 11:6)

➤ One must believe that Jesus Christ is the only provision for salvation

One often hears the claim that it does not matter what a person's spiritual beliefs are if they sincerely believe in something. God will honor that belief and receive them into heaven; but such teaching is heretical. Jesus said in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me," and Paul instructed this jailor in verse 31 to "believe," not in a local pagan deity but "in the Lord Jesus Christ." (See also Acts 4:12, John 5:23, 6:67-69) The fact that God the Father sent Christ the Son as the atoning sacrifice for sin (1 John 4:14, 2 Corinth 5:18-21) should be enough to silence complaint over the narrowness of the way and inspire gratitude that a way has been provided.

Biblical Steps to Salvation

How then can a person be saved? Is generic belief in Jesus alone enough to redeem us? Notice the word of the Lord regarding salvation. The following principles are no doubt what Paul and Silas shared with the pagan jailor in verse 32, for this is what Paul taught his churches on the subject.

1.) Agree with God that you are a Sinner:

We see this sinful jailor agreeing with God in verses 29-30. He does not try to defend his spiritual integrity or display a self-righteous spirit.

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Mission Statement: The mission of the MPN is three- fold: 1.) We desire to glorify God and facilitate the worship of His person. 2.) We seek to promote the Gospel of Christ with its beautiful message of heart holiness. 3.) We seek to be an encouragement to our readers spiritually, as well as an informative source of information to those who relate to, or are interested in, our Conference.

Cover Photo: The cover photo was taken by Michael Fuller. Mike lives in Duanesburg, NY and attends the Rockwood, PHC. His photography has been featured in Buds and Blooms, Boys Scouts Magazine, and other notable publications. He enjoys traveling the USA and Canada with his camera, cross country skiing, flying his powered – parachute, and other outdoor activities. We will be featuring Mike's photos of God's amazing world over four issues of the MPN.



The President's Page



Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

*M*any years ago, when my mother was a young adult, she found herself sadly unfulfilled and testified later that she thought getting married would fill that void in her being. After being married for a while, she realized that did not fill the void she sensed. She then thought having a child would bring the fulfillment she desired, only to find that after her baby boy was born, she still had that sense of need. After a couple of years, while lying awake in the night she was pondering her need. It was then she cried out in her heart, "Lord, if you will just save me, I will do anything." It was in that moment that she was engulfed with peace and knew in her heart the fulfillment that only comes with a right relationship with God. She went on to find good counsel in a church that helped her to grow spiritually. Everyone's experience will be personal and different, but everyone who finds saving grace will know the joy of sins forgiven.

Since Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost the question in the mind of every convicted sinner is "What must I do to be saved?" There is no more important question in all of life.

In this issue of Midwest Pilgrim News, the writers will answer that question in depth. To be sure, convicted sinners are vulnerable, looking for answers that will bring peace, the joy of forgiveness, and acceptance with God. It is incredibly important that they receive and believe the truth. To build hope on false teaching makes the condition of the sinner more perilous. To find the truth one must go to the Word. The Word must be "rightly divided" or properly interpreted. As you read the various articles, keep your Bible and your heart open. God will speak to you from His Word, and the Holy Spirit will guide you in truth. If you are not now in a right relationship with God, I pray this will help bring you into that blessed work of God's redeeming grace.

Rev. Don Nichols is the Conference President of the MPHC and the pastor of the PHC in Lima, Ohio.



News Board

Carson and Natalie are the children of Jonathan and Amberly Zeigler. They live in southern Indiana and attend the Weisbach Community Church in Shoals.

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Pilgrim Family Camp Information

www.midwestphc.org

Click on Announcements Link



Salutations

David (Da-veed) Gray says a big hello to the Conference family. David is 4 months old and lives with his family in Bloomington, Illinois. He attends the MPHIC in Bloomington.

A New Pilgrim

Janet Burton and Rev. Dale Stratton were united in marriage on May 1, 2021 in Columbus, IN. The happy couple are residing in Kansas.



Thank You The Glick Family extends their thanks to the Pilgrim Family for the beautiful floral arrangement upon the passing of Ruth Glick.



HOPE FOR THE UNSAVED

THE SAD REALITY OF THE UNSAVED

The unsaved are in darkness and dead in trespasses and sins. Col 1:13, Eph 2:1

*They face of the Lord is against them. He does not hear their prayers. 1 Pet 3:12

*They cannot see the kingdom of God. Jn 3:3

*They do not have eternal life and face the wrath of God. Jn 3:36

*They are storing up wrath against the day of Judgement. Rom 2:5

*They cannot understand the things of God. Their minds are blind to the light of the gospel. 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Cor 2:14

*They are in the power of the evil one and are servants of sin. 1 Jn 5:19, Rom 6:20

*They have no spiritual peace. Isa 57:21

*They are facing spiritual and physical death as the penalty for their sins. Rom 6:23

*They will be eternally lost in hell. Jn 3:16, Rev 14:11, Rev 21:8

*They are without God and without hope. Eph 2:12

*This includes everyone over the age of accountability, or those old enough to know right from wrong and choose to do wrong anyway. (James 4:17) Everyone is born with a sin nature that alienates them from God and left to themselves will eventually end up in hell. (Romans 3:23, Isaiah 64:6, 1 John 5:19)

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL

God loves wayward men and women and is not willing that any should perish. 1 Jn 4:19, 2 Pet 3:9

*God has made a provision for men to be saved. 1 Jn 4:9-10, Jn 3:16-17

*God is working to draw all men to Himself. Jn 12:32, Lk 19:10, Jn 1:9

*All may partake of God's great salvation. Jn 3:15-16, Titus 2:11-14

*Many will respond to Christ and be saved. Rev 7:9

THE GIFT OF PREVENIENT GRACE

Prevenient grace, or "preventing grace" as John Wesley called it, is the grace that "goes before." It is that grace which precedes human action and reflects God's heart for his creation. It testifies to God's being the initiator of any relationship with him and reveals him as one who pursues us. (John 6:44, 65)

Prevenient grace is available to all, such that there is no "natural man" left in a purely fallen state without a measure of God's restorative grace. Furthermore, prevenient grace is salvific in direction. This means the Spirit

of God works not just to restore certain faculties of humanity or to limit human sin, but ultimately directs people to the work of Christ. (Jn 16:7-8, 15:26)

The good news is that God acted in Christ and works through his Spirit in bringing us salvation. Wesley's theology of prevenient grace teaches us that God is at work long before the church evangelizes, quickening people's hearts to become the people He intends.¹

The hymn writer John Newton marveled at this act of God in his famous hymn Amazing Grace: "*T'was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.*"

Francis Thompson also spoke of this grace in his famous poem The Hound of Heaven.

*I fled Him down the nights and down the days
I fled Him down the arches of the years
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind, and in the midst of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped and shot precipitated
Adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears
From those strong feet that followed, followed after
But with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat, and a Voice beat,
More instant than the feet:
All things betray thee who betrayest me.*

THE BENEFITS OF GRACE

Grace inspires faith to receive salvation personally. (Jn 4:10, 19; Titus 3:3-5; Rom 5:6-8)

*Grace inspires a desire to glorify God acceptably. (1 Pet 2:9)

*Grace inspires confidence to share the gospel publicly. (Isa 55:11)

*Grace inspires us to pray for our lost loved ones faithfully. (Jms 5:16)

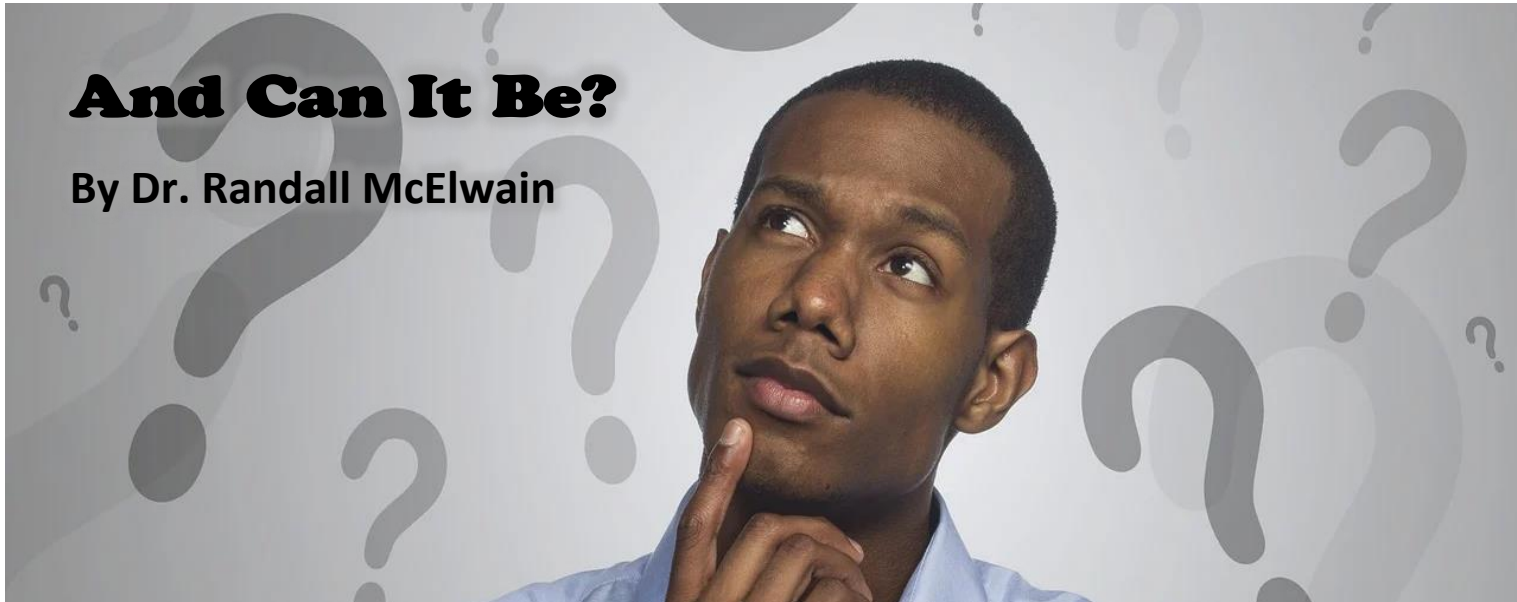
¹ This definition of prevenient grace was adapted from Andrew Dragos article, "What is Prevenient Grace?" on Seedbed.com.

*The word "unsaved" in this article refers to the non-Christian. The words "sinners", "the wicked," "unbelievers," and "workers of iniquity" are also used in the bible to describe those who have not embraced salvation through Jesus Christ.



And Can It Be?

By Dr. Randall McElwain



Many young people who grow up in holiness homes struggle to find an assurance of salvation. Because they see few outward changes, they may ask, “How do I know that I am born again?” Charles Wesley knew this struggle well. He had grown up in a pastor’s home, founded the Holy Club at Oxford, and served as a missionary. As he would later write:

A form of godliness was mine—The power I never knew.

A TESTIMONY OF ASSURANCE

On Pentecost Sunday 1738, Charles testified, “I found peace with God.” Two days later, he wrote his first hymn, a hymn that celebrates the joy of a “know-so salvation.”

*And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?*

Assurance is the “for me” of the gospel. It is more than an intellectual knowledge of the doctrine of the new birth. It is a personal appropriation of what God has done. It means that I have gained an interest in the Savior’s blood. Wesley testified of his release from years of struggle:

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.*

Again, notice the pronouns. This was no third person theology: “Their chains fell off...” This was first person experiential theology: “My chains fell off; my heart was free; I rose...”

Paul rejoiced, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom 8:1). In the same way, Wesley sang:

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*

Because we have been made alive in Christ, we can approach the eternal throne with confidence.

“WHY DO I LACK ASSURANCE?”

“And Can It Be” is a great hymn, but is it reality? Is this testimony possible for the rest of us? There are people in holiness churches who have prayed at the altar and who live careful lives, but who would admit, “I still struggle with ongoing doubts.” It seems to me that many sincere believers have false ideas that rob them of the joy of assurance.

- **We will lack assurance if we have a deficient view of God**

I fear that too many Christians have a respect for God’s holiness, but little understanding of His love. They cannot conceive the infinite goodness of a God who saves them apart from anything they have earned. They have a deficient view of God.

Charles Wesley’s journal on the day he testified to the assurance of faith shows that his confidence was not in himself, but in God. “I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness, yet confident of Christ’s protection.” Biblical assurance is based on confidence in God, not in self-confidence.

- **We will lack assurance if we have a deficient view of the gospel**

In their fear of eternal security, some Wesleyans have adopted a doctrine of eternal insecurity that is far from Paul’s confident testimony: For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39).

Do you realize the joy of this promise? We do not have to check our spiritual temperature every morning. As we walk in simple trust, nothing can separate us from the love of God. This is genuinely good news!

Another Wesley hymn rejoices: *My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear; He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear. With confidence I now draw nigh, And "Father, Abba, Father, " cry.*

This is the gospel! Not an up-and-down experience of uncertainty and fear but a confident assurance that says, "I have been reconciled to God. He is my Abba."

- **We will lack assurance if we have a deficient view of Christian experience**

We will struggle if we do not understand temptation. Some preaching has implied that the entirely sanctified person no longer feels tempted. "When you die to sin, you are dead. A dead person can't smell a steak even if you wave it in front of him."

Paul reminded us that temptation is real to every Christian. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12). But he also reminded us that through God's grace, we can have consistent victory over temptation. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor 10:13). Do not let temptation cause you to doubt your salvation. Temptation is not sin.

We will struggle if we do not understand human frailty. Assurance of salvation does not eliminate all struggles.

With his melancholic temperament, Charles Wesley was susceptible to moments of doubt. A few weeks after his great "And Can It Be," Wesley went through a time of emotional struggle in which he wrote, "I could not feel that God loved me." But the assurance of faith gave him confidence to continue, "But I believe he loved me notwithstanding." Wesley was learning to trust God in times of struggle. He was learning to rest not in his own power, but in God's grace.

Emotional struggles, illness, or even spiritual attack may cause moments of doubt. But when our heart condemns us, we can trust God who is "greater than our heart." (1 John 3:20) One of the old Puritans wrote, "The person who has assurance listens to the Spirit who bears witness that he is a child of God. The person who lacks assurance listens to Satan who says that he is not a child of God. So, Christian, why are you listening to Satan?" When we lack feelings, we can listen to the promises of God's Word.

The promise of assurance is one of the great truths of the Wesley revival. Let us never abandon the message that all people can know they are saved! ~RM

Dr. McElwain is happily married to Sue since 1985, with 2 grown children, Stacey, and Austin. He graduated from Kansas City Christian College, Truman State University, and South Africa Theological Seminary. He is currently the Discipleship/Teaching Pastor at Hobe Sound Bible Church and the Teaching Pastor at Palm Beach Chinese Christian Chapel. He travels frequently to teach pastors overseas and serves as a course writer for Shepherds Global Classroom and author for Gospel Publishing Mission.



THE TRAIN OF FAITH

Taken from Josh McDowell's Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidence for the Christian Faith.



The promise of God's Word, not our feelings, is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship between **fact** (God and His Word), **faith** (our trust in God and His Word), and **feeling** (the result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21)

The train engine will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be futile to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we, as Christians, do not depend on feelings or emotions, but place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and His Word.

A Definition of Saving Faith

- A. Faith is a BELIEF in the eternal, unchanging Word of God. Hebrews 4:2, 6, 11:6
- B. Faith is a COMMITMENT to what God requires, John 14:21, 23-24
- C. Faith is a TRUST in what God promises. Galatians 3:14, Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:38

Faith is acting like God is telling the truth.

10 Words for Aspects of Salvation

By Dr. Stephen Gibson

(This article was adapted by Elizabeth Albertson from the course *Christian Beliefs*, by Stephen Gibson. The full course is available for free download at ShepherdsGlobal.org.)

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the New Testament writers used a variety of terms to describe the many things that simultaneously occur at the moment of our salvation. Each of these terms helps us to understand the significance and breadth of God's saving work. Here we explore a few of those key terms.



A **PROPITIATION** is something that is given to turn away someone's anger. In salvation, Jesus' sacrifice turns away the righteous anger of God that was against us.¹

Expiation, justification, and adoption are all judicial terms that show us what happens in God's legal system when we are saved. **EXPIATION** means that a record has been cleared. In salvation, our record of sins is erased.¹ In **JUSTIFICATION** someone is declared righteous, or innocent. At the moment of salvation, a guilty sinner is counted righteous because Jesus suffered in his place.¹ We are all familiar with **ADOPTION**. When an adoption occurs, someone becomes the legal child of another. In salvation we become the children of God.¹

RECONCILIATION is another relational term. It means that individuals who were enemies have now made peace with each other again. God has done everything required for us to make peace with Him. In salvation, we make peace with God on His terms.¹

REDEMPTION means that a price was paid so that someone can be free. In salvation, Jesus' death is the price that was paid. Now we are free from the bondage and penalty of sin.¹ **DELIVERANCE** is a powerful word that tells us someone is rescued from another's power. In salvation, we are freed from the tyranny and power of Satan and sin.¹ Because we are redeemed and delivered at the time of salvation we now belong to God and are able to serve Him as we were created to do.

God creates new life in us at the time of salvation, called a **NEW BIRTH**¹ or **REGENERATION**.¹ In salvation the believer begins a new life, walking with God in a relationship of love and obedience.

SANCTIFICATION is a word that means someone is made holy. In salvation, a sinner is changed into a holy child of God.¹ Because He has given us new life and made us holy, we are able to live for Him.

Paul writes that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. **SEALING** means that something is marked to show who owns it. In salvation, the Holy Spirit in us identifies each of us as someone who belongs to God.¹

Praise God for His powerful and comprehensive work in salvation!



¹ Read 1 John 2:2.

¹ Read Hebrews 8:12.

¹ Read 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:1. (These verses talk about both justification and reconciliation.)

¹ Read John 1:12; Romans 8:15.

¹ Read 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:1. (These verses talk about both justification and reconciliation.)

¹ Read Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14.

¹ Read Luke 1:74; Romans 6:6, 12-18.

¹ Read John 3:3.

¹ Read Ephesians 2:1; John 7:38-39; Galatians 4:29; John 3:5.

¹ Many of the epistles refer to the believers as "holy ones." (Read Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, Philippians 1:1.)

¹ Read Ephesians 1:13.

Dr. Stephen Gibson lives in Williams, IN with his family. He is the President at Evangelistic Faith Missions, a writer at Shepherds Global Classroom, and the director at Holiness Pilgrim Mission.



SERMON OUTLINES

You Can Use

AN INSTANTANEOUS ABOUT FACE BY JEREMY JESSUP

Subject: Paul's entire life changed in an instant!
Scripture: Acts 9:1-22



I.) His LOYALTY Changed:

- A.) The old Saul was loyal to the Jewish law and sent to arrest anyone who proclaimed the name of Christ.
- B.) The new Saul resigns himself to calling Jesus, LORD. Submitting himself to Christ and recognizing his authority.

II.) His DESIRE Changed:

- A.) His former desire was to see the cause of Christ stamped out and to annihilate anyone associated with Christ.
- B.) After submitting to Christ, he asks, "What wilt thou have me to do?" This displays that his desire is now to advance the cause of Christ.

III.) His ACTIONS Changed:

- A.) Our actions are based solely on the desires of our heart. If our desires are anti-Christ, our actions will be anti-Christ.
- B.) When we submit to Christ, it is inevitable that our actions will change too. Paul later expressed this when he said, Ephesians 4:22 "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" and 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

IV.) His SUPPORT Base Changed:

- A.) We cannot expect to be in the same mindset as those who deny Christ. The world hates Christ and will hate us too when we identify with Him.
- B.) There is no greater support than that of the family of God. Not just with fellow believers, but also when Jesus inspired the writer of Hebrews, Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Application: We can experience, as Paul did, an instantaneous about face, a complete change in our lives.

Pastor Jessup ministers at the MPHC in Elwood, IN.

OBEDIENCE IN SALVATION BY NATHANIEL GRISSOM

Subject: Obedience relates to every part of salvation.



I. Obedience in response to the CONVICTION of sin: John 16:8, 13

- A. A basic acknowledgment of sin.
- B. A belief in Jesus as the remedy for sin.
- C. A choice to be made: Continuing in sin vs. seeking forgiveness.

II. Obedience in REPENTANCE of sin committed: II Corinthians 7:10; I John 1:9

- A. Humility in asking God's forgiveness.
- B. Wholly addressing each sin that is brought to attention.
- C. Commitment to forsaking each outstanding sin.

III. Obedience in the TESTIMONY of God's grace: Psalms 66:16; Acts 2:38

- A. Making a statement to believers of God's saving work.
- B. Giving a public witness of commitment through baptism.

IV. Obedience in RESTITUTION: Matt 5:23-24

- A. Repayment of debts incurred by sin.
- B. Repairing relationships broken by sin.

Pastor Grissom ministers at the MPHC in Madison, IN.

THE POWER OF PREVENIENT GRACE BY DON RAINES

Scripture: John 6:44; 65



- I The grace that goes before salvation:
- II. The grace you cannot prevent from coming:
- III. The grace given to all men:

Pastor Raines ministers at the MPHC in New Castle, IN.



Subject: How can I know that I am God's child?

Scripture: 1 John 1-5

One of the apostle's goals in 1 John is to give assurance to the believer. He wants us to be able to testify with confidence, "I know that I am a child of God." Biblical assurance is based on three elements: God's promises in Scripture, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, and the visible fruit of an obedient life. This assurance is the privilege of every believer.

1) Biblical assurance is based on the PROMISE of Scripture:

John promised, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Assurance of salvation begins with the confidence that God will keep His promises.

Paul reminds us that we are saved by grace through faith: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9). If our assurance is based on our efforts, we will always struggle. Instead, true assurance is based on what God has done. He has already provided everything for our salvation; we can trust His promises.

Oh, how many times I prayed, "God, I think I have enough faith now. I'm trying really hard to believe." And, oh the joy when I finally learned that assurance is based not on the strength of my faith but on what God has done for me.

It is better to have a weak faith in a strong God than a strong faith in a weak God. Assurance is based not on our great faith but on the promises of a great God who says, "Put your feeble faith in me and that is enough."

Yes, to claim these promises, we must meet God's conditions for salvation: repentance for our sins and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But if we have met His conditions, we can have confidence in

the promises of a loving Father who "is not willing that any should perish."

2) Biblical assurance is based on the inner WITNESS of the Spirit:

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The witness of the Spirit is the consciousness given by God that He has brought us to new life. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16). This may not involve great emotion, but it is an assurance that I am at peace with God.

3) Continuing assurance is based on the FRUIT of an obedient life:

As we live in obedience to God's Word, we see changes in our lives that show we have been made new creatures. This is the testimony of our own spirit that we are living in obedience to His commands.

In 1 John, the apostle lists markers that show that we are children of God. These markers prevent us from deceiving ourselves into confusing an emotional response with the witness of the Spirit. For some of us who grew up in camp meetings, this is particularly important. A powerful evangelist could bring us to the altar, and after some tears, we left feeling better. But too often, we settled for a temporary emotional relief. A week later, we had returned to our old way of life. John summarizes the ongoing fruit that shows we are children of God.

- A child of God obeys God (1 John 2:3-5)
- A child of God does not love the world (1 John 2:15-16)
- A child of God does not walk in sin (1 John 3:8-10)
- A child of God loves other Christians (1 John 3:14-18)

This is biblical assurance: grounded in the promises of God's Word, witnessed by the Holy Spirit, and confirmed by the fruit of an obedient life.

This outline by Bro. McElwain is offered as a companion lesson to his article And Can It Be? on page 6.

A Prayer for the Unsaved

Father, show me how to pray in such a way that people's eyes are opened so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the grip of Satan to the freedom of God. Your word commands us to go into the world so that the lost may receive the forgiveness of their sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in You! Use me to reach my family, my neighbors, my city and beyond so that You alone will receive the glory! And when eyes are opened may they see and experience new life forever. Amen

The Decision



“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Matthew 6:19,20

What do we have to gain? Why dedicate our lives to the kingdom of God and give up all the pleasures and thrills of life? I must be honest. There are plenty of pleasures and thrills out there. A couple years ago, I was privileged to get behind the wheel of a Dodge Challenger Scat Pack 392 Hemi with almost 500 HP. I had all that power at my fingertips and miles of empty backroads in front of me. It was a thrill; however, when the time came to hand the keys back to the owner, what did I have to take with me? The memory of a good time. That is all. My point is this:

The pleasures of this world - good or bad - do not bring reward later in life, nor in eternity. Scripture tells us that any treasure of this world will fade away. We cannot live for the moment.

Instead, I challenge you to do two things. First, take a close look at those who have chosen to live for pleasure or for things of this world in general; either it will take you to popularity and wealth that is coupled with loneliness and unsatisfaction or it will take you down the path of destruction that is full of heartache and hardship. Do not look at what appears to be a good time. Remember, sin will take you farther than you ever wanted or expected to go; and most importantly, it will cause you to miss heaven.

Second, take a close look at those who have dedicated their lives to the Kingdom of Heaven. What do you see? I see joy, honor, contentment, and fulfillment. I see a legacy left behind and a difference for eternity.

So, you must decide what you want. Do you want to do something important and lasting? Do you want to be fulfilled? If you do, then give your heart to Jesus. Let Him cleanse your heart from anything not pleasing to Him set you apart for His purpose. Let Him use you for the specific task He has for you. That task will bring true pleasure and fulfillment and will store up heavenly treasures that do not fade away. Choose and resolve to be different. It will be worth it all when we get to heaven because the reward of heaven is better than anything in this messed up world. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. If you do that, you will enjoy the journey with Jesus.

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How to be Saved: From Page 2

He realizes his depravity and humbles himself before God and man. *What must I do to be saved?* We too must humble ourselves. No matter how good we may be, we still fall short of God's standard of righteousness. The sin nature in our hearts leads us to commit acts of pride, selfishness, hatred, lust, wrath, adultery, and murder and God's law condemns us to physical and spiritual death. (Romans 3:23, Isaiah 64:6, 1 John 1:10, Romans 6:23) If we cannot own up to our sinfulness, our self-righteous attitude will continue to separate us from God and the joy of salvation. (Rom 10:3-4, Php 3:8-9)

2.) Confess and Repent of your Sin:

Biblical repentance is changing your mind about Jesus Christ and turning to God in faith for salvation (Acts 3:19). Turning from sin is one of the results of genuine, faith-based repentance. While we are not privy to this jailor's confessional prayer, he did evidence this change of mind and behavior. Verses 31-34 specifies that he believed, was baptized, washed Paul and Silas stripes, brought them into his house, and fed them. This is a far cry from verse 24 and the man who "thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks."

A popular misconception of salvation is that we can change our mind about God, and even confess our sins without abandoning them, but this is another false conclusion. If we are sorry for our sins with godly sorrow, we not only feel regret for them, but we will also demonstrate a change for the better. A changed life, (including restitution) is the evidence of true conversion. (Lk 13:3,5, Acts 2:38, Prov 28:13, 2 Cor 7:9-10, Lk 19:8-9) The man who said that he is not saved because he confessed and repented of his sin, but because he put his faith in Christ, has a poor understanding of Christian theology. Confession and repentance of sin is inextricably connected with saving faith.

3.) Believe and Confess the Lord Jesus Christ:

When we acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice for sin and evidence that belief through confession of sin and repentance, we have grounds to believe God for salvation. Our faith can take hold of God's promise and we can trust Him that the work is done. The moment that we believe we are pardoned, justified, regenerated, and adopted into His family. We can rejoice in our new position with God and share with others what God has done for us. We see this illustrated in verse 34 when the jailor "brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (See also Rom 10:9-10)

A Free Gift

We must keep in mind that salvation cannot be purchased with money or merited by family name or good works. God's salvation is "by grace through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9) God requires us to submit to the above steps and simply believe that the gift is ours. (Romans 4:3) When we sincerely obey Him the benefits of salvation appear in our life.

- Our life is transformed. (2 Cor 5:17)
- We have joy and peace with God. (Rom 5:1)
- We enjoy a relationship with God. (John 14:23)
- We have freedom from the practice of sin. (Rom 6:18-22)
- We have new purpose and meaning in life. (John 10:10)
- We have eternal life in our possession. (John 3:16)
- We have a hope that is alive: (1 Peter 1:3)
- We have confidence in the day of judgement. (1 Jn 4:17; 1 Jn 2:28)

Receiving salvation is the most significant thing that can ever happen to you. If you have not yet experienced it, I encourage you to seek God today. He wants to save you now and give you all that He has prepared for His children. ~TRF

Resources for Growing Christians

Every pastor should have a list of books or resources on hand to help a new Christian grow in the faith. The following resources are helpful for that purpose.

***Practical Christianity: Lesson Series for Discipleship.** This resource contains 26 lessons on practical Christianity, Student worksheets, and a handbook for discipleship. This 185-page electronic resource is free for the asking. Contact Dr. Stephen Gibson to receive via E-mail. keystoneui@att.net

Books by Dr. Randall McElwain

- *Holy Heart; Holy Hands: Holiness in the Bible, \$10
- *Joy Comes in the Morning: 30 Days of Christian Hope, \$8
- *So Great a Cloud of Witnesses: Great Christians You Should Know, \$10
- *Unchanging Truths: A Guide to the Apostles' Creed, \$10

These books are available through FEA Ministries.
<http://gospelpublishingmission.org>

Introduction to Apologetics: Shepherds Global Classroom Series. Authored by Dr. Mark Bird, this course teaches the scientific, historical, and philosophical basis for a Christian worldview, and shows how the Christian faith is consistent with reason and reality. This 140-page spiral bound course is a great investment in Christian growth. This book can be purchased for \$25, or downloaded for free at <https://www.shepherdsglobal.org>.

More God, More Power: Wesley Duewel. This guidebook offers a practical look at the role of the Holy Spirit in the everyday life of a believer. Published by Zondervan it is available on Amazon for \$12.

I Believe, Fundamentals of the Christian Faith: God's Bible School Faculty. Written for the laymen, this book is a solid guide to basic Wesleyan-Arminian theology. Includes study guide questions and answers, suggested reading, and doctrinal summary statements at the end of each chapter. Available at <https://www.gbs.edu/> for \$8.

