

An Exegetical Overview of Gospel Ministry/Biblical Evangelism

1. A Saving Result from Gospel proclamation is ALL OF GOD.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 ⁴ For we know, brothers¹ loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

- a. **Rooted in God's Electing Love:** "brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you"
- b. **Results in God's Renewing Grace:** "because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction."
 - i. **Regeneration / new birth (John 3:3; Titus 3:5-6)**
 - ii. **Repentance (John 16:8-12; Lk 24:47)**
 - iii. **Faith (Eph. 2:8-9)**

2. Saving Grace is Permanent Life Transforming Work of God.

1 Thessalonians 1:6-10 ⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers... ⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, ... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ¹³ And we also thank God constantly¹ for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,

3. Gospel Ministry Is NEVER is never 'in vain'

1 Thessalonians 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers,¹ that our coming to you was not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

4. Biblical Evangelism is Boldly Unchanging, Unwavering and Unaffected by Everything!

1 Thessalonians 2:2 ² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

5. The Gospel is Truth (not opinion, experience, etc.)

1 Thessalonians 2:3 ³ For our appeal (exhortation) does not spring (come) from error...

Galatians 2:5 ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Colossians 1:5 ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

Romans 1:16-18 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith

for faith,¹ as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."² ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

6. The Gospel is not to be mixed, manipulated or meddled with!

1 Thessalonians 2:3 ... or impurity or any attempt to deceive,

2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity,...

2 Corinthians 4:2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

7. The Gospel from God, For God and To God – though we speak to men it is not them but God that we are looking to please. It is not

1 Thessalonians 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 ¹³ And we also thank God constantly¹ for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

1 Corinthians 4:1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.
² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

2 Corinthians 2:17 ... as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

- a. **No flattery** - **1 Thessalonians 2:5** ⁵ For we never came with words of flattery,¹ as you know,...
- b. **No greed** – ...nor with a pretext for greed - God is witness.
- c. **No glory** - **1 Thessalonians 2:6** Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others,

8. Biblical Evangelism is Bold Not Brash.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 ⁷ But we were gentle¹ among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

Ephesians 4:15 ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love...

9. The Biblical Evangelism / Gospel Witness is heartfelt and hopeful

1 Thessalonians 2:8 ⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

10. The Biblical Evangelist Lives in the Light of the Grace declared in the Gospel.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

Assurance of Salvation: When Do You Give It?

By Alan Conner

INTRODUCTION

There is much confusion over the assurance of salvation, especially in the area of when to give it. Oftentimes it is sincerely but wrongly given. What is the biblical basis for the assurance of eternal life? This study will attempt to probe this issue.

I. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION

A. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S WORD.

The trustworthiness of Scripture clearly gives the believer the assurance of their salvation (Jn. 1:12; 3:16; 5:24). Those who believe have eternal life. The assurance of salvation is based on the truthfulness of God's Word. If God said it, it must be true. Every believer has this witness from God's word: believers have eternal life.

But how do we know if someone has really believed? Since the Bible clearly talks about a faith that does not save (Jas. 2:14), how do we know when it is genuine? What constitutes true saving faith? This question is important. A few initial observations are appropriate:

1) ACCURATE - This faith must have an accurate understanding of the basics of the gospel: character of God, sin, Christ, and faith. For example, if someone believes in Christ and his good works for salvation, then his faith is defective and he is not saved.

Oftentimes, in a man-centered gospel the unbeliever is deceived in trusting in their outward "response" for assurance of salvation. "Yes, I am saved, because I walked the aisle when I was twelve years old." Or, "prayed a prayer," "got baptized", etc. Instead of their assurance coming from a living faith and a persevering walk with the Lord, it is founded on something they once did a long time ago. And faith, no matter how confident, when wrongly placed and inaccurate cannot save.

2) ABIDING - This faith must also be more than a temporary faith. The faith referred to in the passages above in John's gospel do not refer to only one act of faith, or to a temporary faith. Such a faith is not promised eternal life. The verb "to believe" in these verses is in the present tense which means that it is an on-going faith. Temporary faith is not genuine and thus does not qualify for the gift of eternal life (Lk. 8:13). A drunk met Moody on the street one day and said to him, "Remember me, I'm one of your converts." Moody said, "You must be one of my converts because you surely aren't one of the Lord's."

Thus, we must be cautious about giving a quick assurance of salvation to those who pray a prayer. Oftentimes such prayers are not genuine expressions of faith. Thus, it is unwise to quickly assure them of their salvation for it can give a false assurance to those who lack genuine saving faith.

B. THE TESTIMONY OF PROPER WITNESSES.

1) It is by the testimony of God's Spirit (Rom. 8:16). True assurance of eternal salvation must have the stamp of God upon it for it to be genuine. No human can give a dogmatic assurance of eternal salvation to another person. We simply do not know the true character of their heart. No one knows that but God. All we can do is to set forth what the Bible says about assurance, but we must be careful about speaking with certainty, "Now that you have prayed this prayer, you can know that you have eternal life and must never doubt it. All doubts come from the devil."

The Spirit must bear witness. Not simply our emotions, but the Holy Spirit of God. Many today "feel" they are saved, or "believe" they are saved but for the wrong reasons. We must realize that true assurance can only come through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

How does the Spirit testify to us that we are children of God? Consider the context: 1) when we cry out, "Abba! Father!" by virtue of the influence of the Holy Spirit (v. 15); 2) when we are led by the Spirit (v. 14); 3) when we put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (v. 13); 4) when the requirement of the law is fulfilled in us as we walk according to the Spirit (v. 4); 5) the mystical inner witness of the Spirit.

2) It is by the testimony of our spirit (Rom. 8:16). The Spirit must bear witness with our spirit. We often interpret this as "The Spirit Himself testifies **to** our spirit that we are children of God." Actually, however, this is not what is being said. This Greek word *summartureo* = *to bear witness with*, is used three times by Paul in Romans (2:15; 8:16; 9:1) and in each case there is one witness bearing testimony with another witness. In other words, two witnesses are involved, not one witness bearing testimony to another. This is most appropriate since the Law of God requires two or three witness to confirm a matter. Thus, Rom. 8:16 is teaching that both the Spirit and our spirit testify to us that we are children of God.

How does our spirit testify to us that we are children of God? Our regenerated spirit testifies to us that we are God's children by the new desires and new loves of the new man within (see vv. 5, 10).

There is a mystical and subjective element here that is hard to avoid. This is why the following objective elements must also accompany a true assurance of salvation.

C. THE TESTIMONY OF A CHANGED LIFE.

One of the most convincing evidences of genuine faith is a changed life. This is because it testifies to one being born again by the Spirit of God. Without these changes, a profession of faith is empty, void, and dead (Jas. 2:14, 17, 20).

You know the tree by its fruit (Mt. 7:15-20).

“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine” (Jn. 8:31).

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (Jn. 10:27).

“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (Jn. 15:8).

“They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed” (Tit. 1:16).

“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Without this evidence, there can be no assurance of salvation; with it, one can see their assurance grow on a solid footing. The new birth will cause changes to occur in the believer's life. These are brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and over a period of time. Doubts about one's salvation or lacking strong evidence does not exclude one from being saved, but it will rob them of the peace of knowing they are saved. A true believer can so wrestle with sin at times in their life that they do not have any assurance of their salvation. However, as sanctification progresses in their life, there should be some assurance attained in time.

II. THE MISUSE OF 1 JN. 5:13

This verse is often used in gospel tracts to give assurance of salvation to those who pray a prayer. The way it is used is often like this: “Now, because you prayed this prayer, you have eternal life. Look at 1 Jn. 5:13 and notice that it says that those who believe in the name of the Son of God “may know that you have eternal life”. It does not say ‘hope that,’ but ‘know that’. You can now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have eternal life. The Bible says so.”

The way this approach interprets 1 Jn. 5:13 is that the “knowing” or assurance of eternal life comes to those who believe. They read it as if it said, “I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” But this is not accurate. Note how the verse starts,

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

What does the “these things” refer to? Basically it refers to all he has written in this letter up to this point. John says that he has written some things to these believers so that they may know that they have eternal life. A believer may or may not have the assurance of their salvation. They may have doubts about their faith. That is why John wrote his letter in order to give them solid evidence by which they can know that they are born again. He does not want anyone to be deceived about their salvation. He wants them to have the assurance of their salvation but he also wants it to be based upon a solid foundation, and not on the whims of their feelings. So, in this letter, John sets forth a number of tests by which his readers can know that they are born of God, and thus know that they have eternal life. These tests of being born of God are as follows:

- 1) Those who do righteousness are born of God (2:29).
- 2) Those who do not practice sin, are born of God (3:9; 5:18).
- 3) Those who love are born of God (4:7).
- 4) Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, are born of God (5:1).

- 5) Those who overcome the world by faith, are born of God (5:4).
- 6) Those who keep His commandments have come to know Him (5:3).

Believers are encouraged to examine their faith by these tests. If they see evidence of these things in their life then they can “know that they have eternal life”. To make 1 Jn. 5:13 apply to those who profess faith only is to abuse the meaning of the text. It ignores the “these things”. 1 Jn. 5:13 is designed to cast the reader back to all the tests given in the letter. It is not a verse which gives the assurance of salvation to those who merely profess faith in Christ by praying a prayer.

CONCLUSION

The assurance of salvation is usually something that believers grow into gradually. It is not necessary, but desirable. Ultimately, our assurance comes from the genuineness of our faith, the testimony of the Holy Spirit and our spirit, and the evidence of a changed life. These together give confidence that we have been born of God and are His children.

Preparing a Testimony that Honors God

(This is to the glory of God as we testify to His grace at work in us through but it is not the Gospel nor will anyone be save by it and it will NOT make the Gospel more effective!)

Write down the key elements of Paul’s testimony from the following passages:

Acts 22:3-21

- 1) His upbringing and religious training (3).
- 2) His sin of persecuting the Way (4-5).
- 3) The events around his conversion. Initiated by Christ (6-11).
- 4) His baptism (12-16).
- 5) His mission given by Christ (17-21; cf. 9:15).

Acts 26:4-29

- 1) His upbringing and religious training (4-5).
- 2) The reason for his standing trial: the resurrection (6-8).
- 3) His persecution of the church (9-11).
- 4) His conversion (12-15).
- 5) His commission by Christ (16-18).
- 6) His ministry and arrest (19-23)
- 7) His response to objections (24-29).

1 Cor. 15:8-10

- 1) Christ’s appearance to him and his humble confession (8-9).
- 2) His acknowledgement of the grace of God (10).

Gal. 1:13-17

- 1) His former lifestyle and persecution of the church (13-14).
- 2) His confession of God’s grace in revealing Christ to him (15-16a).

3) His commission from Christ (16-17).

Phil. 3:3-14

- 1) His previous self-righteous attainments in the flesh (4-6).
- 2) The surpassing value of knowing Christ (7-11).
- 3) His humble confession of imperfection (12-13).
- 4) His commitment to press on toward Christ (14).

1 Tim. 1:12-17

- 1) His former life of sin and persecution of the church (13).
- 2) The grace of God that gave him faith and love in Christ (14).
- 3) His confidence in the purpose of Christ to save sinners (15).
- 4) His humble confession of unworthiness and praise to God (15b-17).

Summarize:

- 1) Our sin.
- 2) God's grace.
- 3) Evidence of a changed life.

To which does Paul devote the most time?