

*“Everyone and Not Everyone” - A Sure Assurance of Salvation*

**Holiness**  
Selected Scriptures  
**The Rev. Ted Wood**  
2015-04-10

**Ted:** Don and Lou, would you give us a time of concentration to focus on the Lord?  
(*Music.*)

Lord God, You've told us that Your word is truth and that Your word, when it goes out, does not return void, and that Your word is a light to my path. We pray, Lord, that Your word and the teaching of Your word may pierce our hearts and convert us completely so that we become followers of You in spirit and in truth, for we pray this in Your name.  
Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Ted:** Okay. You can ignore the man behind me. (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** What man? (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** I'm often driven in my study of the word of God and theology and church history out of curiosity. And so this week is no exception. I was struck by the question of how do we have assurance of salvation, or I call it sure assurance?

In our church, after we have the sacrament we have the teaching of the Catechism. So we go in our church every Sunday. After the service is completed we gather and we go over a question in the Catechism, which of course has a lot of Scripture verses.

But one of the questions in that Catechism raised a question amongst one of the newer members (and this person is just barely a Christian, just new in the faith.) And he said, "Well, how do you really know that you're one of God's chosen people? I mean, is it because you've accepted Christ in your heart?"

And that question stayed with me, and that was followed by R. C. Sproul's series this week, if any of you were listening to it, which I believe is "The Assurance of Salvation." Did I get it right? Nobody listens to R. C. Sproul at 7-30 in the morning, which I do on my way up to Erie.

So both of those got me going. And I began to think of Scripture verses that people have used to deal with the question to know that you're saved and you'll be sure that you have eternal life. And of course one that's used quite often is out of 1 Corinthians. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Actually, I believe that may be in Romans. I may have misquoted that. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." So it's a matter, and you're assured of your salvation if you call on the Lord, that verse would seem to imply.

But then, on the other hand, there's another verse. "Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven." So we have "everyone" and "not everyone." So the question becomes, what is it?

And as I was driving to Erie and trying to take notes on what Sproul was saying, going seventy miles an hour down Interstate 79, I caught two things that R. C. Sproul said. He

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said, “Making a decision has never converted anyone.” And then later he said, “No one has been justified by a profession of faith.”

I’m not saying, and R. C. Sproul is not saying that making a profession of faith or making a decision for Christ is not a critical and important part of growing in faith and coming to a knowledge of the Savior. But he says that making that decision or professing that faith does not justify you before God. And I’m afraid we have churches full of people who think that they are justified and that they’re going to heaven, that they have a place in heaven, that they’re guaranteed a place in heaven because they’ve said certain words.

The whole issue of assurance, then, depends, in my mind’s eye, on where you start. Do you start from a human perspective or from God’s perspective?

From a human perspective you’re sure that you’re saved and going to heaven, perhaps, if I’ve said the right words. So you’re in a meeting. You’re under conviction. You feel the move of the Spirit to make a serious commitment of your life to Christ. And the pastor will say something like “Repeat these words after me.” And then they give the words and the people repeat. And then they’re given some kind of assurance that they’ve been saved.

Or, perhaps, from a human perspective, you don’t look at your words. You look at your actions. And of course we drive into the ground the whole issue of we’re not saved by our works.

I was chatting with some of the brothers earlier, and I was telling them about how bad the weather was as I came south from Erie, going through Crawford County and Mercer County—just terrible weather because of the storms and the amount of rain that was coming down. And when the eighteen wheeler would pass me, of course there was a huge amount of stuff thrown up on your windshield. Here you are going sixty miles an hour, and you cannot see in front of you at all. And at that point I started to count how many good things I’d done in my life. (*Laughter.*) And then I began to subtract all the stuff that came off because of the things that weren’t so good. (*Laughter.*)

Or, perhaps it’s not because of what you say or what you do that gives you your assurance of salvation. Perhaps it’s how you feel. Do you have the right emotions?

It was interesting. I was talking to a friend the other day. And this friend comes out of a tradition, one of the Christian traditions that has a heavy emphasis on emotion in worship. And she was telling me about difficulties she was having in her family. And she was spewing about huge amounts of emotion in terms of her prayers with God. She was talking about this dialogue—not a dialogue; it was almost a one-way conversation with God. And she was getting after God and sharing all her emotions with God because of unhappiness about what was happening with one of her family members. And I said to her, “Could you perhaps be experiencing fallen emotions?”

And she looked at me. “Fallen emotions! What do you mean by that?”

And I said, “Well, you know, when Adam and Eve trespassed God’s commandment, we say they fell, which means that, from that point on, their thinking, their feeling, their body, their spirit, everything within them was fallen away from God and had become corrupted. And therefore even their emotions were in error.”

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And she had never thought about that. Her perception was that all of her emotions were godly.

My wife Diana, when she went through a very difficult time in her life, was in a church. And they in the church regularly said, you know, “Accept Christ as your Savior and you’ll be born again and saved.” And Diana said that what she would do—(she worked in the church as a secretary, a part time secretary, along with her other job.) When she finished her secretarial work she would go into the church when no one was there. She’d go down in the front of the church and kneel down and give her life to Christ. And she did that again and again and again and again, because she had no assurance of salvation. But she knew that she did not feel that she was saved.

So that’s from a human perspective. From a human perspective we’ll always go back to what have I done, What have I said and what have I felt? That’s where we get our assurance.

But if you take it from God’s perspective, and you start with Him rather than you, it’s a completely different situation. Assurance of salvation begins with God’s action. And your experience of salvation is very secondary to what God is doing and has done and will do. So what God is doing is of absolute priority, and the focus of our thoughts and our thinking and our perceptions, and what we’re experiencing takes a far second place to all of that. It’s not that we’re not experiencing the effects of salvation, but they’re not determinative of what we’ve actually received in Christ.

And it says this. It says that “all of this is from God.” And actually we have one of my favorite verses in 2 Corinthians, where Paul says, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.” Now the NIV says that “we regard no one from a worldly point of view.” In the ESV it says, “We regard no one according to the flesh.” The NIV says, “We regard no one from a worldly point of view.”

That means that Paul is saying that once you’re in Christ, you’re no longer looking at others and yourself from a worldly point of view, from a human point of view—from the flesh, from our own abilities, from our ability to say the right thing, do the right thing, feel the right thing.

“Even though,” he goes on, “we once regarded Christ according to the flesh,”—that means before we were converted, before we were regenerated,—we looked at Jesus Christ and what did we think of Him? We thought of Him as a great prophet or a great teacher. Wrong! We thought of Him as a blasphemer, as an enemy of God, which Jesus was accused of in His earthly life. That’s the way we used to look at Him.

“Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh,”—from our own perspective, our own judgment,—“we regard Him thus no longer.” One of the great things that happens at conversion is that you begin to see Jesus in a new way. You no longer look at Him as you used to.

“Therefore,”—and this is the verse that everyone knows—“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Now how did this happen? How did this happen? How do we become a new creation? Because we said the right thing. Because we did the right thing. Because we felt the right thing. No, what does it say? “The new has come. All of this is from God.”

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All of this is from God. “So, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh,” but we regard Him from God’s perspective.

God’s action begins in election, according to His good will and purpose. God acts not because you’ve said the right thing or done the right thing or feel the right thing. It’s according to His good will and purpose.

Now can’t we do any better than that, God? I mean, I’d like to be able to have some kind of experience, something I can point to. I don’t just want to rely on Your good will and purpose! It’s not enough!

God begins in election according to His good will and purpose. “He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will.” That’s all I get. If it’s not good enough, that’s all I get, the purpose of His will.

And this begins what’s often called in theology “the golden chain of redemption,” or “the golden chain of salvation,” or “the golden chain of glory,” or “the golden chain of grace.” But this is it. Romans 8:30. “Those whom He predestined He also called. Those whom He called He also justified. Those whom He justified He also glorified.” So He started you in the beginning and carries you through every single step along the way—all the way from before the foundation of the world all the way to the Second Coming and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth and His kingdom on this earth.

And that assurance is re-emphasized in Philippians. “I am sure of this,” Paul writes, “that He who began a good work in you,” (as long as you say the right words, as long as you do the right things, as long as you have the right feelings), “He that began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Thank God it doesn’t say any of those things. It says, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.” That’s a tremendous assurance of salvation.

Now I want to ask you. Do you need any more assurance than that? Do you? Do you need something in the flesh, or from the human perspective, that gives you a little more confidence that you have a home in heaven and that you are right with God?

Well, yes, I really do, God. I just need a little more. But you and I still long for and we seek after some assurance at a human level. We still look for that.

So we have to look at several things. If we still want to go back there, to a human perspective, let’s return to that and look at it a little more closely.

How about improved behavior? You know, I gave my life to Christ. I believe I’ve been born again, and I’m going to have better behavior. That’s going to show me that I’m really saved if my behavior is improved.

Okay. “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” Oh, well that’s very encouraging, isn’t it? I mean, if we look to our improved behavior, let’s look at our fruits. Let’s see how we’re doing.

And it’s very interesting. The very next verse says this. Isn’t that interesting? “Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,”” So it says, “Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” We’ll recognize you by your fruits. Therefore, “Not everyone who says to

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Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

That’s not very encouraging to me. That doesn’t give me much confidence. People say, “Well, you know, it’s not what we tell our kids. It’s the life we lead and the example we show to our children, the example we show to others.” That is never very encouraging because I’m just too aware of how inconsistent and fallen my actions and behaviors are. That never gives me much hope. I need something other than that.

So what about improved behavior? What about a better attitude? Maybe you need within you a greater spirit of love and compassion. And you get those from the fruit of the Spirit. What I really need is more “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” That’s what I need. That’s going to be my assurance of salvation when I show more of that—when I show more love and more peace, patience.

Well, I once heard a preacher, and he talked about 1 Corinthians 13. And he talked about how we apply that and how we live up to it. And what he said is, “If you want to see how you’re really doing in the Christian life, take 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, and take out the word “love” and apply the words “I am,” and see how you’re doing.”

So here we go. I am “patient and kind.” I “do not envy or boast.” I am “not arrogant or rude.” I don’t “insist on my own way.” I am “not irritable or resentful.” How are we all doing? (*Laughter.*) Pretty good? Is that pretty good? Does that give you great hope and encouragement? (*Laughter.*)

And you know, all we have to do is ask our wives. (*Laughter.*) And they’ll tell us the truth.

**Participant:** What if you’re not married?

**Ted:** What? What if you’re not married? Well, find a brother who will be honest with you, I guess. That’s right. (*Laughter.*)

So if I said, “Well, what about a better attitude?” Well, you know, I *am* getting a better attitude! There’s no question that since I’ve been converted, since I’ve been regenerated, that I *do* have more of those things.

**Participant:** You have a worse attitude? (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** But nonetheless, when I look at that and I compare it to God’s standard, it’s not very encouraging.

Now what about stronger emotions? Maybe I need to feel stronger about the Lord in order to have a greater assurance of salvation. It’s hard to find a verse in the Scripture, actually, that deals with that emotion. But I was interested in Obadiah. It says, “The pride of your heart has deceived you.”

It’s like this woman that I know, my friend. She was deceived because she thought that all her emotions were godly, and that simply is not true.

Now what about the desire to talk about God and what God has done for me? Yes, that has changed, and that’s better. And we look at that verse from Paul in 1 Corinthians. It says, “For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

But then, at the same time, we’ve got the verse that says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.” Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve hedged your bets and not talked

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about the Lord when maybe you should have? Have you been ashamed of the gospel at particular times? I have. I’ve drawn back. I’ve not said what I should have spoken.

So do I talk more about Jesus and the Lord? Yes, I do. But yet there are so many times I find myself ashamed of the gospel. Lord, have mercy on me for that shame!

“I have the desire to do what is right,” Paul says, “but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.” That describes my condition.

It’s interesting. I looked up some of those words in the Greek. Paul says, “I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” Now that word for *ability* is a little different of a word than I expected in the Greek, because it means to work down to the end point, or to bring to decisive finality. That’s my problem. I have the desire to do these things but I can’t bring them to a close. I can’t drill down and do the work I need to do to arrive at the final point. It’s not within me. I don’t have the ability in my flesh. That is, in my own self I don’t have that—to have the right behavior, the right attitude, the right feelings, the right testimony. I just don’t have it.

But what I *do* have, I have the desire. And four times Paul uses this word in that short section in Romans 7. Four times he uses the word *desire*. I desire to do it, but I don’t do it. And that’s what he has, the desire. The very fact that you desire the things of God marks you off as God’s. God’s first act of grace in salvation is the desire for the things of God. That’s the first thing God gives you more than anything else, that you now desire the things of God even though you fall far short of it and I fall far short of it.

I think we need to remember this. The unsaved, unregenerate, natural man does not desire the things of God. The natural man desires religion. He desires spirituality. But the natural man does not desire the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a key mark—not your emotions, not your works, not your attitude, not your feelings. The key mark and the beginning mark is the desire for the things of God. And that desire drives every other thing that happens. Every improvement that you have in your Christian life arises out of that desire for the things of God.

Now where does that desire lead us? For those we go to the Acts, and the story of the first converts to Christianity after Peter’s great sermon in Acts. “Those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” So this is a huge conversion of three thousand people on the day of Pentecost.

And it says, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Now I’ve come to the conclusion that these four things—the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers—are the four essential activities of a Christian once he is regenerated, once that person is born again, once they have that new life in Christ. These are the four things. You may be told that there are many things you have to do, and that’s true. There are many things that arise out of that—tithing, witnessing, this kind of thing. But there are four essential things that we have to nail down, and those arise out of our desire, this God-given desire which will lead us to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers.

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Now I was interested in that word, the Greek word for “devoted themselves,” and what that meant. It says, “to show steadfast and prevailing strength, consistently showing strength which prevails in spite of difficulties, to endure, to remain firm, staying in a fixed direction.” So what does it mean when it says that “they devoted themselves?” They set to a course, and the course was on those four activities.

*The apostles’ teaching.* Now we know what that is. That’s the Scripture. That is the witness of the apostles to Jesus Christ. I think it’s interesting. It’s very interesting to me, and I need to investigate this. Why did they not say, why did Luke not say, “They devoted themselves to the Scriptures?” It says, “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.”

Now someone might say to me, “Well, Ted, that’s just another way of saying “the Scriptures.”” But it may not be. There may be something more to that. But I don’t understand that yet and I want to get into that for my own understanding’s sake.

So that’s what they did. If you’ve been born again and you need an assurance of salvation, you will have a desire, and that desire will be for the apostles’ teaching. You will desire it. If you say you’ve been born again—you’ve said the right words, done the right things, had the right emotions,—but you don’t desire God’s word, that is a dangerous warning that indeed you may not be born again, because one thing that God gives is that He gives us a desire. You’re not given assurance *by* reading the Scriptures, but you’re given the assurance by the desire to read the Scriptures and to dig into it.

The second thing that we’re given the desire to do is to devote ourselves to *fellowship*. Now the word there is not speaking about the third sacrament. You know, Catholics have seven sacraments, Protestants have two sacraments, and Anglicans have three, which are Holy Communion, Baptism and coffee hour. (*Laughter.*) So this is not just saying, “We’re having a fellowship time here.” I mean, it would be worth it to do a word study on the word *koinonia*, which is the word that’s used here, because that word is a very interesting word. It means more than “Hey, we got together. We chatted. We kind of caught up on family and what everybody was doing, what the kids were doing in college, or the vacation we took. We talked about Jesus, did a Bible study. That was fellowship.”

Now the word is much heavier than that. What?

**Participant:** Tell us about it.

**Ted:** Well, thank you. Ted, get to it, right? (*Laughter.*) And once again, I’ve not done a thorough study of this. But it’s worth the study.

So, for instance, it means an intense relationship with others. When Paul talks about the word in the communion, that the taking of the bread is a participation in the body of Christ. The word he uses there is *koinonia*. So that goes well beyond getting together and having a warm, friendly time with everybody.

When Paul talks about the contribution of the saints—help me out here!—there was a need for, help me out. Where was the collection taken for the saints?

**Participant:** Jerusalem.

**Ted:** In Jerusalem? And he talks about the word translated “contribution,” but it says *koinonia*. The Greek word is *koinonia*. And so by the Macedonians who had so little and gave so much, that was translated “contribution,” but it’s actually the Greek word

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*koinonia*. So in their fellowship they really invested themselves in the church in Jerusalem.

When we partake of the bread of Christ, it's being part of Him. It's actually participating, digging down into Christ Himself. It's more than a symbol. It's a *koinonia* with the body of Christ.

So that's the second thing that we should be drawn to. We should want to love being with other Christians in intimate relationship. I have concerns about the ability of big box churches to do that.

**Participant:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** I don't know how it's practically possible. I know all the talk about small groups. I don't know how it's practically possible to have *koinonia* on a big box level. That controversial statement is meant for another time. (*Laughter.*) So that would be the second thing.

Thirdly, we desire, we're drawn to, as a sign, as an assurance of our salvation we're drawn to *the breaking of bread*. And interestingly enough, this expression, this Greek word, is only found twice in the New Testament. And when it's used only infrequently, I get very interested. So it's used here, and it says that they devoted themselves to “the breaking of the bread.” But also, can you think of another place in the New Testament where this expression “breaking of bread” is found? It's found here—

**Participant:** The Last Supper.

**Ted:** It doesn't say that. That's not the word that's used there. But it's close.

**Participant:** After the Resurrection, the Sunday night where Jesus appeared to the disciples and he broke bread?

**Ted:** No.

**Participant:** No?

**Participant:** The road to Emmaus?

**Ted:** The road to Emmaus. They walked along-- Oh, that's what you were talking about? Okay, you get half credit then. (*Laughter.*) Lack of clarity takes away half a point. (*Laughter.*) That's why we thank God that we're not graded on a system like that. (*Laughter.*) But on the road to Emmaus. And they said, (*paraphrase*), “Did we not know Him in the breaking of the bread?”

You know, I find it very interesting that since the time of the Reformation, the Reformers set out the distinctives of the church. Bruce talked about them. Do you remember? There are basically three things that mark out the true church. Where these things are operative, there is the true church. Do you remember what those three are.

**Participant:** Persecution.

**Ted:** No, not persecution. That's good.

**Participant:** A remnant.

**Ted:** It's not a remnant. I'm just staying with the Reformers all across the line, whether they were Baptist reformers, or Calvinistic or Anglican reformers. They all said the same thing. They said that where the gospel is truly and purely preached, where the sacraments are delivered, and where there is church discipline. Those are the three marks. When you see those, you have the true church.



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I find it interesting that in the mindset of modern day evangelicals you have a huge emphasis on the preaching of the gospel, and you have a lesser emphasis on discipline and almost no emphasis on the sacraments. We’ve lost it completely. They come across as just a nice memorial gathering, and we don’t realize that this was one of the four desires, the desire to be with the breaking of the bread, the joining of the brethren in the breaking of the bread. In our church we believe that the breaking of the bread should be done every Sunday, and this was the practice of the early church.

And finally, they devoted themselves to *prayers*. And that is that you desire to spend time with God in prayer and to submit yourself to Him, to have this conversation with Him—God speaking to you, and vice versa.

You’ll have other godly desires that lead you to do different actions, but these four are foundational.

I’ve got so little time here before I launch out into the last part. Do you have any thoughts or questions at this point? I know this has not been quite as entertaining as previous presentations. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Last Saturday—and I’m going to pick on a certain guy in the corner. He’s easy to pick on, so—

**Ted:** Are you talking about Clouser?

**Don:** Yes. (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** Go ahead, please. You have my permission. (*Laughter.*)

**Don:** We were talking about assurance and commitment and he had some observations, and I said, jokingly that, “Well, Dick, I’m only sure about me and thee, and I’m not even sure about thee.” And then a friend of mine quipped, “And I’m not even sure about me,” referring to himself. And that really humbled me quite a bit.

**Ted:** That’s good.

**Don:** It is good, yes.

**Ted:** Do you agree with that, Don?

**Don:** Yes.

**Participant:** No.

**Ted:** Mm! You heard a “no” back there. (*Laughter.*) Okay, keep going.

**Don:** That’s what I was going to say. There are people throughout history who we would think that if anyone had assurance of their salvation, they would have. But John Bunyan and Jonathan Edwards. John Bunyan struggled for four years in *The Holy War* is about that. As a Christian, he struggled four years with his assurance, and Jonathan Edwards didn’t have it till the end of his life. And I just wanted to know if you believe that it is possible for a Christian to be saved but not have the assurance.

**Ted:** I think, I mean to me there’s an obvious answer to that. And some of you aren’t going to like this. Given the fact that we still retain a large portion of the flesh in our souls and in our bodies, in our thinking and our feeling and our deciding—that’s what the soul is made up of—since we still have a large portion of that, we never can have, from a human standpoint, full assurance. Now that’s going to bother some of you. But I don’t know how you could argue that, that you’ll always, because of the infirmity of the flesh that’s holding you now.

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But I think you can be pointed in the right direction. You might not have 100 per cent assurance. Do I ever doubt that I’m saved? Absolutely! But I don’t doubt a God who can save.

**Participant:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** Everybody gets very sober and quiet here. (*Laughter.*) Dick?

**Dick:** Is that your opinion, Ted, or is that—

**Ted:** That’s my opinion, but I’m saying—

**Dick:** What do the Scriptures say about people in the Scripture that have assurance?

**Ted:** What does it say?

**Dick:** Is there anyone in Scripture that has assurance that they were saved?

**Ted:** I don’t know. I don’t know the answer to that question, sir.

**Participant:** John says in 1 John chapter 5 verse 13 that “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know—

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** But on the flip side of that, Peter writes, you know, he talks about those who become blind and shortsighted, having forgotten their purification from their former sins.

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** These people may very well be saved, but they will not live within the parameters of assurance because they’re not living out the new life that God has created in them.

**Ted:** But the thing I was trying to say is that they’re not living it out. But nobody lives it out. So if the assurance comes from looking at—see, people are already starting to leave! (*Laughter.*) If the assurance depends on the living it out, you will never have full assurance. Yes?

**Participant:** The assurance has to be built in your heart. As you grow in Christ, He builds this assurance in your heart. I’ve first got to say that I’ve had a zeal. But as you grow, as you allow Him to work in you, that assurance grows in your heart. And I believe, after you’ve been with Him quite a while, it should totally take you over, you know, that assurance. You should have assurance in your heart that you’re His.

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** Because He’s working in your heart. You think the Holy Spirit—

**Ted:** He is. But then your flesh is always there. You will die with the flesh still operative, and that flesh will always doubt.

**Participant:** But you should have a great assurance. If you’re saved, you shouldn’t be doubting it.

**Ted:** I know you shouldn’t, but you do.

**Participant:** Well, I don’t.

**Ted:** Okay, fine. (*Laughter.*) So this brother has arrived. He has arrived at the place where he does not doubt anymore.

**Participant:** What about some of the things that Paul says though, Ted, about “I know whom I believe.”

**Ted:** Yes.

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**Participant:** Or Romans 8. “Nothing shall separate” me “from the love of God.”

**Ted:** That’s right.

**Participant:** Or other things that He says that seem to talk about the fact that he, even though Romans 7 is there, nevertheless “There is therefore no condemnation.”

**Ted:** Right. Because the focus is on what God is doing and not what he’s experiencing, feeling, thinking, saying or doing.

I’ve got to go here. Gosh, it’s going now, isn’t it? (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** You’ve got to make this quick, right? I think that part of the problem, too, is that we tend to think that it’s either on or off.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** It’s either full or not full. And Christ says, “I know My sheep, and my sheep know My voice.”

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** And Paul says, “I run the good race that I may win this crown.” It’s a process of assurance. But that’s what we need to do. You mature in the Word, and as you grow, you understand more, and you have this better, closer relationship.

**Ted:** Well, that’s where I’m going to finish up, running the race. Yes, Josh?

**Josh:** Yes. I just read a Scripture in Luke 23:43, where the criminal was hung on the cross next to Jesus, and he said, (*paraphrase*), “Jesus, remember me when You come into the kingdom.” And He said to him, (and this is what my Bible says), “I assure you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

**Ted:** Yes. Right!

**Josh:** That’s assurance.

**Ted:** That is assurance! That’s given by Jesus to him. We don’t know. Assurance is in Christ. It’s not what I am feeling, doing, thinking, responding. There’s no assurance in that!

**Participant:** It comes from God.

**Ted:** It’s not in my feelings. It’s not because I feel it more in my heart. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** Yes. It seems to me that the way the gospel is preached in so many pulpits, it sort of leads to a subtle logic, that you’re playing a role in this that then makes you question your salvation because of the logical consistency of the way you hear them talking about it.

**Ted:** Yes. Right. Because if you have a role in it, then it really comes back, at least in part, to you. And what I’m saying is that we can either look at it from God’s perspective or man’s perspective. I’m sorry. I keep forgetting you guys over there. Bill?

**Bill:** And if we have full assurance we’re not walking by faith. We’re walking by sight.

**Ted:** Oh, that’s interesting, isn’t it? Yes?

**Participant:** I was listening to R. C. Sproul this week and I was comforted by him saying that there are times when he’s not assured, where he’s—

**Ted:** He doesn’t have full assurance?

**Participant:** Right.

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**Ted:** Yes, and what I want to say, guys, is that whether you’re assured or not is irrelevant. It’s what God is doing. That’s what counts.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Ted:** And it starts with the desire God gives you and it’s completed by what He’s doing through you. Allow me just to finish up here.

If God’s first act of grace in salvation is a desire for the things of God, His last act of grace in salvation is enduring to the end. Remember John 15. “Abide in Me.” Now I’ve talked about this before. The Greek word *meno*, it’s a great word, and Bruce has talked about it. It means to camp out, to make your house in, to plant yourself, to dig down in. That’s what that word means. And the word for *endure* in Greek is *hupomeno*. It takes the word for *abiding*, or camping down, tenting down at a place, and it adds the Greek preposition *hupo*, which means “under.”

So basically, as you start off in Christ by abiding in Him, you continue to abide in Him. And as you go and move ahead in that race that Paul talks about, as you move ahead, you’re continuing to abide *under* Him. And that is enduring. And that’s the Christian life. It’s like a marathon race. And in that race Jesus says that “he who endures to the end will be saved.” He says that. He does not say, “He who does the right things, thinks the right things, feels the right things, says the right things will be saved.” “He who endures to the end will be saved.”

I was in a church service, a very large church service. I’ve shared this story before. And the worship leader came up and she said, “Wasn’t that great? The Spirit was really present today.”

And I said, “We won’t know for several months.”

And she said, “What do you mean by that?”

It’s not the emotion of the service at the moment. Everybody was ginned up. It had to do with what lives are being changed in the long haul, as you endure in that race. “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.” Stay in the race. “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”

**Participant:** And that’s an action.

**Ted:** It is. That’s correct. We’re still running the race.

**Participant:** But the motivation—

**Ted:** But it’s—yes?

**Participant:** But it’s the Holy Spirit at work in us that leads to that action. It’s the Holy Spirit who is possessing me.

**Ted:** That’s right. And that’s why Paul says, “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race.” But then what does he say? “I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that was within me.” My assurance is based on the desire that God gives me in the beginning. It leads me to devoting myself to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to prayers, to the breaking of bread. That desire drives me in that direction. But it’s also Him who carries me to the end of the race.

**Participant:** Amen.

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**Ted:** “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,” the writer of Hebrews writes, “let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and run with endurance—*hupomeno*, abide under Christ—“the race that is set before us.”

Now how are we to run that race? What does it say? “Looking to Jesus.” Looking to Jesus, “the Founder and Perfecter of our faith.”

And it’s interesting. That word *Perfecter* is the same word I remember hearing in a Good Friday service, where Jesus says, “It is finished.” The word used there is *totelestai*. That’s the same Greek word that’s used there. He says the “Perfecter.” But that word can also mean “the Finisher,” “the Completer,” the One who matures you.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Ted:** And He’s the one who pulls you through the entire race. My assurance of salvation is based on two things. My experience and my assurance is based on two things—the desire God has given me and the endurance He has given me to complete the race. Those are the things.

“Looking unto Jesus.” Not looking unto my experience, my actions, my feelings, saying the right words, doing the right things, but “looking to Jesus, the Author”—He started it—“and the Perfecter”—Finisher, Completer, Maturer—“of my faith.” That’s where I have assurance. In Ted Wood I have no assurance. But in Jesus I have all assurance.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Participant:** Would you say also, Ted, that your ability to finish the race is just a matter of you believing in Christ, as opposed to accomplishing—

**Ted:** Well, I think the way we experience it as Christians is that we live by faith and not by sight. “I have died with Christ, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.” I mean, the whole thing is by faith. That’s the way we live our whole life.

But I don’t want you to overlook the fact that God’s compulsive energy and power in your lives drives you to do the things God wants you to do. Do you do them perfectly? No. But do you do them because it comes from God’s power and not from your own efforts? Yes, because everything that is done without faith is sin, Paul says. And “the flesh profits nothing.” There is nothing in the flesh that accounts for anything that God counts as good.

So therefore I believe that all the good I ever do in my Christian life—treating my clients with respect, delivering quality services, loving my wife, being an example for my kids—all of that comes out of the life of Christ within me and driving me in Christ’s perfections to touch others.

**Participant:** Preach it, brother, preach it!

**Ted:** For me it’s always going to be a little different take on things.

**Participant:** The point I was trying to make though, Ted,—

**Ted:** I was trying to ignore your point. )*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** Well, I guess I was trying to give clarity. When Christ talked about the people God has given Him, you know, right before that high priestly prayer in John 17, he talks about those who sinned being those who didn’t believe in Him.

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**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** And it seems like throughout the Bible, the greatest sin is not to believe in Christ that God sent.

**Ted:** Right. Absolutely.

**Participant:** But even that’s a work, right?

**Ted:** No, it’s not a work if it’s Christ’s faith. See, it’s not my faith, it’s Christ’s faith. I’m in union with Christ. It’s His faith. The faith that I experience day in and day out, the love I experience day in and day out, the good works I do day in and day out, they are Christ’s works—not because I’m trying to get to Him but because I’m already in Him and He is living His life out through me.

The question I have is, why isn’t it any more perfect? Why doesn’t He manifest Himself more?

Well, you can say, “Well, Ted, because you don’t cooperate.” Hey! Tell me something I don’t know! (*Laughter.*) I mean, that’s no help at all. Okay. You’re not exhibiting enough of the Christlike Spirit. You’re not exhibiting enough of Christ because you don’t cooperate. That is absolutely true! And my flesh every time will not cooperate with Him.

But then when that flesh is crucified, when God puts me through those situations that grind me up—loss of family, hatred from children, loss of job and income, disease, cancer, whatever it is—when God grinds me up, it’s His way of putting to death the flesh so more of Him is evident. And that’s why no matter, in all circumstances, we can say, “Thank You, Lord.”

Now do I feel like it in the flesh? Absolutely not! (*Laughter.*) “You know, God, You’re really letting me down this time.” But in truth, in fact, “looking unto Jesus,” that is the reality. And that is so upside down from the way the world looks at it. And I’m just afraid that too many of our churches are preaching a message that sounds too much like what the world says is true.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Ted:** Oh, they’ll talk about Jesus, His blood shed. But in the end, the way it works itself out, it ends up having to do with me and not Him. Yes?

**Participant:** Ted, the other thing is that we use that word *believing*, and it’s nothing like the intent of the-- Isn’t there an action or something behind the—

**Ted:** The word is *pistis* in Greek and it means faith or trust. I mean, it’s active. But that’s when we experience it. I mean, when you get married there is a certain amount of faith in getting married, is there not? There’s a leap of faith. You know, you think she looks good. She laughs at all your jokes. But in the end, you don’t know what you’re getting. (*Laughter.*) It’s a surprise.

Every one of us, when we start with Jesus, many of us can say, “If I had known what it meant, in my flesh, in my human perspective, I would have never signed up with Christ. But God got me. He wooed me. He brought me in. He married me. And now I’m His, and He’s doing the work on me, just like my wife is doing the work on me.” I know we have to leave.

**Participant:** Ted?

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**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** A little bit of this assurance. You know, every day when I come and I look around this room. And I say, “Wow!”

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** What a response!

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** Sometimes, when you think about who you are, and we question. We look around this room here, and we remember that God is raising a family. And sometimes you take some hits. We take some hits when we think about coming Friday morning. We take some hits on the way here on Friday morning. We take hits all week. “Don’t you know that Jesus is a crutch, man. Get away from that. Focus on the decisions you’ve got to make, you know?” All this. But yet (*unclear.*) Sometimes you do take some hits.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** And you won’t like them. And you question. “What’s going on here?”

**Ted:** Yes.

**Participant:** You’re not questioning your salvation. You’re questioning. You’re trying to understand. Okay, how are you doing this? Such admiration! Yes!

**Ted:** It’s God.

**Participant:** Why do we fight over this gift? It seems like we fight over this gift. It seems like they’re making us fight over this gift. You know what I mean? What a blessing! Sometimes we don’t look at it right.

**Ted:** Thanks, Carey. That’s good.

Well, I’m going to wrap up with prayer. Let us pray. Lord God, we pray and give You thanks for the fact that You are our assurance, and not anything we have done or said or felt. We pray that more and more You cause us to look unto You, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, knowing that You who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in Christ Jesus our Lord, for we pray in His name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.