

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

Holiness  
**The Rev. Ted Wood**  
May 29, 2015

**Ted:** Don, would you take us to the throne of grace?

**Don:** This hymn is called “Not What These Hands Have Done” by Horatius Bonar.

**Ted:** Okay. (*Music.*)

Lord God, in Your word You tell us that we are to take every thought captive to Christ. Too often, Lord, we see that as taking captive and subduing lustful thoughts, inappropriate thoughts. But in Your word You make clear that these are the ways we think about You and think about each other and think about Your word. So may those thoughts be brought captive to you as well. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Ted:** Okay. This is part two of a talk that I gave in April. And I actually got through it. Dick Johnson said that he wished I’d unpacked the second part more than the first part. So I’m going to try to unpack the second part and a lot of what I’m going to be saying today is a repetition or rehearsal of what I talked about in April.

One of my clients is the Erie City Mission. And the Erie City Mission provides over a hundred seventy thousand meals every year to people who are homeless and hungry. So they have a feeding program. They also have an overnight shelter. They have beds for fifty-six people, homeless people, to stay in their shelter, and they’re filled almost every night. They also have a program called The New Life Program, which is a program about addiction recovery, whether it’s alcohol, drugs or any combination thereof. And it’s a very important and successful program.

There are about thirty some fellows in that program at any one given time. The program lasts nine to twelve months, and during that time the people who are in that program have a chance to go from being addicted to sobriety and a meaningful life and to establish a relationship with Jesus Christ.

It was interesting as I had to prepare the case for support for the fund raising for this organization, I learned a lot about their addictions recovery program. Also, every day I’m up there—and I’m up there two days a week—I have a chance to have lunch with the fellows that are in the program. That’s where I have my lunch. And so I learn a lot. They tell me a lot of their stories.

And what I find is that there is a series of programs that they have to go through in this nine to twelve month recovery program in order to be sure that their sobriety is established and firm so they have a chance of being a success when they get out into the regular society. And there are programs that have to do with avoiding situations that would lead to temptation in terms of alcohol or drugs. There are classes in thinking about how their minds work. There are classes about relationships. There are classes about the chemistry of addiction.

But there’s also a very important program and it’s called “regenerative thinking.” And what they do is that they take them through a program in which an addict begins to think differently. And this is the story I hear as I sit down and have lunch with these fellows,

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

that for them, in order for every one of them to be sober and to have a right view of things, they must begin to re-think the way they look at life. And prior to that, they thought about it all wrong, and that’s one of the reasons they’re in their addiction.

And extrapolating that out, I find that every one of us before we come to Christ is addicted to the world. And what we do is that we look at folks that are addicted to alcohol or to drugs, to over eating, to over buying, to consumerism and other things—we look at that as the problem. But every one of us, before we are regenerated, before we come to Christ, every one of us is looking for the world to satisfy our needs. And many of us too often are regenerated but never grow much in terms of the cognitive, the way we look at the world in cognitive thinking.

So what I try to do when I come and talk to you folks, to talk to myself, is to begin to re-think a lot of the ways that we had previously looked at life and the way we thought reality was. So that’s what I’m trying to do today in terms of the question about a sure assurance of salvation.

Now let me just go through that. We have a limited number of sheets to hand out, so I hope that all of you got one of those.

And actually this also goes along with Bruce’s teaching that doctrine precedes behavior. He talks about that. You need to be thinking right in order to act right. And that’s a presupposition we come with. Now I’ve also taken that and extrapolated that out because he talks about the fact that you can’t begin to witness for your faith until you have a behavior that testifies to that witness. So I would say that doctrine leads to behavior and behavior leads to witness. So this is consistent with what Bruce has been teaching us.

Now how do you know that you’re saved? And how can you be sure that you have eternal life? There’s that one passage that says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” So it would simply be a matter of saying the right prayer and calling on God and you’ll be saved. But then the next verse there says, “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 it’s not simply a matter of saying the right words.

Well then, what is it a matter of? R. C. Sproul in his teaching says, “Making a decision has never converted anyone and no one has been justified by a profession of faith.” I’ve been in many situations where it’s reported that so many people got saved at a meeting. I have no idea whether they got saved or not. There are other things that we’ll have to tell over the long run, and we only know whether one has assurance of salvation over the long run. It’s not because they had the right feeling or said the right words or had the right behavior.

The assurance depends on where we start. Do we start from a human perspective or from God’s perspective? And unfortunately most modern-day evangelicalism starts from a human perspective in terms of human feelings, human behaviors, or words that have been said.

So I take to heart very much that passage in 2 Corinthians the fifth chapter, the sixteenth and seventeenth verses. You all know that. “So from now on, therefore”—that’s number one on the sheet—“from now on, therefore, we regard no one according to

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

the flesh,” or as it says in the NIV, “from a worldly point of view.” “Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All of this is from God.”

So what we often do is that we begin to look at things, we begin to look at our own walk in Christ. We begin to look at the issue of salvation. We look at who God is and who His people are—the church. We look at it from a human perspective. But what Paul is saying there is that once you’re new in Christ, once you become a new creation, then God begins to give you a new perspective so that, from that point on, you view nothing from a human perspective, or at least we’re not called to do that.

From a human perspective, it always has to do with what I’ve said, what I’ve done or what I feel. I think a good illustration of this (and I was able to mind this), as I go out on the road and I’m in the room at night I’ve pretty much given up watching TV in my motel room at night. I’ve gotten myself a little laptop that I flip open. It’s like dying and going to heaven because now I can get Youtube and watch all kinds of great and edifying programs.

Well, one of the programs that I’ve kind of gotten hooked on is a program, a TV talk show, a Christian TV call-in talk show called “Heart of the Matter.” It comes out of the West Coast. The fellow that hosts it is Shawn McCraney. He’s a crazy man and he looks like a cross between a Hell’s Angel and a latter day hippie. But nonetheless, he has a lot of good things to say. And people call in and ask questions or object, or mostly argue with him over the phone.

Now I want to read you some of the quotes of the people that have called in, because he’s questioning whether these people are Christians. So they’re calling in and objecting.

And one caller called in and said, “Christ is my Lord and Savior.” Another one said, “I know in my heart, because I’ve had miracles. I know that I know that I know.”

Another person called in and said, “I know. All I know is that my heavenly Father talks to me, and when I pray I get answers. And everything confirms what the church teaches.” Do you have any idea what group, what church Shawn McCraney is arguing with, people from what church? Do you have any idea?

**Participant:** Pentecostal.

**Ted:** No.

**Participant:** Mormons. Latter Day Saints.

**Ted:** Latter Day Saints. Listen to this. “I know to my core,” says one caller, “no matter what anyone tells me differently, that my Father in heaven told me that Joseph Smith did see God the Father and the Son.” So, as you can see, Mormons believe that they know that they know that they know that their gospel is true—a gospel that says that God has a physical body and that He had actual sexual intercourse with Mary, and that Jesus and Satan are spiritual brothers, and that God the Father and God the mother in heaven have intercourse in heavenly places and produce myriads of spirit children that are sent to this earth to be tested to see how good their behavior is so they can merit one of the three levels of heaven. They know that they know that they know, and they know that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

So all of this talk when we say, “How do you know that you’re saved?”, the Mormon can say the exact same thing and believe a horrific, awful, damning gospel.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** So from a human perspective it doesn’t work. It must be from God’s perspective. Assurance of salvation begins and ends with God’s action. It cannot begin and end with what I’ve done, what I’ve said or what I’ve felt.

The human experience of salvation is secondary. Whether I actually feel it or not is very secondary to what God has done. It’s God’s action that counts.

God’s action begins in His sovereign election according to His good will and pleasure. “He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”

Why did God save you?

**Participant:** He chose to.

**Ted:** He *wanted* to! That’s why He did it. That is the primary reason why God saved you. He didn’t need a friend. He didn’t need a companion. He didn’t need people to believe in Him. He did it completely because He desired to do that. And I have no idea why He desired to do that, especially me.

So God’s action begins in sovereign election. But God’s action continues in sovereign keeping. “I am sure of this,” Paul writes in Philippians, “that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

He says, “I am sure of this.” This is a great confidence that Paul has, that “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion” if you’ve done all the right things. If you’ve tried really hard. If you’ve been sincere. If you’ve had your quiet time. If you’ve gone to church regularly. If you tithe. If you give more than the tithe. If you don’t use profane language. If you don’t have lustful thoughts.

Does it say any of that? No. It says, “I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus,” with no qualifications or requirements in that. It’s purely God’s great action.

And so when we think about what we need to assure us of our salvation, is there anything more that we need than these promises from God—His election of us and His keeping of us? That would seem to be enough.

But we also seem to need things that we can point to, because we all wonder that. And the last time I talked about this there was a lot of discussion about doubting. Some people were upset that I said that you might doubt along the way that you are saved. And that’s okay because it’s your doubt, not God’s action. In fact, I think a number of those people who objected are not in this class today. (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** They heard you were teaching.

**Ted:** Yeah, they did. (*Laughter.*)

Well, listen. The first action, the first act of grace in salvation, the first thing God does for us, in giving us an assurance, a personal assurance, is the desire for the things of God.

How were you made a new creation in the first place? How were you actually born again? It says in John the third chapter, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, “You must be born again.”

So it’s not through the flesh. It’s not through human effort from which we’re born again but completely by the Spirit of God from which we’re born again.

And where does that birth, that new birth, lead us? Where does that desire lead us? What that desire does the natural man does not have. The natural man does not have this desire. He may have the desire for spiritual things. He may have the desire for religion. He may have the desire for meaning in life. He may have the desire for eternal life. But He does not desire the things of God. That desire drives us to Christ Himself and His body.

“So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” A lot of people, as Jesus started to teach, departed from Him and left Him because they didn’t like what He was saying.

“Do you want to go as well?” Jesus says to the apostles. “Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed.”

That’s what happens. In the end, when you come to salvation, you realize that you really have no other options. Who else shall you go to? Who else has the solutions to these issues in your life? To whom else shall we go? “You have the words of eternal life.”

And at some point along the line, in terms of the time we are converted and come to know Him, we are seized by the fact that He has the words of eternal life. And that drives us to Christ and it drives us to His body as well, because indeed the church is the body of Christ. And that’s not just a nice thing to call it, or a euphemism. It’s indeed what it is.

And therefore, as we’re driven to Christ, what shall we do then? What things happen? What happens as we are driven to Christ and have this desire for the things of God? Because, even though it is God’s selection, we’re active in it. We’re active because God drives us to action. In a sense, we can’t help ourselves in doing the things of God. That’s what we truly desire to do. Every one of us does what we do ultimately because we desire to do that thing. So when we’re filled with the Spirit we’re driven to do the things of God.

Now what do those involve? I take great inspiration from that verse in Acts the second chapter, the forty-first and forty-second verses, in which they talk about the conversions of the three thousand who were brought into the number of the believers on that first day of preaching by Peter. And it says that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and to the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers.” To me those seem like the four things that you are immediately driven to in terms of the relationship with Christ and His church.

First of all, there is *the apostles’ teaching*. We say that’s the Scripture, and indeed it is. But it’s something that Paul himself received. He didn’t get a private revelation. He did see Jesus. He was convinced in that way. But he also received from the other apostles the truth of the gospel.

## “A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”

He says, “I delivered to you,” in 1 Corinthians 15, “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.” So what Paul is doing is, he is receiving the truth from the apostles and he’s passing that on. And the early Christians devoted themselves to this passed on message of truth.

In Ephesians the second chapter, the nineteenth verse, (it’s not noted there), it says, “the household of God.” It talks about the household of God which is the church. It is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone.”

So everything we believe in the church is based on what the apostles taught. And so, therefore, it is critical that we devote ourselves. And that Greek word means to consistently show strength which prevails in spite of difficulties, to endure, remain firm, stand in a fixed direction. So I am standing in a fixed direction toward the teaching of the apostles. And this is something I’ve studied.

And if you find and if you say, “I’m born again and I feel like I’m born again. I think I’m going to heaven. I’m sure I’m going to heaven,” and yet you’re not devoted to the apostles’ teaching, there would be a question in my mind as to whether you’ve been born again.

In fact, this came up when I did a teaching at Christ Church once. And I talked about this whole idea of God giving a desire and that desire driving us to action and doing certain things. And someone came up to me and he said, “Well, that leaves me off the hook. Now I know I don’t have to do anything.”

And I said, “Well, if you feel like you don’t need to do anything, then you are probably not born again.” I mean, you don’t get the desire to do the things of God until God has given you that desire. And that action, the actual things you do, are evidence not that it saves you, but are evidence that God is driving you forward and that you’re under the control of the Spirit. So that would be the first thing that we desire to do and devote ourselves to do.

The second thing is *fellowship, koinonia*. And it says, “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus the Son cleanses us.”

Now actually, when I taught last time, I had not done much study on this word *koinonia*. I have since then. There are nineteen occurrences of it in the New Testament and they fall under groupings in terms of what this means.

The problem is that when we think about fellowship today, we think about coffee hour. And I shared with you that for us Anglicans there are not two sacraments, there are not seven; there are three. (*Laughter.*) And those of course are—and Don remembers, and he can get the punch line—there is Holy communion, baptism and—

**Don:** Coffee hour.

**Ted:** That’s correct. (*Laughter.*)

**Don:** Or tea hour. (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** But we often think of having fellowship when we talk about the context of fellowship.

**Participant:** How about the Steelers, Ted?

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

**Ted:** The Steelers. Well, that’s only regional. That’s only part of the regional church. *(Laughter.)*

But let me just read for you some of the categories that this fellowship is explained in. And it’s not in the text here; I’ve added to it because I couldn’t get everything on two pages.

First of all, there is fellowship, there is *koinonia* with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. “God is faithful, by whom we were called into fellowship with the Son.” That’s 1 Corinthians 1:9.

“That I may know.” Paul talks about that in Philipians. It’s my life verse. “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings.” This word *koinonia* is translated “sharing” here. “That I may have fellowship in His suffering.”

Also, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

“If there is any encouragement in Christ, any love, any *koinonia* in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy.”

And finally, in 2 Corinthians, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

So there’s that first kind of *koinonia* which means that intimate, intense relationship with God the Father. But there is also a *koinonia* with others, in which Paul talks about “I pray that the sharing of your faith,” the *koinonia* of your faith, “may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing.”

“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have *koinonia* with us.” So it’s not only that we have fellowship with Christ. We also have fellowship with one another.

But here’s another interesting way in which *koinonia* is used. It’s used to speak about Christian giving. It says in 2 Corinthians, “begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.” It’s translated “taking part in the relief of the saints.” It’s where the word *koinonia* follows. “And begging us earnestly for the favor of *koinonia* in the relief of the saints.”

“Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor.” But the word is *koinonia*. We translate it “contribution” there. “Macedonia and Achaia,” (that is, the Christians there), “have been pleased to make some *koinonia* for the poor.”

So what does this involve? *Koinonia* involves this intense fellowship and that’s what we’re called to do. I mean, what does it take in a church to get this kind of intense fellowship, the kind of intense, personal fellowship that one has with the Son and the Holy Spirit, that one has with other believers, that one has in giving?

And in talking about *koinonia* and giving, Paul illustrates that this is a sacrificial giving. So everything involved in the Christian life of fellowship is an experience of sacrificial fellowship with the Son, with the Spirit, with each other and with giving.

The third thing it leads us to do, the desire that God gives us, is *the breaking of bread*. Now listen to this passage. “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

What do you think that word *participation* is in the Greek?

**Participant:** *Koinonia*.

**Ted:** *Koinonia*. “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *koinonia* in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a *koinonia* in the body of Christ?”

That’s why to those of us from a more historic Christian perspective, it doesn’t make sense to think of the cup of communion as simply being a symbol. I’m not having fellowship, I’m not having intense *koinonia* with a symbol or a sign. I’m having intense fellowship and *koinonia* with the spiritual body and blood of Christ.

Now where we differ and part company with the Catholics is that they teach that this actually becomes the actual body and blood of Christ in terms of the corpuscles and the sinews of Christ. But we have always taught, and the early Reformers taught, that indeed there was a supernatural blessing because we were actually having *koinonia* with Christ at the Communion. It was much more than a symbol. It was much more than a sign. It was much more than a remembrance. Something supernatural was taking place. Yes, Don? I knew this would get a response?

**Don:** (*Laughter.*) Would you have any objection, for example, to the words of Calvin when he said, you know, that we don’t feed corporeally but spiritually?

**Ted:** Yes, absolutely. That’s the only way we can take it—spiritually.

**Don:** Yes.

**Ted:** Because, in the end, all of the Christian life is a life in the Spirit.

**Don:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** So that’s where we get that. But nonetheless, the spirit is not less real than the corporeal.

**Don:** No.

**Ted:** And the world sees the things of the flesh as being more real than the things of the Spirit. That’s why they never invest themselves in the things of the Spirit because they don’t see any value in it, because it’s basically irrelevant. Yes, Dean?

**Dean:** Could we have Communion without taking the bread and the wine. Could we be there for just taking Communion without eating that bread and sipping that wine?

**Ted:** In the Communion service you mean, per se? I don’t know why you would not want to. I mean, Jesus is saying, “Here I am. I have a special grace to give you through the Holy Communion. I have *koinonia* with My body and My blood. Would you come forward and receive it to build up your own spiritual life?” I don’t know why you wouldn’t want to do that. You can observe it. Yes?

**Dean:** Is that a “no” or a “yes?”

**Ted:** No, I don’t think you can. You have to receive it. If you’re actually having this kind of fellowship, the sacrament, you’re going to have it. Yes?

**Participant:** Well, what if you have a medical need?

**Ted:** Well then God is going to send you to hell. (*Laughter.*) Just joking!  
(*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** I’m not joking.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

**Ted:** No, no. Of course!

**Participant:** (*Unclear.*) We're not talking about wine and we're not talking about bread. We're talking about gluten and other things.

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** And if you can't take it,--

**Ted:** Well you know, in the end we're not justified by the things of the flesh. We're justified by the things of the Spirit.

**Participant:** So that means that you don't have to participate. It's a spiritual act, it's not a physical act.

**Ted:** But, you know, it would be the same thing as I love my wife spiritually. But unless I love my wife physically, there's not much to it. Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** On one hand, St. Augustine said, “As to what end as thou prepared, come to Me. Just believe and thou hast received.” That's the side that he's saying. But on the other hand, if you're at the Last Supper and somebody is handing it out, and you say, “Thanks, but no thanks. I'd just as soon pass,” (*Unclear.*)

**Ted:** Let me see. I'm trying to think. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** The last comment that John made makes me think of something Calvin said. It would be like being invited to somebody's house for dinner and everybody's sitting there eating, and you don't touch anything on the plate. You just sit there and look.

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Jim:** You know, it's just not appropriate.

**Ted:** Right. Okay. Let me see.

**Participant:** To Dean's point, the only thing I relate to what you're asking Dean is that I come from a very Catholic background. So when I'm with my family at weddings, funerals, whatever, I'm going to the Catholic church. And I'm not welcome at the Communion table.

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** Because I'm not Catholic.

**Ted:** That's right.

**Participant:** So to your question, is there fellowship there?

**Ted:** No.

**Participant:** (*Laughing.*) No!

**Ted:** And that's a good point. There would not be fellowship there. I know, Bishop, that you want to say one other thing. Sorry.

**Bishop Rodgers:** (*Unclear.*)

**Ted:** Right. That's good. Excellent. Now let's see. I have Doug.

**Doug:** Can you have a baptism without water? Can you have a burial without a body? Can you have a wedding without a bridegroom?

**Participant:** Some people say—

**Ted:** No, no! (*Laughter.*) Yes. Go ahead. Yes, Bill?

**Bill:** It gets back to our regeneration in the beginning. God gives us desires.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Bill:** One thing is obedience.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

**Participant:** Right.

**Bill:** We’re commanded to eat this bread and drink this wine.

**Ted:** That’s right.

**Bill:** Yet we do it because we want to.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Bill:** If we don’t want to, there’s something wrong.

**Participant:** No one can hear you, Bill.

**Ted:** He said that God in our regeneration has given us a desire. One of the desires is to be obedient. And if He says, “Take and eat,” and we don’t want to do it, then it indicates that we don’t have that desire. And if we don’t have that desire, the problem is that maybe we’re not regenerate. Yes?

**Participant:** We’re also told to examine ourselves.

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** What if upon examination we find ourselves to be in iniquity?

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** And abstain from the meal, that we might not bring condemnation on ourselves?

**Ted:** Right.

**Participant:** In an unworthy manner. I mean, you know, if this was an ongoing thing, I could see that this is a problem. But if it would be a one-time thing—

**Ted:** Of course. And God drives us to desire to receive the feeding and the Communion and the breaking of bread. He drives us to that. And if we have to abstain for the sake of our soul because we’re not right with one of the brothers, or for the sake of the body, being out of fellowship with the body, our desire to receive from the Lord in the breaking of the bread should be such that we’re going to go get reconciled to that brother. Yes?

**Participant:** He asked my question.

**Ted:** Okay, great. What I want to drive home and get you to think about is the fact that what we’ve done is that we, in many, many Protestant churches, have denigrated the Lord’s Supper to a-- I don’t even know what it would be like. It’s like a re-enacting of something. It’s done like having a Christmas pageant, or something like that. It has no spiritual guts or power to it.

And from the very beginning of the church, here even with the conversion of the three thousand, at the very beginning of the church and on into the church, the taking of the sacrament was a critical part of being a Christian. And the early Reformers, Luther and Calvin and others, reaffirmed that. They did not get rid of it.

So now we have a situation where we went when my wife and daughter were younger. She was in a dance competition, and on Sunday they offered a Protestant service. So we had a service. We probably had several hundred people at that service at the venue where the event was taking place before the dance competition started. We went to that service, an hour long. Fifty minutes, literally, of preaching and praise songs. And then they said, “Okay. Now we have to do Communion.” And they passed along, you know, those little mug things that you get for coffee. That was grape juice. And they didn’t say, “Okay.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” They passed it out. It was all done in under ten minutes, but with hundreds of people. There was no preparation, no admonishment. But for them that’s okay, because they’ve lost that early tradition. In fact, they stepped away and departed from it because it really doesn’t have much meaning to them. And I’m saying that we need to get back to our roots.

So we devote ourselves to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers. And Paul writes, “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. Keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” So prayer in communing with God, having this intimate *koinonia* with Him through prayer, is part of what God drives us to, the desire that He gives us.

So not only does He give us desire from the beginning that leads to all the behaviors that we have from that point on. I mean, if you’re saying to yourself, “Well, Ted, you know, I really need to read the Bible more. And, you know, I just need to work on it harder.” Well, if you really want to, you’ll do it. I mean, it really comes down to that. Every Christian virtue that you want to do and you feel you’re falling deficient in, you’re falling deficient because you really don’t want to do it.

You know, I know that it’s so hard to get up in the morning. It’s hard to come out for the fellowship, the Bible study, on Friday morning. Well, if you wanted to do it, you would do it. I mean, there are certain things that we’ll stand on our heads to do. And what we need to do is not to say, “What I need to do is read the Bible more.” What I need to do is to ask God to give me the desire to read the Scripture. Lord, give me a godly desire for Your things. Drive me! Fill me with a passion for the things that concern You! And based on that, then we can move forward.

I just want your energies to be focused in the right direction, because just trying harder doesn’t normally make it. But if you’re doing it because you desire to do it, you’ll do it with grace and ease and joy.

Okay. So that’s the first thing that happens. But the assurance of salvation continues by enduring to the end.

Remember these verses in section 3a. “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” Not the one who comes forward at the crusade, or says the right words, but “the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Paul writes, “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” “I worked harder,” Paul says, “though it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

And finally, in Hebrews, “Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith.”

So the second sign, as I understand it, of assurance of salvation is that you endure to the end.

So I’ve kind of taken my life. And I’ve gone on to the Social Security website now that I’m eligible for it. I haven’t taken it yet, but I’m eligible. And you can actually put in a formula and it will tell you how much longer you have to live. (*Laughter.*) Which is

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

kind of reassuring; now at least I understand. (*Laughter.*) So I’m 67 now and it says that I’ll live to be 84, which makes sense because my dad lived till he was 82.

**Participant:** You mean that’s when the money runs out. (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** And maybe before then. (*Laughter.*) You know, it’s a sobering perspective to look at, because when I’m 50, if somebody were to say to me, “Ted, you’ve got seventeen more years,” well, look down the road seventeen years. Well then I would be 67.

I said, “Yes. I’ve got a whole other life in front of me.” Well now when I look down the road seventeen years, that’s the end of my life. So it begins to change your perspective on this.

So I’ve taken my life. And at one time in high school or college I ran track and I was very familiar with the quarter mile track, the race of faith. And I’ve taken that quarter mile track and divided it up into eighty-four years, just to chart how I’ve done in the race, how I’ve come along. And you know, there’s a section of that race. And that part of that race was probably from the 110-yard mark to the 220-yard mark that I wandered around quite a bit. The gun went off. I’m going. But there came a part after that first quarter of the track that I started to get distracted and I lost my way. And I would wander. So sometimes I’d be running forward and other times I’d stop, and other times I’d walk backwards and sometimes I’d walk back and forth, and I wasn’t going any place in terms of my faith.

Then the Lord, by His grace, got me back to about the 220-yard mark. And so far I’ve been running the race of faith.

So the point is that enduring to the end is an example for you of your endurance of salvation. Enduring to the end is just that. Don’t get off the track. Don’t step off the course, because when you step off the course, what happens in the foot race?

**Participant:** You’re disqualified.

**Ted:** You’re disqualified. You can stop on the track. “Oh gosh, this is so hard! I’ve got a pain in my side! Oh, I don’t know if I can do this anymore or not! Ah, boy, those temptations are so great!” And you agonize. You go through this experience.

But stay on the track. Stay with the apostles’ teaching, with the fellowship—*koinonia*, with the breaking of bread and with prayers, and the other things that flow from that. If you stay on course, you will endure to the end.

Now many times we think, “Well, gee whiz, how do I know for sure that I’m saved?” And you add all this stuff to it, but it’s really quite simple. Do you desire the things of God at all? The natural man does not desire the things of God at all. He desires religious things, spiritual things. He desires being good. He desires having a happy life. He’d like to live forever. But he does not desire God.

So first of all, do you desire God? And secondly, are you still in the race? Are you enduring? And if you endure by the grace of God—God does it—you will be saved. That’s the assurance I have—desire and enduring to the end. Don’t

**Don:** Yes, Ted. R. C. Sproul has said something that I take great comfort in. He asks people when they’re struggling with assurance, “Do you love Jesus Christ perfectly?”

**Ted:** I know.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

**Don:** “Oh no! Of course not!”

“Do you love Him as much as you would like to love Him?”

“No, I can’t say that, either.”

“Do you love Him at all?” And see, that’s what you’re saying.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Don:** Is there any desire for the things of God at all that God has given you? If there is, that’s evidence that God is in your life and that the Holy Spirit is working.

**Ted:** You know, you’re exactly right. I heard him give that talk. It was superb, and it was very encouraging, because you see, in terms of feelings about religious things, unbelievers, Mormons, can have the same feelings that you do.

**Don:** Right.

**Ted:** So feelings don’t count. Unbelievers can say the things that you say and that doesn’t count. Unbelievers are often better than you are in terms of their behavior. But none of those account for assurance of salvation. It’s only in God’s promises, and through those promises the desire that He gives us in the beginning that drives us, and enduring in the race, not getting off the track, but completing that race. Yes, Sig?

**Sig:** So you’re saying that God gives us the desire to finish the race, to endure the race, to stay on the course—

**Ted:** Yes.

**Sig:** But if I don’t, God didn’t give me the desire to get off the course.

**Ted:** No, right. And I would say, if I had more time, I would get into the last part, which has to do with the work of the flesh. And it’s the work of the flesh, the presence of the flesh in our lives that is still very strong.

**Sig:** Mm-hmm.

**Ted:** And I cannot account for that. The world, the flesh and the devil, those are the three things that get us. The church has historically said these three things—the world, the flesh and the devil. I do not know why, at the Resurrection from the dead and the giving of the Spirit, I do not know why Jesus did not destroy Satan completely. I do not know why God has not taken me out of the world so I don’t have to deal with the pressures from the world. And I have no idea why God didn’t take away all my fleshly desires. But for some reason—and this is a great mystery to me, probably the greatest mystery—is why the flesh, that is the desire to do what is evil—I want what I want when I want it!—that’s the flesh. I want what I want when I want it! I don’t know why God has not removed that. I’m doing battle with it. We all are doing battle if we desire the things of God. But it still persists in a very obnoxious way in our lives.

**Participant:** That’s why we have hope.

**Ted:** That’s why we have hope, rather than despair. Yes, right! Yeah! And that’s why we live by faith and not by sight, because of our failures.

Just the other day I was with a client. And I’d been pretty worked up and wired up because of a lot of the deadlines that are due and a lot of typing. And I hunt and peck. So when I have to produce a 45-page report, it’s like this and it’s just gruesome to have to get through.

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

And I found myself being on the edge. And a client came to me. Actually, I’ve formed quite a good relationship with a client, a board member from the organization. And this fellow and his wife are atheists. It’s interesting. They’re atheists, but they’ve been watching “A.D.”

**Participant:** Huh!

**Ted:** And they said, “What did you think of that?”

And I said, “I’m not watching it. What do you think of it?”

He said, “We don’t believe anything in it, but we like it.” (*Laughter.*) So I’m just praying.

But this atheist I like very much. I’ve been to their house for dinner. We have a warm relationship. I like the person very much. When I see him I give him a hug.

And he said, “Ted, you seem on edge today.” (*Laughter.*) And he said, “I thought your faith would have helped you with that.” (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** Ooh! Ouch!

**Ted:** Well, he’s exactly right. The flesh persists—the flesh in me that says, “I’ve got to be in control of everything that goes before the client, or everything is going to blow up in my face.” And it was an embarrassment for him to say it. Actually, the way it went is that he said, “Ted, you seem very tense.”

And I said, “You would think my faith would have helped me.”

And he said, “Yes, that’s exactly what I was thinking.” (*Laughter.*)

So you know, when people say, “Your life is a witness,” my life is such an awful witness! And I pray that God gets beyond that and makes a difference and touches someone’s heart despite the fact that I come into that meeting on edge and cranky because I’m worried about fleshly things. I just pray that God has the grace to do that.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** Let me just stop there and see if there are any other comments.

**Participant:** Give us the assurance that it’s not dependent on me.

**Ted:** Well—

**Participant:** To be saved.

**Ted:** Well, I mean, I have a whole bunch of quotes there at the end about the flesh. The thing is, it says, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh is no help at all.” The unregenerate person is in another world. They are still in darkness. They’ve not moved to light. They are in another world. Therefore, the only things that make sense to them are the world, the flesh and the devil. Those are the only things that make sense to them.

So once I am brought from darkness into light, the Lord begins to destroy every one of those powers—gradually with some, more quickly with others, if it’s God’s will, if it’s His purpose—so that, in time, I do put my trust in Him and I don’t worry as much.

Then it works itself out in all these secondary experiences. But the primary experience is God’s work, not how I’m experiencing it.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Ted:** So when the guy says to me, “Yes, I was thinking the same thing. You should have faith. I guess you’re a Christian. You should have faith, right? Why are you so worried and anxious about these things?”

## *“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”*

**Participant:** Right.

**Ted:** In fact, the guy gave me good words. Here’s an atheist saying, “Don’t worry, Ted. All of the volunteers, they’ve got the program under control. You don’t have to do a thing. Just sit in the corner.”

And he said, “As my wife says,”—she practices yoga—“just breathe deeply.” (*Laughter.*)

So here I have an unbeliever instructing me—

**Participant:** How to relax.

**Ted:** How to relax. But listen! He’s instructing me at the secondary and third level experiences. He cannot instruct me in the desire for God.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Ted:** That’s what he cannot do. So my deficiency is clearly in this area—behavior. But it’s not in this area—assurance. Because I’ve been given that promise, desire and endurance. Let me see who’s up. Yes, sir?

**Participant:** To your sixth point. Close the gap here on this assurance of salvation. Don’t we go to the seven tests in 1 John, for example and say, “Read that and decide there.”

**Ted:** Well, that’s right and Bruce does that. And I agree with Bruce in everything he says, except some things. (*Laughter.*) I think those are very good tests. But in the end, I always get nervous if the tests depend upon my fidelity.

**Participant:** In the end it depends upon God.

**Ted:** In the end it must depend on God and His promises.

**Participant:** Preach it, brother!

**Ted:** I don’t know what else we can say. If you don’t believe that, then you’ll underestimate how wicked you are, and how inconsistent, and how selfish you are and self-absorbed. You’ll underestimate the depth of your depravity.

I was watching a thing on Youtube the other day. It was a discussion, a very friendly discussion between a Calvinist and an Arminian. And the Arminian had to say, “I don’t agree with my friend over here because I don’t believe that man is totally depraved.”

I said, “Well, that’s the problem!” (*Laughter.*) If you don’t start there, and I see it every day. Yes?

**Participant:** The desire for the assurance of salvation is another side of selfishness.

**Ted:** Well, yes. The desire for the assurance of salvation, that’s right.

**Participant:** It’s just how deep we are.

**Ted:** Yes, that’s right. I think God wants us to know and to be assured. So what I’m trying to do is point you in the right direction, not to what is said, done or felt, but in God’s promises. Yes?

**Participant:** Well, Ted, I want to thank you for doing us a great favor here this morning. In over one half hour, forty minutes or whatever it was, you convinced me of what the TV preachers have failed to convince me: that I want to think about the assurance of salvation. I don’t want to claim it. Thank you.

**Ted:** Don’t

## ***“A Sure Assurance of Salvation part 2”***

**Don:** Yes. I think that one of the most precious promises having to do with assurance is found in John 10, verses 28-30. “I give them eternal life.” Notice, Jesus says, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. For the Father who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” That is precious. Now, you know, alongside that, of course, we are, as 2 Peter says, to “make our calling and election sure.” There are the seven tests. But you’re right. Ultimately, it’s God and His tremendous promises.

**Ted:** Right. Bill, quick.

**Bill:** They did a survey in 2010 of who knows the Bible.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Bill:** Atheists know the Bible. (Number 1.)

**Participant:** Unbelievable!

**Bill:** Mormons number 2.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Bill:** Evangelicals, who say that God helps those who help themselves were number 3.

**Ted:** Yes. Well there you go, folks. We all desire to know and God has given to us. Even in 2 Peter, the election for sure, even that comes from looking at what God is doing.

We’re going to need to wrap this up, so let’s pray. Lord God, we thank You for Your great and glorious promises. We thank You that we can come to our study in which the focus is on God and who He is and what He is doing and what He has done and what He will do, rather than what we can do or have done or hope to do. So we thank You for this great gift. We pray that more and more we may find ourselves in union with You so that You will be in us and we in You. And in that we take our greatest satisfaction and joy. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause.*)