Ultimate Question #7 What Assurance Do You Have Entering Heaven as a Christian?

Intro: In the previous lesson, we examined the basis upon which Christ will judge us. We enter the world in innocence, we become accountable to the law which confronts our innocence and demands our perfect obedience. When we transgress that law we not only forfeit legal righteous, but come under the wrath of God for our sin. Therefore, our only hope of entering the new Jerusalem is to be saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. When we obey the gospel, God forgives us of our sins, and we are made right with him. Does this assure that our hope of heaven is secure? That we cannot lose our inheritance? What must we do to insure that our relationship with the Lord is secure?

False hopes

This subject has become controversial in the religious world. In fact, it has become the focus of major doctrinal disputes in history. Many faiths have embraced the doctrine of "perseverance of the saints" or "once saved always saved".

Simply put the doctrine teaches that the saved man is given a new nature such that it is impossible for him to turn away from the Lord or live so as to be lost.

The Bible clearly shows that those who have become saved may lose their inheritance.

2 Pet. 2:20-23

The book of Hebrews is full of exhortation urging Christians not to turn back to Judaism lest they lose the blessings they have gained through Christ. Many verses of warning: Heb. 3:12; 6:3ff

Do not place your hope in this false concept of salvation. The Bible does not teach that salvation is unconditional or that it is impossible for the Christian to turn away from the Lord.

Others have embraced the doctrine of perfectionism

This doctrine teaches that all who become Christians are endowed with the knowledge to live above sin. Therefore, there is no grounds of condemnation because the Christian finally does all that the Lord says. "I can live above sin. I know what God wants me to do and I obey His commands just as He revealed them".

John says "no!" 1 Jn. 1:8

Perfectionism is not the answer to the Christian's need for assurance any more than perseverance. And, it will not bring about the holiness God expects from His people.

Faith in God's grace, the true grounds of assurance

In contrast to these false hopes is the true hope God has given to his people. Our eternal salvation is conditioned upon the continued presence of those <u>principles that saved us initially</u>. Our own obedience to the gospel emphasizes the principles by which we have committed to conduct our life. Let's consider them again:

First and foremost is the principle of faith. It summarizes our response to the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).

Just as God promised salvation to all who believe the gospel, he assures salvation to all who continue in that faith, confidence, or assurance produced by and in the gospel (Cf. Heb. 3:6; 14; 10:35-39).

How faith is manifested in the Christian's life

Just as the gospel reveals more specifically how the sinner manifests his faith, so also the gospel reveals more specifically how this faith is manifested by the Christian in order to keep saved:

Continued confession of Jesus as the Son of God and the resurrected Lor

Continued confession of Jesus as the Son of God and the resurrected Lord (1 Jn. 4:15).

We come to Christ on the basis of what the gospel affirms about Him as a person. We became a Christian by confession of faith.

That He is the Son of God.

That he died for us and was raised the third day.

That He is Lord and Christ.

Now as a Christian we must hold fast to these truths.

We must never be ashamed to confess Jesus as Lord (Mt. 10:32).

The Scripture speaks of some who lose their fellowship with the Lord because they deny the truth about Jesus.

Acknowledgment of our accountability to the His teaching and live in obedience to it (1 Jn. 2:3).

We are committed by our conversion to the teachings of Christ and his apostles, Mt. 28:18ff. We enter a covenant with him to keep His law by having it written on our hearts, 1 Cor. 9:27. The law that once condemned us is now fulfilled in us by the rule of the Spirit in our hearts (Rom. 8:1-4).

Greatness in the kingdom is determined by our progress in keeping and teaching others the Lord's commandments, Mt. 5:19.

When we say "obedient" we don't mean "sinless" life. We are talking about a lifestyle that is committed to obeying the Lord; but one that may involve sin to some degree because of ignorance or spiritual weakness. However, there are two principle features of obedience that must be stressed.

Obedience involves the <u>maintenance of the progress</u> we have made in the faith. One cannot ever be said to be faithful while he willingly resorts to the sins of the past which the Lord forgave him (Phil. 3:15-16).

Such a way of life is a perversion of the gospel of grace, turning it into licentiousness.

This is why those in Scripture who willingly turned back to the old way of life were urged to be speedily disciplined by the church (1 Cor. 5:9-10).

Obedience involves the quest for increased knowledge and conformity to truth when it is discovered (2 Pet. 3:18). Implicit in gospel obedience is the desire to learn the teachings of the Lord and conform our lives to them.

The person manifests indifference or rebelliousness toward instruction in the word of God is not obedient nor faithful and is not secure.

The person who does not seek out the will of God and makes no serious attempt to apply what he is learned is not obedient nor faithful.

Living a life of love toward God and our fellowman, especially our spiritual family in the Lord

There is one command in Scripture that is particularly distinguished as the hallmark of a faithful life. That is to maintain a fervent love for God and our fellowman (1 Jn. 3:14).

Why is this command so particularly important to God? True love demonstrates that we have begun to comprehend what the Lord has done for us and for all who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. It reveals our appreciation for our own forgiveness and causes us to be helpful and forgiving toward others.

Jesus by parable demonstrated that disciples who were characterized by this love would lose their access to God's grace (Mt. 18).

James similarly exhorts us, "Judgment will be without mercy to him who showed no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment" (2:13).

Acknowledgment of sin and the ongoing need for forgiveness in failing to keep those teachings

The commitment to follow Christ does not insure a perfect life. It sets us on the road to perfection. It is a process of learning, strengthening, and yes sometimes occasionally failing, that lasts throughout our whole life. Sin will always be a reality in our live. This is made known in a number of ways:

The statement of Scripture—1 Jn. 1:8,10

Inferred from the progressive nature of growth—Heb. 5:12ff. The ability to discern good and evil takes place over a period of time.

Inferred from the presence of the flesh working in us—Gal. 5:17. The Christian must continue to struggle against the flesh and by the help of the Holy Spirit's teaching overcome it.

Thus, to live in faith is to continue that same acknowledgment of sin and penitence that characterizes our coming to the Lord. John urges believers to acknowledge sin to God, 1 Jn. 1:8.

When we, and as long as we, comply with these terms of pardon, we can live with assurance.

Becoming a Christian gives us an advantage in serving the Lord. A deep and abiding love for God is created in our hearts by His love and forgiveness. When the love of God is in your heart, then the law of God is also there. For love is the fulfillment of the law. Loving God because you are forgiven will change everything about the way you live. You will become a better person, live a good moral life, excel in spirituality. But you will not go to heaven because you are:

A good moral person Better than others Better than some in the church.

But that by God's grace you are forgiven and made righteous by the blood of Christ.

Conclusion: I'm asking you to honestly evaluate your own life. Are you really living the faithful life? If so, then you have a wonderful assurance of being with God in heaven when this life is over. Nothing else ultimately matters!