11-4-2018 Message – Are You Sure?

 I don't know about you, but I have sometimes struggled with the idea of God loving me and wanting me to be with Him for eternity.

 There is a contemporary song called *No Matter What* that kind of expresses how I feel at times.

 *A lot of us grew up believing
 At any moment we could lose it all
 And at the drop of a hat
 God might turn His back and move on
 A lot of us feel like we blew it
 Thinking that we're just too far gone*

 As I grow in my love relationship with Christ, I realize that God loves me so much He sacrificed Jesus to save me for His plan and purpose and to be with Him for eternity.

 Assurance of Salvation is God's blessed gift for all who believe.

 In Jesus' own words we have assurance of life everlasting in the presence of our Savior and Lord!

 John 5: 24 *“I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.*

 When God first directed me to today's Scripture, a memory of a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin also came to mind. In a letter in 1789 he wrote " Our new Constitution is now established and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except **death and taxes**."

 Not sure of its origins, I Googled the phrase and discovered:

 The phrase seems to have originated in 1716 *The Cobbler of Preston* by Christopher Bullock who wrote:

’It is impossible to be sure of anything but **Death and Taxes**.

 It has been restated several times in different contexts, by different people since then, including Benjamin Franklin in the 1789 letter.

 As Believers we have assurances in God's Word of way more important things than just death and taxes. On Wednesday nights we have been studying what the Bible says about Heaven, where we go when we leave this earthly body, and enter the presence of Jesus for eternity.

 Do you know for certain where you will spend eternity and how to get there?

VIDEO How do you get to Heaven?

<https://youtu.be/hxZ55mRNdfo>

 Many people struggle with the certainty of where they will spend eternity and how they get there, but God's Word can transform our hearts and our thinking.

 The truth is, we can be sure about the where we will spend eternity. We can know with certainty that when we die, we will be in the presence of God.

 Scripture tells us in Romans 10: 9 – 10 *9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. & 13 For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”*

 Today's passage John 5: 24 is a promise, to my thinking among the greatest promises ever! It is a certainty from our Creator, Savior, and Lord that gives us the assurance of eternal life with God, how we receive the promise, and the benefits of our response to believe.

**1. The Promise from Jesus**

 *John 5: 24 a “I tell you the truth,* with this Jesus is verifying the trustworthiness and importance of what He is about to say.

 In the King James version, the passage reads "Verily, verily, I say unto you". Verily is one of those words that have a strong meaning, but we don't use much anymore. It has Hebrew origins, it means trustworthy, surely, and so be it.

 **A. Certainty of the Promise**

 Throughout the Old and New Testaments God's trustworthiness is fully noted.

 *Numbers 23: 19 God is not a man, so He does not lie. He is not human, so He does not change His mind. Has He ever spoken and failed to act? Has He ever promised and not carried it through?*

 The Father and Son are so closely united and work as one, that belief in the Father is belief in the Son and belief in the Son is belief in the Father

 *John 14: 6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*

 When the Bible speaks, God speaks. And what God said, He will surely do. He will save all who call upon the name of Jesus and believe in His message. You have His word on it.

 *2 Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.*

 Colossians 2: 6 - 7 *6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow Him. 7 Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

 The promise is a gift from the heart of God that has a contingency attached, our response, acceptance of the promise.

**2. Conditions of the Promise**

*John 5: 24b those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life.*

 **A. Hearing the message**

 In Deuteronomy 18: 18 – 19 the Lord speaks through Moses, *18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. 19 I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf.*

 The importance of listening, hearing God is revealed throughout Scripture. *John 8: 47 Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don’t listen because you don’t belong to God.”*

 If you come to Jesus with genuine repentance, faith, and obedience He promises that He will save you. We can know Jesus has received us because, quite simply, He said so!

 Matthew 7: 24 *“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock."*

 When you build “on solid rock” it means to be a hearing, responding disciple, practicing obedience becomes the solid foundation to weather the storms of life.

All who have committed their lives to Christ Jesus may have the firm confidence of salvation based upon the infallibility of God’s Word. Jesus said, in John 6: 39 – 40 *39 And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. 40 For it is my Father’s will that all who see His Son and believe in Him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.”*

 **B. Acting on the promise** is how you are assured of salvation through the finished work of Jesus on the Cross

 *Romans 10: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

 In these passages, the Aramaic word believe is the verb form of the word and it requires response action. It means to have faith in, to rely on, commit to, and trust in, especially for your spiritual wellbeing to Christ Jesus.

 In the video several people answered the question "How do you get to heaven? With, "I have no clue."

 As believers we are commissioned in Mathew 28: *20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.”* In other words, it is our job to tell them the truth of how to get to heaven.

God desires that you believe in Him, and for that alone He gives you eternal life. But He loves us too much to leave us there, He desires us to grow into the likeness of His Son.

 This transformation starts with the changing of your heart, the changing of your attitude towards life and people.

 You choose to allow the heart that is full of love to act in accordance with the love of God.

 As in, 2 Corinthians 5: 17 *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

 Christians are brand-new people the indwelling Holy Spirit gives them new life, we are not the same anymore. We are not reformed, rehabilitated, or reeducated—we are re-created, we are new creations, living in unity, in a living love relationship with Christ Jesus.

 Living a **good life** without inward change leads to a shallow empty spiritual walk. What matters to God is that we be completely changed from the inside out.

 As in Galatians 6: 15 *It doesn’t matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been transformed into a new creation.*

 At conversion we do not merely turn over a new leaf; we begin a new life under a new Master, under new management.

 This is not a superficial change that will be quickly superseded by another novelty or overruled by a worldly idol or desire.

 This is an entirely new order of all creation under Christ’s authority. It requires a new way of looking at all people and all of creation.

 Does your life reflect this new perspective? Are you living in the assurance of God's promise?

**3. The Comforting assurance of the Promise**

 John 5: 25c *They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.*

 Paul shares the promise in Colossians 1: 13 – 14 *13 For He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, 14 who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

 This aspect is essential to everlasting life; to escape judgement for sin and to pass from death to life through obedient surrender to Christ Jesus.

 Jesus confirms this in *John 8: 51 "I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!”*

 True assurance comes through the evidence of a changed life. Ultimately, assurance is confirmed within us as the living Holy Spirit is conforming us into the image of Christ Jesus.

 All who have been born again will see clear evidences of a new life in Christ. While we will never become perfect in this life, we will, experience a changed life. It is this inward transformation that provides strong confirmation of our salvation.

As expressed in*1 John 3: 14 If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. And, 5: 13 I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.*

 As believers, we are “temporary residents and foreigners” in this world because our real home is with God. Heaven is not the pink-cloud-and-harp existence popular in cartoons. Heaven is where God lives.

 We embrace and cherish the promises of God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, who reminds us of them, we deepen our relationship with Christ Jesus.

 More importantly we are called to boldly share the promises of God with our family, friends, co-workers, classmates, acquaintances, and the people we meet on the street who "Have no clue". Nothing has more eternal value than giving Jesus to others.

 Assurance of Salvation is God's blessed gift for all who believe.

 In Randy Alcorn's book *Heaven*, he writes of the joy of seeing God in Heaven. "Seeing God will be like seeing everything else for the first time. Why? Because not only will we see God, He will be the lens through which we see everything else—people, ourselves, and the events of this life."

 Lord, thank you for the gift of Your Word and the Blessed Assurance that we will pass from the darkness and live in the light of Your presence for eternity.

 If you would like to reaffirm your belief in the promises of God, please come to the alter, let the Holy Spirit assure you God's promises are true and a gift for all who believe in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord!