

Briefing Document: Review of "1 John Lesson 22, June 4, 2025"

Source: Excerpts from "1 John Lesson 22, June 4, 2025"

Date of Source: June 4, 2025

Overview: This source is a transcript of a sermon or teaching session focusing on the concept of assurance of salvation, primarily based on the book of 1 John. The speaker addresses various perspectives on assurance throughout Christian history and contemporary evangelicalism, ultimately emphasizing the importance of a multi-faceted understanding of knowing one's salvation.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Assurance of Salvation is Possible, Commanded, and a Privilege:** The central argument is that knowing with certainty that one is saved and on their way to heaven is not only possible according to scripture but also a responsibility ("commanded") and a blessing ("privilege").
 - "The scripture says that yes that is possible"
 - "The Bible also commands... that we pursue the path where that assurance lies"
 - "It's also a privilege it's a privilege it's part of your birthright as a Christian you ought to know if you're if you're secure in your faith"
 - This assurance is described as "the best of blessings," a "little taste of heaven." Conversely, lacking assurance can lead to misery.
1. **Critique of Shallow Views on Salvation and Assurance:** The speaker critiques what they perceive as insufficient or superficial understandings of salvation prevalent in "contemporary Christianity" and "modern evangelical circles."
 - Assurance is "not often taught" or "kind of ignored."
 - Critiqued views include "decisional regeneration" (salvation simply by saying a prayer or walking an aisle) and "baptismal regeneration" (salvation automatically by being baptized).
 - "Often times in the modern church they don't want to talk about assurance because they don't want to raise doubts about people's salvation-they want people in the church"
 - Some popular views even suggest that belief in "God, however they imagine God to be" is sufficient for salvation, often omitting Christ. This is contrasted with the biblical teaching that the way is "narrow."
1. **Assurance and the Concept of Losing Salvation:** The speaker directly links the possibility of assurance to the doctrine of eternal security.
 - Those who believe salvation can be lost ("claim you can lose your salvation," referencing Nazarenes) cannot truly have assurance.
 - "If you can lose your salvation, can you have any assurance-no you can't"

- Salvation is presented as a "gift of God," questioning how it could be lost if it is from God.
 - The Bible "does not teach that you can lose your salvation does not teach that teaches that if you're saved, you're saved forever".
1. **Historical Perspectives on Assurance:** The sermon traces the discussion of assurance through church history.
 - **Roman Catholicism:** Denies that anyone can have assurance of salvation before reaching heaven, viewing salvation as a "joint effort between God and the sinner," dependent on works. Quote provided from a Catholic source: "as the Bible says I'm already saved but I'm also being saved and I have the hope that I will be saved... salvation... is a joint effort between God and the sinner. I know God will always do His part but the sinner might not always do his part, so no one can be assured of their salvation until they finally get to heaven and see what faith like that teach... is the only way you can be assured you can get to heaven is by your what works".
 - **Wesleyan/Arminian Theology:** Also viewed as unable to offer assurance because of the belief that salvation can be lost.
 - **The Reformation (Luther and Calvin):** Seen as a "recovery of the gospel," teaching that believers *can* and *should* be assured.
 - **John Calvin:** Taught that "assurance is the essence of... faith." Faith is something "you experience," involves understanding truth ("mental aspect"), an "emotional response," and "action" (confessing Christ). At the moment of trusting Christ, a person has a "real sense of having their own faith" and knows they are saved based on "the promise of God's word."
 - **Westminster Confession of Faith (Puritans):** Represented a shift, stating that "infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith... to the degree that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many other difficulties before he be a partaker of it." This suggested assurance might not be immediate or come easily.
 - **Later Puritans:** Some "got carried away," demanding preachers "preach to produce a widespread lack of assurance" to keep people striving and fearful they might not be elected, leading to despair and "endless self-examination."
 - **Three Elements of Assurance (Synthesized View):** The speaker proposes a more complete picture of assurance involving three interconnected elements:
 - **Cognitive Assurance:** Knowing based on the promises of scripture. This is a "mental or rational response to the promise of God that's inherent in the act of faith."
 - **Subjective Assurance:** The witness of the Holy Spirit within the believer.
 - **Behavioral Assurance:** Examining one's life to see if it aligns with God's word, looking for the "manifestation of your assurance which is God working in your life because you look like Jesus." This is tied to the concept of "fruits" (referencing Matthew 7 and being known by fruits).
 - "You need all three of these things to have what I will call a full assurance."

- **The Bible's Role in Assurance and Insecurity:** The Bible encourages *true* believers with the promise of eternal security and the pursuit of assurance ("make their calling and election sure"). However, it is also designed to make *false* Christians insecure.
 - "The Bible also makes false Christians insecure by demanding that they examine themselves and by never settling for an event type of salvation that does not have a transformation along with it"
 - "The Bible is designed to make false Christians uncomfortable... by attacking their deceptive false sense of security."
1. **Billy Graham and the Challenge of Professions of Faith:** The speaker shares an anecdote about Billy Graham, suggesting that even a prominent evangelist struggled with the potential reality that many people he told were saved might not have been.
 - "One of the most prominent evangelists in the last century... said that he didn't want to deal with the issue of assurance... because if he did he might have to go back and realize that many of the people that he told were saved were not saved. Billy Graham and he didn't want to face up to that, he actually said I can't handle that"
 - This highlights the difference between a superficial "profession of faith" (potentially based on a "formula") and genuine, transformative salvation.
 1. **1 John 2:3 as a Test of Assurance:** The speaker briefly introduces 1 John 2:3 as a key verse for discerning assurance.
 - "now by this we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments"
 - This is presented as a "test that says if you do this you're saved, and you have assurance and if you don't, you're in trouble." While acknowledging imperfect obedience, the "desire of your heart to keep his commandments" is crucial.

Most Important Facts/Ideas:

- Assurance of salvation is a biblical reality, not an impossibility or something to be avoided.
- Many contemporary views on salvation are seen as too shallow, failing to account for the need for assurance and transformation.
- Assurance is undermined by the belief that salvation can be lost.
- A robust understanding of assurance includes cognitive knowledge from scripture, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and observable behavioral change (fruit).
- The Bible simultaneously assures genuine believers and exposes the insecurity of those with false or superficial faith.
- The command to examine oneself ("examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith") is a vital part of pursuing and confirming assurance.

- 1 John 2:3 ("By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments") serves as a primary biblical test for self-examination and assurance.

Relevant Quotes:

- The scripture says that yes that is possible" (Assurance is possible)
- "Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure" (Assurance is commanded - referencing 2 Peter 1:10)
- "Assurance is a marvelous reality that's spoken of in the word of God even though it's been seriously and severely attacked probably in the last 150 years"
- "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith... test yourselves" (Biblical command for self-examination)
- Calvin: "assurance is the essence of... faith"
- Westminster Confession: "this infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith but does not but does it does but not to the degree that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many other difficulties before he be a partaker of it" (Assurance may not be immediate)
- "You need all three of these things to have what I will call a full assurance" (Cognitive, Subjective, Behavioral)
- "The Bible encourages true believers with a promise of secure and eternal salvation"
- "the Bible also makes false Christians insecure by demanding that they examine themselves and by never settling for an event type of salvation that does not have a transformation along with it"
- "now by this we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3 as a test)

Actionable Insights (from the perspective of the sermon's message):

- Do not rely on a single event (prayer, baptism, walking an aisle) as the sole basis for assurance.
- Actively pursue assurance through studying scripture, seeking the Spirit's witness, and examining one's life for evidence of transformation.
- Recognize that genuine faith results in a desire to obey God's commandments.
- Engage with the Bible's teaching on self-examination to ensure your faith is genuine.