

Briefing Document: 1 John Lesson 72

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Executive Summary

The following document synthesizes a teaching on the doctrine of assurance based on the First Epistle of John. The core finding is that many modern believers lack confidence in their salvation because of shallow contemporary preaching and an inability to recognize God's hand in personal trials. True biblical assurance is not a mere psychological feeling; rather, it is a "tested faith" evidenced by "holy affections"—a genuine, inward desire for righteousness and holiness. The document contrasts traditional theological views on eternal security and highlights the necessity of both justification (being made right with God) and sanctification (the ongoing process of becoming holy) as inseparable proofs of a true conversion.

Community Concerns and Current Events

The teaching session opened with a review of current events and specific prayer needs within the community.

- **News and Geography:** The speaker noted historical data regarding the Panama Canal, where 35,000 men died during construction, 90% of whom succumbed to malaria from mosquitoes. It was noted that the canal was sold for a dollar to Puerto Rico and that there is increasing Chinese involvement in the region.
- **Weather Conditions:** Severe weather was reported in North Dakota and surrounding areas, including high winds, fires, and tornadoes.
- **Health and Prayer Requests:**
 - **Sunshine Cesolini:** Scheduled for a double mastectomy.
 - **The DeWitt Family:** Milo DeWitt is battling Stage 4 cancer and undergoing radiation. His 15-year-old granddaughter, Daisy, is suffering from a severe brain injury after being kicked in the head; a portion of her skull was removed to relieve brain pressure, leaving her paralyzed on one side.
 - **Kathy Steel:** Reported a successful surgery and is currently in recovery.
 - **Renee Cox:** Preparing for an upcoming surgery and consultation.

The Struggle for Assurance

A central theme of the teaching is the lack of assurance regarding salvation. The document identifies six primary reasons why individuals may struggle to feel secure in their faith:

1. **Strong Preaching:** Hard-hitting biblical teaching can produce deep conviction, causing people to question if they are truly saved.

2. **Inability to Accept Forgiveness:** Some believers fail to forgive themselves for past sins, even after God has granted them forgiveness.
3. **Misunderstanding the Gospel:** A lack of clarity regarding the finished work of Jesus Christ leads to doubt.
4. **Lack of a "Conversion Date":** Some worry because they cannot pinpoint the exact moment or time they were saved.
5. **Focus on Personal Sin:** Observing the ongoing presence of the "flesh" or sinful nature can cause one to doubt their standing with God.
6. **Misinterpreting Trials:** Many believe that if they were truly God's children, He would not allow them to suffer through illness, job loss, or family crises.

The Role of Trials in Tested Faith

The document asserts that trials are not evidence of God's absence, but rather the source of the strongest assurance. When faith is tested and survives, it becomes a firm foundation for the believer.

- **Refining Through Weakness:** God is described as being in the "business of breaking people down" or "pruning" them to make them more useful for His kingdom. As the speaker noted: "Nobody is too weak to be useful to God, but many people are too strong to be useful."
- **Scriptural Evidence:**
 - The Apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" illustrates this principle. In *2 Corinthians 12:9*, the Lord tells him, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*"
 - Paul later concludes in *2 Corinthians 12:10*, "*Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"
 - In *Romans 8:35*, Paul asks, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" These trials did not signify a loss of salvation but rather tested and proved his assurance.

Critique of the Contemporary Church

The speaker identifies a decline in the interest and understanding of biblical assurance, attributing it to several factors in modern church culture:

- **Shallow Preaching:** Presentations of the gospel are often superficial or trivial, focusing on emotions and "feeling good" rather than the cost of discipleship.

- **Psychological Assurance:** Many churches provide a "dose of psychological assurance" based on a simple prayer, teaching that once a person says they believe, they should never question their salvation again.
- **"Seeker-Friendly" Models:** This approach is critiqued as allowing people to "come as they are and stay as they are," without emphasizing repentance, the lordship of Christ, or the pursuit of holiness.
- **Lack of Conviction:** In an "anti-intellectual" and "experience-driven" environment, people are rarely exposed to preaching that produces the conviction necessary to examine the validity of their faith.

Theological Frameworks of Eternal Security

The document outlines three primary viewpoints regarding the permanence of salvation and its manifestation in a believer's life:

Viewpoint	Nature of Salvation	Manifestation in Experience
Reformed (Calvinism)	Permanent	Permanently manifested through a changed life and works.
Armenian (Wesleyan)	Temporary	Manifested only as long as the person remains in a state of salvation; can be lost.
"No Lordship" (Modern)	Permanent	Claims salvation is permanent even if the manifestation in a person's life is only temporary or non-existent.

The speaker rejects the "No Lordship" view, noting that true salvation must include both **justification** (being declared righteous) and **sanctification** (the process of becoming holy). According to *James 2:17*: "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

The Doctrine of Holy Affections

Drawing from the 1746 treatise by theologian Jonathan Edwards, *On Religious Affections*, the document concludes that the accurate proof of salvation is the presence of "holy affections."

- **New Nature:** True conversion creates a new nature in the "inner man" that possesses an overwhelming passion to be holy.
- **Holy Actions:** Grace planted in the heart always produces an abiding change. If a profession of faith is not accompanied by a holiness of life, the conversion is likely false.
- **The Beauty of Holiness:** For the true believer, holiness is "the most sweet thing that can be found in heaven or earth." In contrast, those with "false affections" may claim they are saved to avoid hell but continue to enjoy their ease and lusts without a desire for the "burden of the cross."

As stated in 1 John 3:19: “And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”

Vocabulary and Phonetic Guide

Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Christ ^[^1]	[krahyst]	From the Greek <i>Christos</i> ; meaning "the anointed one." The central figure of the Christian faith.
Epistle ^[^2]	[ih-pis-uhl]	From the Greek <i>epistolē</i> ; a formal letter. Specifically refers to the letters in the New Testament, such as 1 John.

[^1]: Used throughout the text to refer to the source of strength and the object of faith. [^2]: Used to describe the three letters written by John, specifically the "great epistle" of 1 John.