

Children's Moment

January 24, 2015

Title: Put on a godly way of life - take off the bad way of life

Theme: Pictures of new clothes

Scripture: “Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Do you like to wear new clothes? When do you usually get new clothes?
(Birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Back to School) I like to wear new clothes.

Did you know that Christians are like people who put on new clothes? When we become Christians, God makes us into new people. Before we can put on God’s new clean clothes we have to take off our old and dirty clothes, right?

To become new people in Christ, we must take off our old bad ways and put on God’s ways. Let me give you an example: God tells us to control our anger and don’t desire bad things. God also commands us not to say bad things about people, we should not say bad words, and we should not tell lies. Those are some of the old ways that we must get rid of.

After we have taken off our old ways, God can clothe us with His ways. We can love one another and be kind, polite, obedient, and helpful. We can become more like Jesus every day.

Pray - Lord Jesus, help me to change and become more like you every day. Amen

Assurance – Part 1

This morning we find ourselves in the 3rd chapter of 1st John verses 19 to 24. Verses 19 and 20 states, “By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows everything.” John is speaking of assurance or that Christians have the peace of mind and soul, and live in confidence that they are indeed saved and will spend eternity in heaven.

Assurance is an issue that is important, but its importance has ebbed and flowed through the history of the church. Praise God this was an important issue for John, Paul, Peter and James to deal with. The writers of the New Testament and preachers raise the biblical standards of holiness in thought, word and deed, they call people to be obedient to Christ and to submit to His lordship and they are call people to repent from sin and when people are called to these things - assurance of salvation is critically important. It is only natural for people to wonder, I have repented enough, do I believe enough, is my faith deep enough and strong enough, am I pursuing holiness diligently enough? Do I really know Jesus Christ on a personal basis because the scriptures teach I should? Will I really go to heaven? I have asked these questions, although early in my life path of sanctification. How about you – ever ask any of these questions? Part of the job description of a pastor is helping people experience the assurance of their salvation. That is my job this morning, by speaking of what assurance is and is not.

It appears that today interest in assurance of salvation is at an all time low. In a large part I believe this is true because the preaching of holiness, obedience, repentance and the lordship of Jesus Christ as key to the lives of Christians is downplayed as churches trying to appeal to people on the basis of social and physiological perceived needs. In American and for that matter the rest of the world the environment is experience driven and the biblical precepts of Christian thought and living has been softened. In many churches heart pumping music and programs have taken front stage while preaching has become secondary. This morning we will spend time exploring history and how it repeats itself concerning the need for assurance. We will also delve into the theology of assurance for a better understanding. These two - history and theology will lay the foundation for my message next week on 1 John 3:19-24.

History of Assurance

We talked about Cain last week. He was a religious man, a man who worshipped the One true God. But, he worshipped God on his terms and not on God's terms. He was religious, but not a believer. Go back a few verses in 1st John chapter 3 to verse 12, [“We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.”](#) Cain was a religious man, but not saved and if he thought he processed assurance, his assurance was based on confidence in the prince of this world who is a liar and murderer. Those who live rooted in the world under the influence of the devil are lost by his influence. Like Cain many people today do not understand the lordship of Jesus the Christ our King. Just like Cain, people do not understand the importance and necessity of repentance. God told Cain his sacrifice and offering was not right. [“The LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face](#)

fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.” (Genesis 4:6-7) Cain could have repented and brought the right sacrifice to God, but he chose to approach God without respect and he then lost any assurance from God. Cain had listened to the same liar that his parents did in the garden. The difference was Cain had no repentance or humbling before God.

John wrote his letters to clarify what the true Christian life was and what it was not. Cain was an example of false worship. The theme of John’s letters can be summed up in 1st John 5:13, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.” John said one must, must believe “in” Jesus, not “on” or “about” Jesus. The difference is that of Abel and Cain. This letter was written that people could know what is required to truly believe and have assurance in their eternal salvation. John wants them to know what a life in Christ is and enjoy that life to the fullest. As it was with Abel and Cain, so it is today. True salvation is forever; it is eternal and irrevocable. False salvation brings death. True salvation by the power of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables us to rise above our doubts and fears. It is by the power of God we know and we have assurance.

History shows, as the preaching of the Word of God is strong or weak this effects true and false salvation. A new Christian, that is a true Christian, is concerned about holiness, obedience, repentance and the lordship of Christ and what these mean concerning salvation. The study of the Word and the preaching of the Word of God bring on these concerns. As people are fed the milk of the Word of God and grow to eat the meat of the Word of God they grow in their assurance for they deepen their faith in God.

If our faith is to deepen we must realize we have little control over the world and we cannot write our own destiny. We live under the lordship of either Christ or the devil. The devil's reign over this world is temporary, he is self-serving and his desire is to display his hatred for God and this is expressed by corrupting the world and keeping as many as possible from knowing God, just as we observe in Cain. Satan offers false gods, teachers and salvation. On the other hand Christ's lordship is over the universe and it is permanent. God's plan for salvation allows Satan temporary influence over the earth. But, Satan will in due time submit to God. The questions that need to be asked are; "Who do people serve? Who do we serve? Who has reign over our lives?" We have eternal assurance if we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord. Or, we can believe in our own abilities to control the world around us and be separated from God. This is where we all start as children of the world. Assurance and faith in Christ is difficult at first as we leave the corruption of this world. Letting go of the influence we had lived under, the prince of this world, who is a liar by his very nature. As a child of the living God we have to let go of our past and He teaches us to trust for He is trustworthy. We have to let go of our past experiences that have taught us to be weary and not to trust anything or anyone. Life on this earth is always in a state of flux and frustration for it is corrupt and we are corrupt until Christ saves us. This transition of letting go of the world and letting God control our lives brings with it assurance under Christ's lordship. Living our lives in submission to the lordship of Christ is an important concept of Christian living and yet it is not being commonly taught. True peace and assurance calls us to submit our lives to Christ and no longer live as those who do not know Christ. We must acknowledge that God and the Word of God are the only standards of truth in a

deceptive world influenced by the evil one. Satan is false and all he attempts is temporary and false.

It is not only the writers of the New Testament who dealt with false teachers and false doctrines that gave people a false sense of salvation, history shows this has been a continuing problem to this very day. I often read and study the writings of great men who have long ago gone to heaven. One such man is the theologian and preacher Jonathan Edwards. He began his bold preaching when the church in America was weak. He boldly preached the Word of God when most did not want to hear. Because of Edwards and other men who were willing to preach the Word of God, as God gave it, and preach it straight and bold - revival came. It might be the greatest revival in our nation's history and it was called the Great Awakening. Edwards' most famous sermon *"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"* was preached in 1741. He took people to the fires of hell and then showed through the Word of God what eternal truth is, his preaching was powerful and strong. He called for repentance, for obedience, for abandoning sin and for embracing holiness. This is the same requirement God placed before Cain. This is the same requirement that God places before every person, truth or lie, salvation or damnation. People were convicted and repented and many for the first time embraced the true gospel. One can imagine that the subject of assurance was suddenly very important. The gospel is demanding; repent, believe, obey, submit, turn from the world and follow Christ. People wanted to know if they were true believers, did they have enough faith and had God truly changed them. As Paul wrote, *"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. 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.” (2 Corinthians 5:16-17) People want to know with assurance that they are indeed new creations and are saved.

In response to people needing to know and be assured, Edwards wrote, *A Treatise on Religious Affections* in 1754. He dealt with what is the evidence of true conversion. This great work helped people who wanted know with assurance that their salvation was genuine. People thought the standard for salvation was so high and that it was impossible to reach it. They were right, on their own it is impossible, but through Christ all things are possible. In the tenth chapter of Mark’s gospel account we read, “But Jesus said to ~~them~~ *the disciples* again, ‘Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.’ ²⁶ And ~~they~~ *the disciples* were exceedingly astonished, and said to ~~him~~ *Jesus*, ‘Then who can be saved?’ ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.’ ” (Mark 10:24-27) Edward’s writing was solid biblically, it was clear and practical. He said the proof of true salvation is a person has “holy affections.” Edwards was saying in greater detail than what Paul had written, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Edwards was saying, a true believer is a new creation whose soul has been regenerated by God and they now live with a passion for holiness. Does this describe you? Even though you and I have a passion for holiness does not mean we consistently live as God calls us to, it doesn’t mean we do not sin, it doesn’t mean we do not say things we ought not to or think only pure thoughts, but it means Christ’s holiness is our passion and we strive to live holy. We have “holy affections” for all that is of God. Paul truly had a passion to live for Christ. He wrote to the Galatians about his struggles and the

struggles of every Christian, “I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The signs that someone is of the world or of Christ is stark and clear. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:16-24) Observe the life of a person, what he loves and what he does and how he treats others. As you observe you will see the evidence of his heart. You will come to understand if that person is a true Christian or not.

I wonder what do people observe by the way I live my life? By what I love and how I treat others? Do they see a repentant sinner whom the Lord is changing into a person of peace and love for God and others? What does the world observe by your life? If you are unsure, ask your spouse. They see you more clearly than you see yourself. What do people observe by our lives as the body of Canyon Bible Church?

Remember Cain worshipped the true God, but was not obedient and we know the result. A person can be attached to the gospel and not be saved. You and I are to be sowers of the gospel seed, as Jesus said in His parable, “The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under

foot and the birds of the air ate it up.” It is the Lord who prepares the soil. Our job is to be faithful and preach the gospel whenever we have an opportunity. 6 “Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.” These are those attracted to the gospel, but desire to live in the world. They may speak of holy things but they drink the water of the world instead of spiritual water from the fountain of life. 7 “Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.” This is the No Lordship theology view of I am saved, but can live as I please. God standards are for others. Churches that do not preach the Word of God give people a false sense of assurance and it is deadly, eternally deadly. I will explain and expand on this “No Lordship” theology in a few moments. 8 “Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” (Luke 8:5-8) I hope verse 8 is true of us. We are growing by the Word of God, we are living it, we are preaching it and God is using us to bless ours. It is He who has prepared the soil of their hearts to be His children.

This brings me to, “What is it we believe about our assurance as children of the living God?”

Theology of Assurance

There are two primary historical opposing schools of thought concerning assurance. The first position is the one I ascribe to and is often called the Reformed view. The Reformed view of assurance holds to the belief in the permanent nature of salvation by regeneration. This is seen in the change that overcomes a person by the power of the Holy Spirit and they never see life the same. If you are truly saved you are permanently saved and this change, this “new creation” as Paul calls it is observed in your life through the fruit of the Spirit.

The opposing view is the Arminian view or sometimes also called the Wesleyan view. This view sees regeneration as temporary in nature. Your salvation experience manifests itself in your behavior, but can and often is a temporary regeneration.

Two views. First, salvation is permanent regeneration and a permanent manifestation in a person's life. Salvation is assured. This does not mean a person does not sin, but has a passion for holiness. This is the Calvinism or Reformed Theology view. Second, salvation is temporary in nature and is only manifest in a person's life while the regeneration lasts. This Arminian or Wesleyan view of salvation can and may be lost. If you lose your salvation you lose your ability to do good works by faith and it can become a downward spiral unless you are regenerated anew. As the Apostle James wrote, [“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”](#) (James 2:26) Or to restate it in reverse, good works without faith are works that do not last and die with this world.

Historically we have two camps - permanent regeneration of one's soul and permanent salvation or temporary regeneration and insecure salvation. In recent history we now have a third view that churches have bought into. This view believes a person can have permanent regeneration and salvation but only temporary experience. One can be permanently saved and temporarily live as a new creation pursuing holiness. This could be labeled as the “No Lordship” view says that one can be a believing unbeliever because salvation and faith are separate things. One can be saved but live in rebellious sin and still believe they are a Christian. Cain was religious, but not saved. Here we find people who are not

religious or believers in the Lordship of Christ but believe they are saved. The most obvious examples of this false thinking are those who defiantly live opposed the Word of God and yet say they are Christian. The easiest examples are the people committed to practicing life styles that openly defy God's holy Word. It is not just individuals, but denominations, like the Metropolitan Church, as well. Or how about people who said the prayer and acknowledged Christ, and believe they are saved but they they can live in any manner of their choosing. Under this view, salvation may or may not manifest itself in any kind of righteous living or works. As Jesus said, "Other *seed* fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out." (Luke 8:7) Here we see a desperate need for sound biblical preaching of the Word of God and this was the case at the time John wrote his letter and in the eighteenth century when Jonathan Edwards wrote, "... natural men have no sense of the goodness and excellency of holy things ... it is wholly hid from them; but the saints by the mighty power of God, have it discovered to them; they have that supernatural most noble and divine sense given them ... and it captivates their hearts, and delights them above all things; it is the most amiable and sweet thing to the heart of a true saint, that is to be found in heaven and earth." As in Apostle John's time and Edward's time and today when people testify that they have been delivered from evil but have no burden for repentance or for holy living this is a sign of false conversion. These people are living as Cain lived.

The Apostles and Edwards stand firm in the teaching of Christ. I stand with Christ also. I stand as a saved sinner who desires to live holy before the only Holy God. How do you and I know we are true Christians? John says in chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before

him.” Jonathan Edwards would say we have assurance by our living with “holy affections” for God. It is not about a fleeting emotion or experience, but it is about a life of faith, a life that is growing in sanctification and holiness by the power of God as we live in submission to the lordship of Christ.

Assured

This brings us back to what John wants his readers, you and me, to understand. John wants us to know that we have assurance through Christ that our salvation is dependent upon God and not us. True salvation is eternal. Praise be to God! But, at the same time John wants us to know what is true salvation. What does a true Christian look like? How can we know we are saved? How can we know if a person is a Christian as they claim?

A Christian who is concerned about holiness, obedience, repentance and the lordship of Christ has what Jonathan Edwards calls “holy affections” for Christ. A Christian desires to live the Word of God in order to bring glory and honor to Him. When living with a passion for God and His word is the focus of our lives then it is only natural that there will be fruit. ²² “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” This is the life I desire, this is the life I strive for and this is a life lived with “holy affections” for Christ, a life that brings joy – joy beyond what I could have ever dreamed of!

My beloved, I want us to go from here this day and live with “holy affections” for Christ! This life will assure us of our salvation. As Peter declared, I say unto you,

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” (2 Peter 1:2-3) Amen and Amen!