

DO

YOU

HAVE

ASSURANCE?

Hebrews 10:22 "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

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Introduction

If there is one thing that everybody desires it is “assurance”. We want to be sure that we have reliable friends. We want to be sure that our jobs are secure; when we leave work at the close of day we want to be sure that our jobs will be waiting when we return. Every now and then on the news we hear or see on our televisions of a work place that is burned to the ground and we cannot help but feel sorry for those who are employed there. We want to be sure that we will have a home when we return from work, vacation etc. We want to be sure that our families are physically well and happy. No one wants to see their mates or children suffer with an illness or to be unhappy!

“Assurance” is the one thing that everybody is seeking! But we are living in a world that is constantly changing. This makes our efforts of having “assurance” difficult. In the year of 2009 of our Lord there is constant change; more and more men and women are losing their jobs. More and more people are losing their homes to foreclosure! As we grow older we are losing our good health; we don’t even have the “assurance” of tomorrow.

Some thirty years ago my next door neighbor was an elderly man in his nineties and I was fascinated to listen to him tell of the changes that had occurred during his lifetime. Now that I am three quarters of a century old I can talk about the changes that have occurred during my lifetime. When I was young there were very few airplanes; it was a rare event to see one. I remember when I heard an airplane if I was inside I would run outside and look into the sky to see the plane; but now that the air is filled with airplanes I don’t even look up. I remember living on a farm as a youngster; we had no telephone, no electric, no running water; trips to town were usually once a week [Saturdays]. And we call these “The good

ole days"! I have noted the changes in my life simply to illustrate that there is no assurance that things will be the same tomorrow and they were today.

So, with there being so many changes every year and even every day it has become difficult to have "assurances" of anything. Yet the Hebrews writer exhorts us to have "assurance": (*Hebrews 10:22*) "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*" It is indeed a privilege to draw near to God "in full assurance of faith". It is possible for us to have this "full assurance" because Jesus Christ has made atonement for our sins and this offering for sin has been presented to God and it never has to be repeated. There were certain consequences that followed so the inspired writer proceeds to state them: (*Hebrews 10:19-25*) "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰*By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;* ²¹*And having an high priest over the house of God;* ²²*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* ²³*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)* ²⁴*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:* ²⁵*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" As long as we continue to keep the advice or exhortations given here we may continue to have "full assurance" even in this world that is constantly changing because God never changes.

The objective of this lesson is help everyone [including myself] to have "full assurance" of the hope of salvation that we so desperately desire! We will also be discussing how to gain this "assurance" and when it is once acquired how to retain "assurance". We need to be reminded that

God is able and capable of keeping that which He has promised and this is our aim in writing this book.

rophia *play-rof-or-ee'-ah* , *entire confidence*: - (full) assurance". And Thayer says this: "1) full assurance, most certain confidence **Part of Speech**: noun feminine".

Occurrences of the word "assurance"

The word "assurance" occurs four times: (*Colossians 2:1-2*) "*For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; ²That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*"(*1 Thessalonians 1:5*) "*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*" (*Hebrews 6:11*) "*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*" (*Hebrews 10:22*) "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*" Please notice that in three of these passages the reference says "full assurance". The word full means you can't have any more. If the glass is full of water you cannot put one more drop of water in it without it spilling over. This is how complete our "assurance" can be.

I would like to examine each of these verses; we begin with *Colossians 2:2* “*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*” The hearts of God’s people often need to be comforted because of the presence of sin all around them or often we are tempted of Satan and sometimes God will even hide His face from us: (*Isaiah 59:1-2*) “*Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*” Or perhaps we have been troubled by false teachers: (*2 Peter 2:1*) “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*” So you see there can be many causes for the people of God to have unsettled minds that need to be comforted. The mission and the business of gospel preachers is to comfort those who are troubled and this is exactly what Paul is doing with the Colossians. If you will make a careful study of the gospel message you will find that it is designed to bring comfort. In the gospel you will find full redemption, free justification to comfort distressed minds.

Paul then tells them that they are “knit together in love”. It is love that bonds them together to each other and it is love that bonds us together with God and Christ! It is love that joins and keeps us together. A church that does not have love cannot stand very long; if it does remain in existence it may grow but it will never be able to keep its membership. If fact if you don’t love you neighbor or fellow Christian you don’t even love God: (*1 John 4:20*) “*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*” The first step that believers must take in finding “assurance” is to be “knitted together in love.

Next Paul states we must have spiritual knowledge and understanding with these words; “**and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding;**” It was the desire of the apostle that they might have entire conviction of the truth of the Christian doctrines. When we grow to the point of having “full assurance of understanding” is when we understand the great truths of the mystery of God. By this I mean we have no doubts, we do not question anything; instead we embrace the truths of the gospel [where the mystery may be learned] with high satisfaction and accept them as faithful and truthful sayings. In fact we not only believe them with our hearts but we are willing also to confess them with our mouths: (*Romans 10:9-10*) “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” Another evidence of having “full assurance” is that we are not ashamed of our master or our religion. Let us remember that Paul wrote this to give them comfort of their hearts. When our hearts are comforted the soul prospers when it is filled with joy and peace: (*Romans 15:13*) “*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*” If we are truly knitted together in love the stronger our faith will be and we can all grow together.

In another epistle the apostle Paul wrote this on the subject of “assurance”: (*1 Thessalonians 1:5*) “*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*” Paul is here reminding them of the manner in which they had received the gospel when it was first preached to them. We have a record of this event: (*Acts 17:1-3*) “*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: ²And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sab-*

bath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, ³Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.” Paul speaks of it as “our gospel,” because it was the gospel preached by him and Silas and Timothy. In no way is Paul saying that the gospel had been originated by himself, Silas or Timothy. He is simply saying that they had preached the gospel to the Thessalonians. Paul reminds them that the gospel they had received **“came not unto you in word only”** don’t allow this to confuse you as the gospel did come to them in word, it could not have come to them in any other way, it could not come without words, there is no interpreting of Scripture, no preaching of the Gospel, nor hearing of it without words, without articulate sounds, This gospel that they preached had a powerful effect on their hearts and lives. I have serious doubts that Paul is referring to any miracles when he wrote that the gospel came to them “in power”. I believe he is writing of the powerful effect the gospel had upon them. Did not this same man refer to the gospel as God’s power? (*Romans 1:16*) *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* Since Paul had this opinion of the gospel I feel certain this is what he is referring to in 1 Thessalonians 1:5. Would anyone dare to deny that the gospel has the power to convert the sinner by converting the heart of the sinner? It is possible that there were miracles performed there, as there were in other places, but there is no mention of such a fact, and it is not necessary to suppose it, in order to see the full meaning of this language. There was great power manifested in the gospel in its leading them to break off from their sins, to abandon their idols, and to give their hearts to God. Paul then goes on to say how they had received the gospel with these words: **“And in much assurance”** By this Paul meant they had received the gospel with full conviction or full persuasion of its truth. They did not embrace it as a doubtful thing. How sad it is today that many seem to embrace the gospel as if they only half believe it and that it is of very little importance to them; but this was not the case with the Thessalonians. The main purpose of this passage to the Thessa-

lonians is to remind them of the “assurance” they had in the gospel that they heard spoken in words. We would do well today to remember how powerful the gospel is when it is spoken today.

The Hebrews writer also wrote in his letter using the word “assurance”: (*Hebrews 6:11*) “*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*” He uses the word “assurance” in the context of his confidence in them and exhorts them to diligence and perseverance. (*Hebrews 6:9-12*) “*But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. ¹⁰For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. ¹¹And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: ¹²That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*” In verse eleven he exhorts them to diligence in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, that so they might arrive to a full assurance of hope. It was his desire that they use “diligence” because it is through diligence that they could gain “full assurance”. This is an exhortation that should be heard often by today’s **Christo-day** that is, (by implication) *despatch, eagerness, earnestness*: - business, (earnest) care (-fulness), diligence forwardness, haste. Thusly we can see that he wanted them to be eager, to be earnest and not to waste any time to grow to the point where they would “full assurance of hope”. Is this not a wonderful thought and goal for each of us to have “full assurance of hope”? This goes right along with what Paul wrote to the Romans: (*Romans 4:21*) “*And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*” What is it that we all hope for; is it not heaven? The hope of heaven is made up of an earnest “wish” to reach heaven, and a corresponding “expectation” of it, or “reason to believe” that it will be ours. The full assurance of that hope exists where there is the highest desire of heaven, and such corresponding evidence of personal piety as to

leave no doubt that it will be ours. My favorite definition of hope is one that I heard given in a Bible class years ago; it goes “hope is desire plus expectation!” Since we all desire to go to heaven we can expect to go there because Jesus died so that it might be possible.

Later in the same epistle the Hebrews writer again uses the word “assurance”: (*Hebrews 10:22*) “*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*” The general subject of Hebrews chapter ten is the sacrifice which Christ has made for sin, and the consequences which flow from the fact, that he has made a sufficient atonement. Since it was a fact that such an atonement had been made; that one great offering for sin had been presented to God which was never to be repeated, there were certain consequences which followed from that, which the apostle proceeds to state: (*Hebrews 10:19-25*) “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰*By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;* ²¹*And having an high priest over the house of God;* ²²*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* ²³*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)* ²⁴*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:* ²⁵*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*” In verse twenty two the statement “in full assurance of faith” is basically the same that we have already discussed; however, it is what is written just before these words that is of interest to me. The words that I am referring to are “**a true heart**”! A true heart is required in our prayers, in our praise and in every act of worship. A sincere heart was required under the old dispensation and it is always demanded of people when they draw near to God to worship Him: (*John 4:23-24*) “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father*

seeketh such to worship him. ²⁴God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Every form of religion which God has revealed requires the worshippers to come with pure and holy hearts. Friends, if you desire to have “full assurance” you must have a “true heart”!

Don't you find it interesting that each time you read the word “assurance” it is preceded by the word “full” or the word “much”. This denotes complete confidence. We know that the apostle Paul wrote the epistles to the Colossians and to those in Thessalonica; but the writer of the Hebrews epistle does not identify himself. Although it is debatable I believe that Paul is the writer of the Hebrews epistle. I base this opinion upon the fact that the language of each epistle is much the same. As we have noticed the words “full” and “much” accompany the word “assurance in all of the epistles we have noted in this chapter. To me this is a clear indication that they all had the same writer, the apostle Paul.

Question over the occurrence of the word assurance

1. How many times does the word “assurance” occur in the New Testament? _____

2. Why did Paul write Colossians 2:2?

3. Why would the hearts of God's people need to be comforted?

3. Does God ever hide His face from His people? [Isa. 59;1, 2]

4. Who does Peter say it is that may trouble you? [2 Pet. 2:1]

5. Do you think as a Christian it is your mission to comfort your brothers and sisters?

6. With what should we be knitted together? [Col. 2:2]

7. As a Christian how does love benefit you?

8. John says if you don't love your brother neither do you love _____.[1 Jn. 4:20]

9. Would you agree that the first step Christians must take to have full assurance is to be knitted together in love?

10. What does it mean to have “full assurance of understanding?”

11. If we have this “full assurance of understanding what are we willing to do with our mouths? [Rom. 10:9,10]

12. God is “the God of _____.” [Rom. 15:13]

13. What will God fill you with? [Rom. 15:13]

14. What word does Paul use to describe assurance? [1 Thess. 1:5]

15. What is Paul reminding them of in this passage?

16. Where would you find when they first heard the gospel?

17. What did Paul mean when he wrote the words “our gospel”? [1 Thess. 1:5]

18. What did Paul mean when he said “our gospel came not to you in word only”? [1 Thess. 1:5]

19. The gospel can only be spoken, heard, believed and obey if it is spoken in words; did Paul believe the gospel was powerful when it was spoken in words? [Rom. 1:16] _____

20. Do you believe the gospel has the power to convert a sinner?

21. The Hebrews writer wanted them to show what _____? [Heb. 6:11]

22. What would they gain through diligence?

23. What does the word “diligence” mean?

24. As Christians what is it we all hope for?

25. Did Paul think that God was able to keep that which He had promised? [Rom. 4:21] _____

25. What is the general subject of Hebrews chapter ten?

26. In what are we to have “full assurance”? [Heb. 10:22]

27. Who is our high priest today? [Heb. 10:21]

28. Do you think it is important to have a “true heart”?

29. If you answered “yes” to the preceding question in what areas should we have true hearts?

30. What kind of worshippers does God desire to worship Him? [Jn. 4:23, 24]

31. Can you have “full assurance” without a “true heart”?

How assurance is produced

Even in our world of constant change “assurance” can be obtained. Today “assurance” is gained through faith: (*Ephesians 3:12*) “*In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*” As Paul wrote this epistle he was a prisoner because of his testimony of Jesus Christ. In this epistle he declares his knowledge of what had been a mystery from all ages that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews: (*Ephesians 3:1-6*) “*For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, ²If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: ³How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:” Which doctrine he was made a minister, that he might declare the unsearchable riches of Christ, and make known to principalities and powers this eternal purpose of God: (*Ephesians 3:7-12*) “*Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. ⁸Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ⁹And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: ¹⁰To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, ¹¹According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: ¹²In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*” Looking at verse twelve Paul wrote that they had “boldness” and this boldness comes through Jesus Christ [verse 11]. Most*

Bible commentators agree that Paul is referring to speak or pray to God through Jesus Christ. Look at Strong's definition of the word "boldness": "all out spokenness, that is, frankness, bluntness, publicity; by implication assurance". Did you notice that he added the word "assurance" to his definition? So this verse fits perfectly with or study of "assurance". The word "boldness" also suggests to us that we have liberty to approach God at any time we desire to; the trouble with most people is that they don't desire to approach God often enough in prayer. Paul says we have this boldness and confidence through faith in our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. By this he means that we may now come confidently and boldly to the throne of grace for mercy in the name of Jesus. I want to warn that boldness is not rashness; and faith is not presumption.

This boldness comes by faith in him. The sense is that we may now come confidently and boldly to the throne of grace for mercy in the name of the Redeemer. Boldness is not rashness; and faith is not presumption; but we may come without hesitating, and with an assurance that our prayers will be heard. Brethren, this boldness, confidence or assurance is made possible through faith; so the question arises "how do we get faith?" Answer: (*Romans 10:17*) "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" If you want assurance through faith my advice is to read your Bible; better yet study that Bible.

The apostle Paul is a good example of one who had faith and full assurance; this can be observed by what he wrote to Timothy: (*2 Timothy 1:12*) "*For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" There is no question that Paul suffered: (*2 Corinthians 11:23-28*) "*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. ²⁴Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save*

one. ²⁵*Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;* ²⁶*In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;* ²⁷*In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.* ²⁸*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”* Is there anything more that one man could do to prove his faith in God and His Son than Paul did? I cannot help but believe that during each one of these perils that Paul suffered he was thinking about the reward that was awaiting him! Revelation two gives a promise that should give each of us boldness and assurance: *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* [Rev. 2:10].

The prophet Isaiah wrote that “assurance” is the effect of “righteousness”: (Isaiah 32:17) *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”* To get the full benefit of the meaning of this verse we need to understand the meaning of the word “righteousness”; a simple definition that I would use is “morally just”. Therefore, this passage is telling us that those who are morally just [or righteous] have the effect of possessing “assurance”. This is a beautiful picture or description of the peace that the righteous enjoy. Most agree that this is referring to the peace that a nation enjoys but I believe it can also be applied to an individual who is righteous; he or she will enjoy peace of mind and a sense of “assurance” whenever a life of righteousness is being lived. When applied to a nation true religion would put an end to strifes and litigations; to riots and mobs; to oppressions and tumults; to alarms and robbery; to battle, and murder, and conflict. Without doubt “righteousness” will bring “peace” and “assurance” to a

nation; but I have a serious question, “will not righteousness give the same result to individuals as it will to a nation?”

As we have already stated “assurance” is produced by a true heart: (*Hebrews 10:22*) “*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*” And we must not forget that “assurance” is produced through hope: (*Hebrews 6:11*) “*And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*” Also “assurance” is abundant when we understand the mysteries of the gospel: (*Colossians 2:2*) “*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;*” And to this list we can also add “righteousness” to the list that will bring “assurance”: (*Isaiah 32:17*) “*And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*”

Can you confirm that you indeed have “assurance”? Allow the apostle John to answer this question: (*1 John 3:14-19*) “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. ¹⁵Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*” To be perfectly honest I have been in congregations where no love existed; they claimed to be a part of God’s kingdom; but were they really a church that Jesus gave his precious life for? In

the kingdom of God love exists! John wrote that “we KNOW we have passed from death unto life, because we LOVE THE BRETHREN”. When you know something you are sure [this is nothing else except assurance]. This is how you know that you have ‘assurance’! As John says it is not good enough just to tell someone that you love them you have to love in deed and truth! John does not stop here, he goes on to say this is how we know that we are of the truth and by this we assure our hearts before him. Do you like to study words? The word “assure” in verse nineteen is worthy

pi'-tho A primary verb; to *convince* (by argument, true or false); by analogy to *pacify* or *conciliate* (by other fair means); reflexively or passively to *assent* (to evidence or authority), to *rely* (by inward certainty): - agree, assure, believe, have confidence, be content, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield. Do we not understand from the inspired writer that that if we love the brethren we have “assurance”? What can be said for those who do not have love for the brethren? Are you confirming your “assurance” by loving the brethren? Do you remember what Jesus said? (*Matthew 5:44*) “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*”

How assurance is produced questions

1. Where was Paul when he wrote his epistle to the Ephesians? [Eph. 3:1] _____

2. Why was Paul a prisoner?

3. How did Paul learn the mysteries that had been hidden so long? [Eph. 3:3, 5]

4. Who was Paul to preach the gospel to? [Eph. 3:8]

5. Fill in the blanks: "In whom we have _____ and _____ with _____ by the faith of him." Ephesians 3:12 (KJV)

6. Through whom do we have boldness and confidence? [Eph. 3:11]

7. What does the word "boldness" mean?

8. Does our boldness give us the right to be rash or presumptuous?

9. What was Paul persuaded of? [2 Tim. 1:12]

10. Paul's sufferings show that he had "full assurance"; what did he suffer? [2 Cor. 11:23-28]

11. What will the faithful receive? [Rev. 2:10]

12. Isaiah wrote that “assurance” is the effect of _____ [Isa. 32:17]

13. Define the word “righteousness”.

14. What two things can the righteous expect to receive? [Isa. 32:17]

15. Who should Christians love? [1 Jn. 3:14]

16. How do we perceive the love of God? [1 Jn. 3:16]

17. What does the word “assure” in 1 Jn. 3:19 mean?

Saints are privileged to have assurance

As Christians we have several privileges and we come to realize these privileges when we know that we have “assurances” from the word of God. The list of “assurances” that we have are very extensive so I will not attempt to mention them all.

Saints are privileged to be the “election of God”: (*1 Thessalonians 1:4*) “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*” There is no doubt that Paul was writing to Christians as he addresses them as “brethren beloved”. The idea here is that you know that you are chosen by God unto salvation. If this is not a privilege I have no idea what a privilege is! But how can I be sure? Read these words from the pen of Paul: (*Ephesians 1:4-5*) “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*” The word “us” here shows that the apostle had reference to individuals, and not to communities. It includes Paul himself as one of the “chosen,” and those whom he addressed i.e. the mingled Gentile and Jewish converts in Ephesus. The word “knowing” refers to Paul himself and his rendering thanks for the favor shown to the church at Thessalonica. The meaning that should be applied to the word “knowing” is that Paul had such a strong confidence that they had been chosen that they might say that they knew and might say “The word knowing here refers to Paul himself, and to Silas and Timothy, who united with him in writing the Epistle, and in rendering thanks for the favors shown to the church at Thessalonica. The meaning is, that they had so strong confidence that they had been chosen of God as a church unto salvation, that they might say they knew they had been chosen by God to be His elect people. I would also refer you to Ephesians 1:11 “*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*” We need to be cautious when reading this as there are some who

have misunderstood this passage. This verse is not teaching that God decides before you are even born if you are going to heaven or to hell! What this means that God had predetermined a plan of salvation and those who will obey His plan of salvation He ‘predestinated’ them “according to His purpose”. Those who will be obedient have been chosen to be the election of God which we should recognized as a privilege. David wrote that Lord has set apart those who are godly for himself: (*Psalms 4:3*) “*But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.*” God has marked the godly as his own and put them aside as His own property.

Saints or Christians are privileged to be assured of redemption; Job knew that his redeemer lived: (*Job 19:25*) “*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*” Although Job did not say, “I am redeemed” he did say that I know that MY REDEEMER LIVES; if Job was aware that he had a redeemer was he not aware of the fact that he had been redeemed? If Job was redeemed he had redemption! In verses twenty five through verses twenty seven Job states his hope of salvation: (*Job 19:25-27*) “*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: ²⁷Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*” There have been debates as to whether Job was referring to his restoration of physical health or eternal salvation; I am of the strong opinion that he is referring to his spiritual well being. Please notice the assurance that Job had in his redeemer; he said **I KNOW**. There was no doubt in his mind; he possessed the “full assurance” that we have been referring to. Our redeemer was crucified, buried, raised from the dead, appeared to many witnesses alive and ascended into the clouds to be seated at the right hand of his Father in heaven. Is it not important for us to have the same assurance that our redeemer lives that Job possessed? It is also important that we be assured that Jesus will return: (*Acts 1:9-11*) “*And when he had spo-*

ken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Assurance of redemption can be ours if we have obeyed the gospel and remain faithful unto death [Revelation 2:10] because our redeemer lives!

Christians are privileged to be the “sons of God”: (1 John 3:2) *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* John reminds his readers what a great privilege this is and I want to do the same. John tells them that they shall be like Jesus when he appears [1 Jn. 3:2]. He further tells them that they shall purify themselves under the influence of this hope: (1 John 3:3) *“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”* How is this possible? This is made possible because obedient people are now “THE SONS OF GOD! Have you given any thought as to what a great honor and dignity it is to be a child of God? We should reflect upon this honor with extreme pleasure and gratitude. Consider what a great pleasure it is to be a “son of God; then we should also consider that which is to come; we will be LIKE Jesus. John knew what he was writing would come to pass because he was writing by inspiration and this my friends is the assurance that we have from an apostle of Jesus Christ and one who wrote by inspiration. Are you aware that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are “the children of God”? (Romans 8:16) *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”* While the text does not say it is the Holy Spirit it would be foolish to apply “the Spirit” to anyone else other than the Holy Spirit. “Beareth witness” simply means that he testifies or gives witness that we are “the children of God”. Would you not agree that the Holy Spirit gives evidence to our minds that we are the children of God? Don’t you know that you are a Christian and as such

you are a child of God? Because of the writing of the apostle John and the evidence given to us by the Holy Spirit we have “assurance”.

Another privilege that Christians have is knowing and having “assurance” of salvation: (*Isaiah 12:2*) “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.” Verses one through six of Isaiah chapter twelve is a part of the vision which was commenced in Isaiah 10:5. The prophet had foretold the deliverance of the nation from the threatened invasion of Sennacherib Isaiah 10; he had then looked forward to the times of the Messiah, and described the certainty, the character, and the consequences of this reign Isaiah 11. The eleventh chapter closes with a reference to the deliverance of the nation from the oppression of the Egyptians. That deliverance was celebrated with a beautiful song, which was sung by Miriam and ‘all the women,’ who ‘went out after her with timbrels and with dances’ [Exo. 15:1-21]. Isaiah says, in this chapter that the deliverance of which he speaks shall be celebrated also with a song of praise; and this chapter; therefore, is properly an expression of the feelings offered by redeemed people of God, in view of his great mercy in interposing to save them. It should be read in view of the great and glorious deliverance which God has performed for us in the redemption of his Son; and with feelings of lofty gratitude that he has brought us from worse than Egyptian bondage - the bondage of sin. The song is far better applied to the times of the Messiah, than it could be to anything which occurred under the Jewish dispensation. The Jews themselves appear to have applied it to his time. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles, they brought water in a golden pitcher from the fountain of Siloam, and poured it, mingled with wine, on the sacrifice that was on the altar, with great rejoicing). This custom was not required by Moses, and probably arose from the command in Isaiah 12:3. We should always remember and be thankful that God is our author and source of our salvation. Our salvation cannot be traced to any other source other than Jehovah God. No man is capable of saving you; the only thing that man can do is to lead you to God by teach-

ing you the will of God. But when we learn God's will and obey His commandments we do have the privilege and assurance of receiving salvation. Isaiah wrote "I will trust and not be afraid"; he could write this with full assurance and confidence because he knew that God is the author and supplier of salvation.

Do you "believe on the name of the Son of God"? (*1 John 5:13*) "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*" If you believe that Jesus is indeed the Son of God John says you may know [i.e. have assurance] that you have eternal life. This must surely be a privilege that only believers have. Know this we can go to bed and get some good rest, knowing this gives us courage to face the temptations of each new day. What a joy it is to have this blessed assurance.

Saints are privileged to have assurance questions

1. What kind of men did Paul address in 1 Thess. 1:4?

2. [Fill in the blanks] Saints are privileged to be the _____
_____ [1 Thess. 1:4]

3. When did God choose us? [Eph. 1:4]

4. Is God pleased to adopt us as His children? [Eph. 1:5]

5. In [Eph. 1:5] who does the word “us” have reference to?

6. According to [Eph. 1:11] what can be obtained?

7. What does it mean to be “predestinated”?

8. For whom has God set aside some? [Psa. 4:3]

9. What did Job know about his redeemer? [Job 19:25]

10. Did Job have any hope of seeing his redeemer? (Job 19:27)

11. Doesn't the fact that Job spoke of his redeemer suggest that he had been redeemed? _____

12. When Job said “I know that my redeemer lives” didn't he infer that he had assurance? _____

13. What were the apostles doing when Jesus ascended to heaven? [Acts 1:10]

14. Who appeared and spoke to them as Jesus disappeared into the clouds? [Acts 1:10] _____

15. Who bears witness that we are children of God? [Rom. 8:16]

16. [Fill in the blanks] Christians are privileged to be _____
_____ [1 Jn. 3:2]

17. Who did Isaiah say was his salvation? [Isa. 12:2]

18. Who is our source of salvation?

19. What does the writing of the apostle John prove to us? [1 Jn. 5:13]

20. Isn't it great to have the assurance of eternal life?

Christians are assured of God's love

I know of no one who does not want to be loved; even hard core criminals want to be loved! Atheists may not desire to be loved by God but everyone else desires to be loved by God. The apostle Paul wrote that we have assurance of God's love: (*Romans 8:38-39*) "*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" This chapter is a very interesting portion of the scriptures; it is continuation of the subject discussed in the previous chapter. The main objective of Romans chapter eight is to show that the gospel could accomplish what the Law was unable to do. In chapter seven Paul had shown that the Law was incapable of producing sanctification or peace of mind. Chapter eight will give us peace of mind and assurance of God's love. Through the gospel the faithful Christian can have a good conscience and assurance that NOTHING can separate them from the love of

pi'-tho Strong says it is a primary verb; to convince [by argument, true or false]; agree, assure, believe, have confidence, be content, trust. It is important for us to understand Paul's meaning as it will determine how extensive his belief was that nothing could separate him [or us] from the love of God. Paul was sure; he completely believed, had full confidence and trusted that his love for God always be present. He says that not even death could separate him from God's love. In my opinion the real message of Paul is that not even death or the thought of death would cause him from stop loving God. He next refers to "life". Regardless of how happy we are or how much we might desire to live we will not stop loving God nor will He stop loving us. We must understand it was not uncommon for persecutors to offer life if the Chris-

tian would deny Christ. This is persuasion of loving God; would you react the same way if you were given a choice between life and death? Then Paul mentions “angels”. It is apparent that Paul is not referring to good angels here. Remember the apostle is saying that nothing would separate Christians from the love of Christ. I cannot imagine that good angels would even seek to alienate Christians from their Savior. It seems apparent that Paul refers to the temptations of evil spirits. The word “angels” is sometimes applied to evil spirits: (*Matthew 25:41*) “*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*” (*1 Corinthians 6:3*) “*Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*” The word “principalities” is an interesting word; this word usually refers to magistrates and civil rulers. But it is also applied to evil angels who have dominion over people: (*Ephesians 6:12*) “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*” Some have supposed that it refers here to magistrates and those in authority who persecuted Christians; but the connection of the word with angels seems to require us to understand it of evil spirits. Paul declares that not even “powers” could separate him from the love of Christ. This word is often applied to magistrates, but it is also applied to evil spirits that have dominion over men [1 Cor. 15:24]. The ancient Rabbis also gave the name powers to evil angels. The Jews often divided the angels of heaven into ranks and orders. We even find evidence of this in the scriptures. They regarded Satan as the leader of evil angels as we have already shown from Matthew 25:41. The good news is that no evil angel, regardless of how powerful would be able to alienate the hearts of Christians from their Redeemer. Calamities and persecution which they were now subject to are referred to as “things present”. Verse thirty eight concludes with these words, “nor things to come”. Not even the trials to which they might be exposed would be sufficient to destroy their love for Christ.

Verse thirty nine continues with the same thought. He concludes this chapter with a direct and positive conclusion of the entire matter, “for I am persuaded”. These words denote a full, strong and affectionate persuasion of Paul’s love for Christ and Christ’s love for Paul and all Christians. In these two verses Paul has enumerated all which some might suppose would be likely to separate Christ and the believers. We must take note that Paul concludes that it can not be done. What a blessed thought it is that neither time nor eternity can separate us from Christ. We know that Paul and other Christians were cast into prisons and dungeons; yet their love for Christ did not diminish in the least. There is only one thing that can separate us from God and that is sin: (*Isaiah 59:1-2*) “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” We can rest assured that God will not depart from us until after we have departed from Him.

Before leaving this thought there is a point that should be made; the love that exists between God and true believers is through Christ. Jesus is the mediator of our love. It is in and through Jesus Christ that God can love us and it is through Christ that we even dare to love God. We can be sure that God loves us: (*Zephaniah 3:17*) “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Can God be as assured of our love for Him? If our faith is as strong as Paul’s we will never stop loving God.

Christians are assured of God's love questions

1. Can you name anyone who does not desire to be loved by God; if so name them?

2. How did Paul express his assurance that nothing could separate him from the love of God? [Rom. 8:38]

3. What was Paul's objective in writing Romans chapter eight?

4. Is the gospel able to do what the Law could not do?

5. Give your definition of the word "persuaded".

6. Did he think that death could separate him from his love for God?

7. What would Christian persecutors often offer in exchange for denying Christ? _____

8. Was Paul referring to good angels or bad angels?

9. What kind of angels did Jesus refer to in [Matt. 25:41]?

10. Who will judge angels? [1 Cor. 6:3]

11. Who do we wrestle against? [Eph. 6:12]

12. Is the word “power” ever applied to angels? [1 Cor. 15:24]

13. Who did the Jews regard as the leader of evil angels?

14. Should we allow our trials of today or tomorrow to destroy our love for God? _____

15. Did Paul believe that any of the things that he listed was able to separate him or us from loving God?

16. What is the one thing that can separate us from God? [Isa. 50:1, 2]

17. The love that exists between God and believers is through whom?
[Rom. 8:39] _____

We are given assurance of peace with God through Jesus

Just thinking about the wrath of God make me shudder: (*Romans 1:18*) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*” To not be at peace with God is a fearful thing: (*Hebrews 10:31 (KJV)*) *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” Therefore, having peace with God is a good thing: (*Romans 5:1*) *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:* The design of the fifth chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Romans is without doubt to show the benefits of the doctrine of justification by faith. In previous chapters he had established that people were under condemnation for sin. This condemnation was upon the Jews and Gentiles alike. He had shown that this condemnation could not be escaped by personal merit; the only escape was through the grace of God. He explained how this plan was made known by the gospel of Christ. This was not a completely new doctrine because it is a fact that it was God’s grace that Abraham and David had been accepted by God. Paul now in chapter five verse one stated the effects of the gospel was to produce peace. Throughout this epistle Paul writes about the peace that faith will produce: (*Romans 1:17*) *For therein*

is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Romans 3:24) "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" (Romans 4:5) "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted righteousness." And Paul is not finished with the subject of faith either: (Romans 8:6) "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 10:15) "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Please notice what they preached [the gospel] and also note that it is called by the inspired writer that it is called the "gospel of peace". So called because peace is what the gospel will produce: (Romans 14:17) "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." If you desire to be at peace with God you must acquire faith! How does one acquire faith? (Romans 10:17) "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To the church at Galatia Paul also wrote on the subject of peace: (Galatians 5:22) "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is peace! How can we tie peace to this faith? Remembering that faith comes by "hearing the word" we must ask who is the author of the word. Some would answer Peter, John, Paul, James, Jude, Matthew, Mark or Luke. True these men were the writers but the Holy Spirit is the author as he inspired them what to write or speak: (Acts 2:4) "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Therefore, we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is the author of the word from which we acquire faith and it is this faith that produces "peace"! If you want to be at peace with God attend a church where the gospel of Christ is being preached and taught and don't forget to read your Bible.

We may be at peace with God but not at peace with all mankind. Too many people think that Jesus came to this earth to make peace: (Matthew 10:34) "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to

send peace, but a sword.” This is taken from Micah chapter seven verse six: *“For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”* It should be understood that Jesus Christ is not saying here that objective of his coming to this earth was to produce discord and contention, because Jesus was the Prince of Peace: (Isaiah 9:6) *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* When Jesus was born a multitude of heavenly host made this announcement: (Luke 2:13-14) *“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* So the words of Isaiah were fulfilled. Yet Jesus warns that he did not come to make peace; what did our Lord mean by this statement? What he meant was that those who did not and do not even to this day believe in him as the Son of God would and still do set themselves against those who do believe. Let me point out that it is the wickedness of man and it is not the gospel that causes this hostility. Jesus warned his apostles of the hostility that would come when they preached the gospel: (Matthew 10:21) *“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.”* We must not allow such hostility to hinder us from believing and obeying the gospel. I would much rather have friends or even those of my own blood to be my enemies than to have Jehovah God as an enemy. I prefer to be at peace with God and I can obtain this peace by believing and obeying the gospel.

David knew what it meant to have peace of and through God: (Psalms 3:6) *“I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.”* David was a man of courage from his youth; the instances of his attacking the lion and the bear, when he kept his father's sheep, his engaging with Goliath, and his military ex-

plots, show it; and though there were now many thousands up in arms against him, and his own son at the head of them; all the tribes of Israel were revolting from him, and he was only attended with a few of his friends, yet he was not dismayed. What gave him this assurance? He trusted the Lord: *(Psalms 3:8) "Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people."* Again he wrote of his assurance and confidence in the Lord: *(Psalms 27:3-5) "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. ⁴One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.⁵For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."* The confidence that David had in the Lord's protection is certainly wonderful and it was made possible because he had the peace of God.

Saints have assurance of peace questions

1. What is the wrath of God revealed against? [Rom. 1:18]

2. Should we be afraid to fall into the hands of God and to face His wrath? [Heb. 10:31]

3. Through what are we justified? [Rom. 5:1]

4. What do those who are justified have with God? [Rom. 5:1]

5. What is the design of the fifth chapter of the book of Romans?

6. Paul had earlier shown that both the Jews and Gentiles were under condemnation because of sin; is he not showing that salvation comes by grace though faith? _____

7. How were Abraham and David accepted by God?

8. How are the just to live? [Rom.1:17]

9. Faith is counted as what? [Rom. 4:5]

10. What kind of a mind produces peace? [Rom. 8:6]

11. What are preachers to preach: [Rom. 10:15]

12. Why is the gospel called the gospel of peace?

14. If you desire to be at peace with God you must have faith; how does one acquire faith? [Rom. 10:17]

15. What is the “fruit of the Spirit”? [Gal.5:22]

16. Who is the author of the Bible?

17. Did Jesus come to “send peace on earth”? [Matt. 10:34]

18. What did Jesus mean by this statement?

19. Isaiah wrote about the Prince of Peace; who is the Prince of Peace? [Isa. 9:6] _____

20. What did the multitude of heavenly host say when Jesus was born? [Lu. 12:13,14]

21. What warning did Jesus give his apostles? [Matt. 10:21]

22. Who was David not afraid of? [Psa. 3:6]

23. David had been a man of courage from his youth; give some instances that show his courage.

24. Why was David not afraid? [Psa. 3:8]

25. What did God do for David in times of trouble? [Psa. 27:5]

Faithful Christians have assurance of their prayers being answered

I feel certain that the majority of us do pray to God; however, it might seem to some that God is not listening nor has no concern of the request we make to Him. This is the very reason that the apostle John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the following passage: (*1 John 3:22*) “*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*” This verse was written specifically to give us the assurance that God not only hears our prayers but will grant our petitions. If we are truly God’s children and ask in the proper manner our prayers will be answered. This goes along with the words that Jesus spoke in his Sermon on the Mount: (*Matthew 7:7*) “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*” Here Jesus presents three different forms of seeking the things which we need from God. They are asking, seeking and knocking. The latter is taken from the act of knocking at a door to gain admittance. As we ask, seek and knock we should do so with earnestness, diligence and perseverance. Jesus promises that what we seek shall be given to us. This of course implies that we ask the things which may be consistent for God to give us; that is things He has promised to give to us and the things that would be best for us to receive. Of course this would also include things that would bring honor to Him. (*1 John 5:14*) “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*” We must not neglect God’s will in our prayers. God is willing to provide for us, to forgive our sins, to save our souls, to befriend us in trial, to comfort us in death, to extend the gospel through the word. Man “can” ask no higher things of God; and these he may ask, assured that he is willing to grant them. As I have already stated when we pray we should do so with confidence and assurance; I believe Jesus will back me up: (*Luke 18:1*) “*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*” The parable of the persistent widow is designed to teach us fervency in prayer: (*Luke 18:1-8*) “*And*

he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; ²Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. ⁶And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. ⁷And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? ⁸I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" I wonder if we were to remember these words of Jesus and what John wrote in 1 John 3:22 if our prayer life might not be changed.

We must not overlook 1 John 3:23 *"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."* In this verse John expounds on the commandments we are to keep. To those who do not keep the commandments of God I suppose this verse does not give very much assurance of having their prayers answered. Here John states two stipulations to God answering our prayers; we must believe on the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ and secondly we must love the brethren: (1 John 3:23) *"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, **and love one another**, as he gave us commandment."* I have no doubts that you "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ". But some within the brotherhood do make me wonder if they do truly love their brethren. In fact I even have concerns about some who claim to be the Lord's church because of their lack of love for one another. If you ever have doubts that God is hearing your prayers maybe you need to read these words of John. Those who do not keep God's commandments and commit things that are displeasing to Him cannot expect that God will hear and answer their prayers. I will give two more passages that will prove this: (Psalms 66:18) *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:"* (Proverbs 28:9) *"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the*

law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” There is no part of the Bible that will be any more profitable to the Christian to study than this portion of 1 John.

The word “prayer” may be found one hundred and nine times in the King James Version of the Bible. So it becomes apparent to me that God wants us to go to Him in prayer. As you know God speaks to us today through His inspired word and we speak to Jehovah God in prayer. Let us remember that we are God’s children; as a parent myself I know that I want and delight when my daughter talks to me; as our heavenly Father God is no different than I am. I also delight when my daughter and even my grandchildren and great grandchildren tell me that they love me; God wants to hear from you that you love Him. God has proven to us that He loves us: (*John 3:16*) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* We can prove that we love God by telling Him that we love Him in our prayers and by keeping His commandments. When we do this we will be rewarded with our prayers being answered.

How often do you pray? How often are we required to pray? We teach our children to pray at bed time; but is that enough? We teach our children that we need to prayer before we have a meal; but is that enough? We pray for the sick; but what about those who are spiritually ill; in my opinion theirs is the greater need. All of these questions still lead me to ask, “how often should we pray”? The apostle Paul answers this question with just three words: (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*) *“Pray without ceasing.”* Paul is not suggesting that saints should always be on their knees, or ever lifting up their hands, and vocally calling upon God; this is not required of those to whom Paul was writing; neither is it required of you or me. We are not required to spend our entire worship service in prayer; in fact we have other acts of worship that we must fulfill. If we were to spend all of our awake hours in prayer we could not provide for our families and this would classify us as an infidel: (*1 Timothy 5:8*) *“But if any provide not for his own,*

and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” If we were to spend all of our time in prayer when would we study our Bibles to learn God’s will? Our bodies are weak we need to take nourishment for our bodies and we need to rest and sleep; therefore, I do not believe that Paul meant for us to take this literally! Rather the meaning is that believers [i.e. Christians] should be found going to their heavenly Father daily and often in prayer. The Ethiopic version renders the words, “pray frequently”; in other words do not leave off praying, or cease from it through the prevalence of sin; nor should we allow temptation or discouragement to interrupt our prayer life. I think that most of us would have to admit that we do not spend enough time in prayer. Again I would remind you of the words of the apostle John: (*1 John 5:14*) “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*” With this assurance would you not agree that we need to spend more time in prayer? We should not overlook the words of John in *1 John 5:15* “*And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*” Friends if we know and have assurance that this is indeed a true doctrine we should not hesitate in going to God in prayer. While it is true that often times we do not have immediate response to our prayers we do have assurance that our prayers are not disregarded. Furthermore, we have the assurance that our petitions will answered in way that is most beneficial for our good. The specific thing that we ask for may not be granted; this was even true with a petition that our Lord and Savior asked of his Father: (*Luke 22:42*) “*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” Even though God did not grant Jesus’ petition we must admit that everyone who will believe and obey have benefited from the crucifixion and death of Jesus. We need to make our petitions to God in the same manner that Jesus did; “if thou be willing, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.” The apostle Paul experienced the same reaction to a petition he once made: (*2 Corinthians 12:8-9*) “*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. ⁹And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my*

strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” We can learn a great lesson from the reply that Paul received and that is that our Lord’s grace is sufficient. Just because our prayers are not answered in the exact manner that we requested does not indicate that our prayers have been disregarded! We do have assurance that our prayers are heard and will be answered in the manner that is the best for us; because our heavenly Father has promised to hear our prayers.

Christians have assurance that their prayers will be answered questions

1. Do you believe that God listens to your prayers?

2. What is required of us if God is to grant our petitions? [1 Jn. 3:22]

3. Why was 1 John 3:22 written?

4. From the words of Jesus spoken in his Sermon on the Mount agree with the words of John? [Matt. 7:7]

5. What three forms of seeking does Jesus give in Matthew 7:7?

6. Should we have confidence [assurance] when we pray? [1 Jn. 5:14]

7. How should our petitions be made? [1 Jn. 5:14]

8. Should we be consistent in our prayers? [Lu. 18:1]

9. What did Jesus teach in a parable? [Lu. 18:1-8]

10. In 1 John 3: 23 two commandments are given; what are they?

11. Can we believe on the name of Jesus and still not love the brethren?

12. Is not loving the brethren a hindrance to our prayers?

13. If we don't keep the commandments of God can we expect that God will hear and answer our prayers? [Psa. 66:18]

14. If we turn away our ears from hearing the commandment of God what will our prayers become? [Prov. 28:9]

15. The word "prayer" may be found 109 times in the KJV of the Bible does this indicate that God wants us to come to Him in prayer?

16. As a parent how would you feel if your children would not talk to you?

17. Christians are the children of God; how do you suppose He feels when we don't talk to Him in prayer?

18. How has God proven that He loves us? [Jn. 3:16]

19. How do we teach our children that they need to pray?

20. How often do you think that you need to pray?

21. What did Paul say about prayer? [1 Thess. 5:17]

22. Is Paul suggesting that saints should always be on their knees and lifting up their voices in prayer?

23. If Paul meant this literally would this not require that our worship services would only consist of prayers?

24. If Paul meant this literally would we have any time to study God's word? _____

25. What does studying God's word provide for us? [2 Tim. 2:15]

26. If we spent all of our time praying how could we provide for our families? _____

27. If we don't provide for our families what are we worse than? [1 Tim. 5:8] _____

28. What do you believe that Paul meant in 1 Thess. 5:17?

29. Can we know that God hears our prayers? [1 Jn. 5:15]

30. Are our petitions always granted the same way we made our requests to God, _____

31. Was there ever a time that God did not grant Jesus' petition? [Lu. 22:42] _____

32. What were the results of God not granting this petition of Jesus?

33. Who benefited from God's refusal to grant Jesus' petition?

34. How many times had Paul made this request?

35. What did the Lord tell Paul?

36. If God does not grant our petitions as we requested does this mean that God did not hear our prayers?

37. Do you believe that our prayers are ever disregarded by God?

Christians have the assurance of comfort in affliction

I know of no one who has not suffered “affliction” at one time or another; however, we do have the assurance that we are not alone at these times: (*Psalms 73:26*) “*My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*” This psalm (with the ten succeeding psalms, together with Ps. 50 - twelve in all) is ascribed to Asaph. Flesh and heart seem to refer to the whole man, body and soul; meaning that his powers of body and mind had failed him. Perhaps he felt that death was near; and with thought in his mind and he asks himself what would be his strength, upon whom could he rely upon? It seems as though he is quick to answer with complete assurance that he could rely on God. He believed even if his heart and flesh should fail him that the love of God would survive; as he wrote “God is the strength of his heart”. When we are suffering affliction our refuge is to turn to God. We may not realize it but God is even the source of our happiness. True happiness

does not come through wealth, honor, earthly friends or fame. True happiness can only be ours as we realize that God is our friend and as Asaph said “my portion”. Even if we are facing death we must cling to Him as our hope, our joy and our all. In death we have no other refuge. Brethren, we have the assurance that God will “never leave us or forsake us: (*Hebrews 13:5*) “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” We can always rely on our Lord.

Jesus knew that God was with him: (*Luke 4:18-19*) “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,* ¹⁹*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*” Jesus is quoting from *Isaiah 61:1-2* “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;* ²*To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;*” *Luke 4:18,19* gives a full account of Christ’s undertaking and the work he came into the world to do. As we read this we must conclude that Jesus was qualified for the work because “the Spirit of the Lord” was upon him. The Spirit of the Lord surely refers to the third part of the godhead; that is the Holy Spirit. All of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit were conferred upon Jesus, not by measure, but without measure: (*John 3:34*) “*For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*” Jesus was well aware the God was with him through the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus also knew that he had been sent to earth by his heavenly Father and we have assurance from *John 3:34* that the words Jesus spoke were the words of God.

Through all of his afflictions Paul did not give up: (2 Corinthians 4:8-10) *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”* Paul here refers to some of the trial to which he and his fellow laborers were subjected to in making known the gospel. May I remind you wherever you are, into whatsoever country, city town we enter we are sure to meet with trouble, of one sort or another; for wherever we are, we are in the world, in which we must expect tribulation: Jesus warned his apostles that they would have tribulation: (John 16:33 *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*) If we desire to go to heaven we must endure tribulation: (Acts 14:22) *“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”* Paul expresses his attitude toward tribulation very well in Romans 5:3 *“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;”* Tribulations of saints are many and various because there is the hatred of the world and because of the temptations of Satan. Let us remember that Christ foretold his disciples of the tribulation that would come upon them and they were to be expected. We too can expect tribulations because the world or Satan has not changed. We have the assurance that not even tribulation can separate us from the love of Christ: (Romans 8:35) *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”* When you are suffering tribulation through afflictions just remember that Jesus is there with you and that not can separate you from his love. Does this thought not give you comfort?

Paul again wrote about afflictions in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for*

a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Do you not get the idea that they had comfort in all of their afflictions? The comfort they received could only have come from the Lord! Paul and his companions felt that they were doing and suffering these afflictions for the salvation of lost souls and surely it was their intention to magnify the glory of God. Their purpose was to save as many souls as possible and every soul that accepted and obeyed the gospel gave them encouragement to joyfully face the next affliction. As in verse one Paul again uses the word “faint”. Both in verse one and verse sixteen the word “faint” means that Paul by the mercy of God, did not become disheartened by the difficulties which he met; his faith and zeal did not fail; he was encouraged to be faithful, and laborious, and his courage always kept up, and his mind was filled with cheerfulness, he was not turned aside by any of the difficulties he faced. By using the two phrases “outward man” and “inward man” Paul shows that he believed that man is made up of two parts; that is body and soul. While one grows old and decays the other renews and is invigorated. The soul does not depend on the body for its vigor and strength; it is strengthened by the word of God. This tells me that the soul can exist independently of the body. Even as the soul is growing stronger and endures forever the body cannot bear up under the trials of life and will some day sink into the grave. While we should not abuse our bodies we need to give special care to the soul.

Verses seventeen and eighteen are designed to show further the sources of consolation and support that Paul and his fellow laborers had in their many trials. In verse seventeen he writes of “light affliction”; I think that you will agree that affliction is common to all men and I believe you will also agree that affliction is even more severe and perhaps even more severe to the children of God. Paul indicates this by writing “our affliction” referring to all of God’s children. I must point out that when we are afflicted our Lord is with us; giving us support to withstand and overcome our afflic-

tions, even as He did for Paul and those who labored with him. We are assured that even if our affliction should require our physical lives there is a place waiting for us that Jesus has gone to prepare for us: (*John 14:1-3*) *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* This is a promise that Jesus made, a promise that he is sure to keep! Throughout the affliction that Paul endured the world most likely looked upon him as being in a pitiful state but Paul expresses his future state with the word “glory”. It is as if Paul was aware that God was purifying him through afflictions: (*Isaiah 48:10*) *“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”* Contrast what the world offers with what God offers; the world offers kingdoms, crowns, inheritances, possessions, riches, honor and substance of every kind and degree. Christ offers us the same glory with which he entered heaven: (*Colossians 3:4*) *“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”* This is what sustained Paul and gave him the strength and this should give you and me the strength to face and endure our afflictions; doesn’t the fact that we shall appear with Jesus in glory give you great encouragement? Paul could not have endured everything that sinful men tortured him with without the help of his Lord and neither can we. Aren’t you glad that the Lord is with you and will give you the strength to stand against afflictions that are sure to come?

Questions over comfort in afflictions

1. Do you know of anyone who has not suffered afflictions of one kind or another? _____

2. Who did the Psalmist say was his strength when his flesh and heart failed? [Psa. 73:26] _____

3. Who wrote this psalm? _____

4. What does “flesh and heart” refer to?

5. Who should we cling to even when facing death?

6. Will God ever leave or forsake us? [Heb. 13:5]

7. Did Jesus think he was alone while upon this earth?
[Lu. 4:18] _____

8. Who is meant by “the Spirit of the Lord? [Lu. 4:18]

9. Who was Jesus sent to preach the gospel to? [Lu. 4:18]

10. What did Jesus do for the brokenhearted? [Lu. 4:18]

11. What did he do for the blind? [Lu. 4:18]

12. Would this include both the physical and spiritual blind?

13. In Luke 4:18, 19 who is Jesus quoting and where can this be found?

14. Luke 4:18, 19 gives us a full account of Jesus' work upon this earth; what qualified him to do this work?

15. Was Jesus given the Spirit with or without measure? [Jn. 3:34]

16. While upon this earth whose words did Jesus speak? [Jn. 3:34]

17. Through all of his afflictions did Paul ever give up? [2 Cor. 4:8-10]

18. Do you think Christians will have afflictions wherever they may be?

19. What warning did Jesus give in John 16:33?

20. Has anyone ever overcome the world; if so who? [Jn. 16:33]

21. What did Paul think tribulations [i.e. afflictions] would produce? [Rom. 5:3]

22. What should we not allow to separate us from the love of Christ? [Rom. 8:35]

23. Where does the soul get its strength?

24. Paul wrote about the “outward and inward man”; what does this indicate? [2 Cor. 4:16]

25. [Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18] Where do you think their comfort and strength came from?

26. Why did Paul and his co-workers preach the gospel?

27. How did Paul describe his affliction? [2 Cor. 4:17]

28. Who is Paul referring to with the phrase “our affliction”? [2 Cor. 4:17]

29. What does the word “faint” mean? [2 Cor. 4:1, 16]

30. If our affliction should require our physical life what awaits us? [Jn. 14:1-3]

31. Do you consider John 14:1-3 to be a promise?

32. How does God purify us? [Isa. 48:10]

A glorious resurrection is assured

It becomes easier to face death when we know that we have assurance of a glorious resurrection. Job was aware of this: (*Job 19:26*) *“And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:”* This chapter contains Job's reply to Bildad's second speech, in which he complains of the ill usage of his friends, of their continuing to vex him, and to beat, and bruise, and break him in pieces with their hard words, and to reproach him. Job comforts himself with his belief and hopes of happiness in the other world. Even though he had so little comfort of late he made a very solemn confession of his faith. His faith and hope has been recorded for us as he desired: (*Job 19:23-27*) *“Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! ²⁴That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! ²⁵For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: ²⁷Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”* The extent of Job's suffering may be read in *Job 19:20* *“My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”* In verse twenty six Job is speaking of the time after his death when worms would consume what little skin he had left. Yet, Job felt assured of being resurrected from the grave! Job believed in his heart that even though he should die and turn to dust in the grave that he would rise again. He further believed that in the fulness of time he would be raised from the dead and then he would behold the glory of eternity. I do not question that Job believed this nor do I question that all who are in the graves shall be raised from the dead: (*1 Corinthians 6:14*) *“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”* (*1 Corinthians 15:16*) *“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:”* There were too many witnesses to Jesus' resurrection for me not to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and Paul gives us assurance that the dead will

rise from the dead. Paul also gives us the assurance in 1 Corinthians 15:52 *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* So you and I can have the same assurance of a glorious resurrection as Job was.

In a prayer David stated his assurance of a glorious resurrection: *(Psalms 17:15) “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”* This psalm is entitled “A Prayer of David.” Who gave it this title is not known; but there can be no doubt of its appropriateness. Verse fifteen is an expression of a confident hope of a deliverance from all of his enemies and a looking for to a world where he would be rescued from all of his troubles and the best thing was he would be resurrected into the presence of God. Worldly individuals seek that which can be obtained and gained in this world but David was looking for the time when he would be in a different world in which he would see the face of God. Yes, David was looking forward to a glorious resurrection and the time he would be face to face with God.

Not only will Christians have a glorious resurrection their vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his **glorious** body: *(Philippians 3:21) “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”* Philippians chapter three consists in the main, of exhortations to holy living, and to an effort to make great attainments in the divine life. In verse 21 he refers to our bodies as “vile”; our bodies are vile as the result of sin. Sin has subjected our bodies to weakness, mortality, and death. This vile body, in the resurrection morn, shall be stripped of all its vileness. Our bodies shall be changed from corruption to incorruption: *(1 Corinthians 15:52) “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* Paul wrote, that it might be fashioned like

unto his glorious body" [Phil. 3:21] or to paraphrase "the body of his glory", as it is now in heaven. The bodies of the saints in the resurrection shall be like Christ's resurrected body, though not equal to it. The Jews have the notion, that "the holy blessed God will beautify the bodies of the righteous in future time, like the beauty of the first Adam. We have both the assurance of a glorious resurrection and a glorious body

The apostle of love wrote this: (1 John 3:2) *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he*

shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." This verse tells us of the extraordinary love of God towards mankind, and the effects of it. What glorious effects they are; can you think of anything more glorious to be like Jesus? John begins this verse by speaking of those who are begotten by God: (1 Corinthians 4:15) *"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."* While it is true that we may know that we are the children of God it is also true that we do not know what we will be when we are resurrected from the grave; but we are assured that it will be a glorious body with which we shall enter into heaven, because we know that when Jesus does appear we will be like him. As I have already stated our vile bodies will be changed; and we will be like him when he appears to this earth in his second coming.

Questions concerning our glorious resurrection

1. Who was Job speaking to in Job 19:26? _____

2. In Job 19:26 would it be incorrect to say that Job was trying to comfort himself? _____

3. With what does Job comfort himself? [Job 19:26]

4. Could this be considered a confession of Job's faith?

5. Did Job want his words recorded for future generations? [Job 19:23, 24]

6. What does Job 19:20 mean to you?

7. What time is Job referring to in Job 19:26?

8. What was the assurance that Job had after his death? [Job 19:26]

9. Who did Paul say was and will be resurrected? [1 Cor. 6:14]

10. If the dead are not resurrected who else was not resurrected? [1 Cor. 15:16] _____

11. What assurance or proof do we have that Jesus was resurrected?

12. How will the dead be raised? [1 Cor. 15:52]

13. Will this take several days or hours; if you answer no how long will it take?

14. The seventeenth Psalms is called "A Prayer of David"; who gave it this title?

15. Psalms 17:15 an expression of confidence that David will see what?

16. Worldly men seek that which can be gained in this world; what was David seeking and looking forward to?

17. Christians have the assurance of a glorious resurrection and what else? [Phil. 3:21]

18. What is it that makes our bodies vile?

19. What are the results of having a vile body?

20. Paul said our bodies are changed from _____ to _____ . {Fill in the blanks} [1 Cor. 15:52]

21. On the resurrection day our bodies will be fashioned like what? [Phil. 3:21]

22. What do the Jews think their bodies will be changed to?

23. To whom did John write in verse two of 1 John chapter three?

24. Did John tell them exactly what they would be resurrected as?

25. How are Christians begotten? [1 Cor. 4:15]

26. Do you believe there will be a glorious resurrection?

27. Are you prepared to meet Jesus in the sky?

Conclusion

As we come to the close of this lesson there are a couple more points I would like to make.

- First we have assurance of receiving a kingdom.

Although we are not deserving of it we do have the assurance of being a part of a kingdom through God's grace: (Hebrews 12:28) *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."* The writer of this epistle [most likely the apostle Paul] having illustrated the nature and power of faith in chapter eleven proceeds in chapter twelve to exhort those whom he wrote to apply the same principles to their own lives in Christian living as those of chapter eleven had shown. In verse twenty eight the "we" is making reference to we who are Christians; if you are a Christian this verse most certainly applies to you. He states that we are a part of kingdom that will never pass away; not even Satan possesses the power to destroy this kingdom: (Matthew 16:18) *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Unlike the Jewish dispensation it will never give way to another; the church is the final dispensation, there will never be another, Although there have been many attempts to destroy the church and the word of God all attempts have failed. He then wrote: **"Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God"**. The Greek is, literally, let us have grace; the meaning is, let us hold fast the grace or favor which we have received in being admitted to privileges to be a part of that of that kingdom." The objective is, to keep them in reverent fear and service of God. The "argument" which he presents is, that this kingdom is permanent. There is no danger of its being overthrown. It is to continue on earth to the end of time; it is to be established in heaven forever. If it were

temporary, changeable, liable to be overthrown at any moment, there would be much less encouragement to perseverance. But in a kingdom like this there is every encouragement, for there is the assurance of it being everlasting. Since we have this assurance it should always be an encouragement to serve the Lord. Serving God is our whole duty of this life; but how are we to serve him; the Hebrews writer said “**with reverence**” which means with shame for sin, and with a sense of unworthiness. And we are to serve with “**godly fear**” which has God for its author and object, which springs from His grace, and is increased by discoveries of His goodness; which is consistent with faith, and spiritual joy. This is much the same message as *Psalms 2:11* “*Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*” Seeing that we have this assurance of being a part of this kingdom and being assured that it is everlasting we are given motivation to serve the Lord as He desires.

- Secondly we have the assurance of a crown of righteousness.

Paul had this assurance as he stated in his second epistle to Timothy: (2 Timothy 4:6-8) “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*” Here Paul is telling Timothy that his work was nearly done, and that the hour for his departure drew near. This statement also seems to be made in order to excite Timothy to increased fidelity in the ministry. His teacher, guide, father, and friend was about to be withdrawn, and the great work of preaching the gospel was to be committed to other hands. Hence, in view of his own departure, Paul exhorts Timothy to fidelity when he himself should be removed. My intention with this section of scripture is to point out the assurance Paul had of receiving “a crown of righteousness”. Paul felt sure that he had won a crown in the cause of Righteousness, and conferred as the reward of his conflicts and efforts in the cause of Christ. It

was not the crown of ambition; it was not a garland won in struggles for earthly distinction. It was that which was the appropriate reward of his efforts to be personally holy, and to spread the principles of holiness as far as possible through the word. The happiness of the future state of saints is signified by a crown, on account of the glory and excellency of it; and in perfect agreement with the character of saints, as kings; and who are raised to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory, and have a kingdom prepared for them; this is called a crown of “righteousness”, because it come through the righteousness of Christ it is that which gives a right unto it, and without which it cannot be enjoyed; and because it is obtained and possessed in a righteous way, and not by force as crowns sometimes are, It is God the Father’s gift unto His children, what they are born heirs unto, and have a fitness for, through regenerating and sanctifying grace, and have a legal title to it through the righteousness of Christ. Moreover, this may be expressive of the perfect holiness and righteousness of the heavenly state, and of the saints in it, wherein will dwell none but righteous persons, and who will be entirely without sin. And this happiness is signified by a crown, is “laid up”: in the covenant of grace for the saints. It is of utmost importance that we read verse seven again: **(2 Timothy 4:7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:**” This verse is important because it explains how Paul came to have his assurance of receiving “a crown of glory”. If we live our lives in the same fashion as Paul did we too can have assurance of receiving “a crown of righteousness”.

It is my prayer that the study of the word “assurance” has been beneficial to you and that you have the same confidence that Paul had of receiving a “crown **of righteousness**”.

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