

TEACHING GOAL

Study the nature of the Christian's assurance of salvation.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification?
- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

S.C. 36, L.C. 80-81 W.C. of F. XVIII, Savoy 18

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: I John 5

Support Passages: I John, particularly 1:6-7, 9; 2:3, 5, 10, 15-17, 19, 23-24, 29; 3:3, 9-10, 14, 24; 4:6, 12-13; III John

BIBLE STORY

Luke 15: Parables that illustrate the joy of being sought out and received into the kingdom of God.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:2-3, ESV)

APPLICATION

We must thank God for His means of grace whereby we may improve our relationship to Him and experience the joy of His kingdom.

SUMMARY

It is certainly possible to be assured of entrance into the kingdom of God. Scripture, the sacraments and prayer are the ordinary means to this end. Assurance of salvation is a problem to some Christians but many others believe they are saved when, in fact, they are not, being falsely assured. Certain modern evangelism has seen to that. Justification by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law, improperly understood can result in the message, "only believe" and can lead to the following line of thought:

"Do you believe that you are a sinner?"

"Yes!"

"Do you believe Christ died for sinners?"

"Yes!"

"Will you receive him as your savior?"

"Yes!"

"Then you are saved?"

"Yes, the Bible says I am saved."

Omitted herein is any reference to repentance unto life and the service demanded by the King. The recruiting sergeant has failed to tell the young recruit of the terrors of battle and the hardship of the new way of life. The result being that when trouble inevitably comes along, the devil readily reclaims his own.

John, in the study passage, gives us the real basis for assurance as he writes, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." (1 John 5:2, ESV) Along with verses one and three we learn that true believers observe the commandments of God which involve love for King Jesus and love for His kingdom. One of the signs of true repentance, therefore, is delight in the law and precepts of God. In addition, the in-dwelling Holy Spirit witnesses to us, who truly believe, that we have the Son of God and life eternal. Finally, there is a perceptible change such that the true believer no longer pursues a manner of living that is characterized by sin.

John characterizes our new life styles by confession of sin (I John 1:9), love for the brethren (2:10, 3:14), loathing of worldliness (2:15-17), the practice of righteousness (2:29), purity (3:3), listening to the word of God (4:6) and the doing of good (III John 11). Where these characteristics are seen, there is the basis for a good measure of assurance of salvation.

Some Christians never seem to enjoy the blessing of assurance. William Cowper, the author of such hymns as *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*, and *God Moves in a Mysterious Way, His Wonders to Perform*, one of the great hymn writers in the English speaking world, was afflicted with long periods of depression during which he was literally overcome by his consciousness of sin

and despaired of his salvation. For much of his life, as a child of God, he lived in the terror of going to the flames of hell forever.

Happily, most Christians seem to experience the joy of the Lord expressed in the Lost Son who returned home, or the Coin That Was Found, or the Lost Sheep That Was Found.