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Week Seven

SALVATION - YOUR SURETY

(I John 5)

LESSON AIM - I want my students to:

Know: The certainty of eternal life.

Feel: The joy of a Bible-based salvation.

Do: To base their salvation in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON:

In this concluding chapter of the epistle, John records very clearly that assurance of salvation is not only possible but intended for every believer. Certainty of salvation comes when Christians exercise their Bible faith. Faith is exercised by showing love for the brethren (5:1-3), by having victory over this world's system (5:4-5), and by accepting God's testimony (5:6-12). By means of Biblical actions comes the assurance or surety of salvation. Conversely, because of salvation, the believer is assured of several important blessings of the Christian life (5:13-21).

LESSON OUTLINE AND COMMENTS:

I. Loving the brethren (I John 5:1-3)

Once more, John writes that true believers show their faith by love for the brethren. Love is to be expressed Biblically and this will bring assurance of salvation to the believer.

A. The statement about love (5:1)

The recipients of this command are identified as, "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." John's statement is directed to people who believe that the Jesus, who came in the flesh, is the promised Christ (Messiah). Those who believe this have already been "birthed" by God. John speaks here of their new birth, which produced lasting spiritual life. Every Christian loves God because he has been given a new life. This is not only a Biblical truth but a natural response. John adds that the one who loves God also loves "him that is begotten of him." Paternal love begets fraternal love. This is not a command to obey but a normal exercise of Biblical faith.

B. The certainty from love (5:2-3)

Lest there arise a question about love, John relates that assurance ("By this we know") from correct love for the children of God can be tested. The love that John has written about must come from a real love for God. This love is demonstrated by obedience to God's Word. Since a child loves and obeys his parents for that which he benefits from during this life, how much more the Christian should love his heavenly Father. The commands of God are not grievous ("harsh, exhausting, heavy in weight"). Genuine love keeps God's commands from becoming an oppressive burden even though they are exacting. As one has written, "Love makes obedience easy, and the life of God in the soul makes obedience possible." When the believer has this type of love, he can be certain that he has Bible salvation.

II. Having victory over this world's system (I John 5:4-5)

Earlier in the epistle, John commended these Christians for victory over the evil one (2:13-14). Now he reminds them that they also have victory over the world (5:4a). This conquest is a fact not a possibility (5:4b-5).

A. The statement of victory (5:4a)

All born again believers are overcoming the world. This is a statement that is all inclusive. In using the word overcoming, John selects a concept depicting a continuing victory. He does not state that there are no failures by Christians in the battle, but, like a war, the battle will culminate in victory. This world system will not dominate the believer because it cannot.

B. The certainty of victory (5:4b-5)

John singles out the believer's faith in Christ which defeats the world. This faith is the same active faith which resulted in salvation. Because Christ overcame the world and since the believer is in Christ, he can overcome the attempted conquests from this world system. No one can defeat Christ. He, being in the believer, makes the believer victorious.

In referring to this victory, John used the name of the Greek mythological goddess of victory. To the Greek, the goddess Nike brought victory. For the Christian, the act of faith in Jesus being the son of God brings spiritual victory. This is not a possibility but a reality which brings assurance.

III. Accepting God's testimony (I John 5:6-12)

The key to one's certainty about salvation is the possession of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the surety of salvation. Each of the verses in the section gives testimony about the Son and His provision for the believer.

A. About the incarnation (5:6-8)

When Christ came to earth, it was not without reason. He came to perform a ministry for the benefit of the whole world. His ministry began at His baptism by John the Baptist ("water"). On this occasion, it was clearly attested that He came for the purpose of taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The same Jesus came to shed His blood ("die") on the cross. The testimony of God about Jesus is clear and has always been accepted by every Christian. He did not just come, but He came to die. A special function of the Holy Spirit is to bear internal witness to this truth within the believer (v. 6).

(In the vast majority of manuscripts, verse seven through the word "earth" in verse eight are omitted. They state that the Godhead all agree in their testimony. This is taught elsewhere in the Bible. Verse eight suggests that there are three agreeing witnesses on earth.)

Because the Spirit internally witnesses to the Christian concerning Christ being baptized and crucified, there are three witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was baptized (water), He was crucified (blood), and the Spirit is the one bearing witness of Him. He is not a myth but God's Son as revealed in the Scriptures (v. 8).

B. About eternal life (5:9-12)

Although the testimony of men is accepted by the world, the witness of God is much greater and completely trustworthy. Only God is qualified to speak accurately concerning His Son (v. 9).

God's testimony about Christ will be received by the believer because he hath an internal witness. This witness came at conversion. The one who rejects God's witness about Christ makes God a liar. The reason for this is such a person has never believed in God's testimony concerning Christ at any time. A further test providing assurance comes from an active faith in God's testimony about His Son (v. 10).

According to verse eleven, God's testimony is that "eternal life is in Jesus Christ." This life is nothing less than the life of God Himself, which is given to those who receive Jesus Christ on the basis of the Father's testimony.

Perhaps the greatest verse in the Bible setting forth assurance of salvation is found in I John 5:12. "He that is possessing the Son is possessing life; he that is not possessing the Son of God is not possessing life." Although most of I John stresses proper actions as the basis for assurance of salvation, this verse teaches assurance is based upon the exercise of faith in God's testimony about Jesus Christ. The surety of the believer's eternal life is Jesus Christ. To not accept God's testimony about eternal life is to not have this life of God.