Assurance of Salvation

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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(Talks to Young Christians)

Every time I go to a place to preach God's gospel of grace, I always ask the local Christians one question. I believe all those who can answer me with a clear "yes" are joyfully enjoying the grace of God. The question is, "Are you already saved?" In other words, do you really know that you are saved? Among a thousand people, one can only find two or three who know that they are saved. Sometimes, among a whole congregation, one cannot find one person who knows that he is saved. Then I ask these ones, "You have received the Lord Jesus and have accepted Him as your personal Savior. You have trusted in the blood of His cross to wash away your sins. Why do you still not know that you are saved? If a man falls into the water, and another man pulls him out, after the first man comes to his senses, he will surely know whether he is still in the water or safe on the shore. You should know whether you are a perishing man or a saved man who has obtained God's grace." Many people would not respond clearly with words, but their answer always seems to be, "I do not know if I have been saved. How can I say that I am saved while I am still living on earth?"

I think many of the readers of this message would answer this way! This is exactly where our mistake lies. Our belief in the Lord Jesus is not like gambling, winning when we are lucky and losing when we are not lucky. The salvation that comes through believing in the cross of the Lord Jesus is fully guaranteed. We do not have to wait until we die before we can know if we are saved or not. We can know this now. This is the clear teaching of the Bible. Please read a few verses:

"Therefore let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this One forgiveness of sins is announced to you; and from all the things from which you were not able to be justified by the law of Moses, in this One everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:38-39).

We cannot obtain justification by God through our own work. We have many sins, which make our heart sad whenever we think about them and cause us to think that we are not saved. But although we can fail, the Lord Jesus is still trustworthy. If we believe in Him, our sins will be forgiven. All those who believe in Him will be justified. How great is the Lord's salvation! God's Word says, "Let it be known to you." We should know what? We should know that once we have believed in the Lord Jesus, our sins are forgiven, and we are justified. You are saved! When God says, "Let it be known to you," we can know if we are saved or not. We should not refuse Him. We should commit our sins to the Savior and believe in His accomplished salvation for us. We will then be saved.

"This is the testimony of God that He has testified concerning His Son. He who believes into the Son of God has the testimony in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony which God has testified concerning His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:9-13).

He who has the Lord Jesus has life. He who does not have Him does not have life. Have you accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior? If you have, you have life already, and you are saved. The Lord Jesus said Himself: "He who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). God has testified for His Son that He has given to us eternal life. This passage of the Scripture says that if we do not believe in the testimony that we have eternal life, then we are making God a liar. God says all those who have trusted and accepted the Lord Jesus have eternal life. Would God lie? We should believe that we who have been washed by His blood are saved already. God said, through the apostle John, that He wrote these words that we may know that we are saved.

The testimony of the Bible is that we can know if we are saved. This is not something that happens only after we die; we do not have to wait until the coming age before we know. While we are living on earth today, we should know if we are saved or not. If we are not, we should make haste to believe in Jesus Christ and come to God through trusting in His saving accomplishment for us. If we are saved, we should give much thanks to God's grace and should live on earth like saved persons. "Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). God accepts us now and saves us now, rather than after we die.

Sometimes, when I ask a person if he is saved, he answers, "I am only trying my best to do good and to serve God, hoping that I can eventually be saved." Alas, this is also wrong. This means that he does not understand the way of salvation. Do you think that you can be saved in the future by trying your best to do good and to serve God? We have to know that none of our merits and works are acceptable before God. "All our righteousnesses are like a soiled garment" (Isa. 64:6). Do you think that merit and work will save you? No, ten thousand times no! The Bible clearly says, "You have been saved...not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation comes through trusting in the Lord Jesus, "who Himself bore up our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24), "the Righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring you to God" (3:18). He has accomplished the work of salvation. All you have to do is to believe and obey Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). Do not try to be saved by your own work. No matter how good your works are, they cannot save you, for "you have been saved...not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9). If you trust in the accomplishment of the substitutional death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, you will be saved. If you do not accept the Lord Jesus as the Savior, there will be no hope for your salvation because you cannot save yourself. If you accept the Lord Jesus as the sin offering, you do not have to hope to be saved because you have eternal life already.

We only hope for things that we have not yet obtained. If we have them already, we do not need to hope for them anymore. When a child's father leaves his home, the child hopes very much to see the father. But when the father returns home, the child is extremely glad. If the mother asks the child, "Do you still hope to see your father?", the child will answer, "I have seen my father already. Why do I still have to hope to see him?" Indeed, if we have obtained something already, we do not need to hope for it anymore. Either

the world believes in Jesus and is saved and has eternal life, or it is not saved and is perishing. There is no middle ground between the two things. "Every one who believes into Him...[has] eternal life...he who does not believe has been condemned already" (John 3:16-18). The Bible divides humanity into two classes: those who are saved and those who are perishing. There is not a third class of those who hope to be saved. If you have indeed believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and have believed in His death on the cross where He bore your sins for you, you are saved already. You do not have to hope to be saved anymore. If some would ask a man who has been rescued out of the water, "What do you want?", would he say, "I hope to get on shore"? Is such an answer sensible? Brothers, if you have believed in the Lord Jesus, you have eternal life already. Why are you still doubting? You have received it already. Why still hope for it? Simply praise the Lord instead!

There are others, when I ask about the question of salvation, that answer, "While I live on earth today, I indeed trust in the accomplished work of the redemption of the Lord Jesus. But I dare not say whether I am saved or not. I have to wait until I die and go before the Father to be judged as either a goat or a sheep. If He says that I am a sheep, then I will be saved and be most happy. If He says that I am a goat, then I will perish and go to hell in misery."

Alas, is this future not a pitiful one? Speaking truthfully, if I did not know that I was saved, I would be afraid that I would be unable to take my meal today; and I would not be able to sleep tonight. Thank the Father, for He has accepted us and has given us the eternal life! Do you really believe in the merit of the Lord Jesus' redemption? If we have believed in Him, do we have to wait until we die before we know whether we are saved or perishing? Please look at the word of the Bible. The Lord's own words are the most trustworthy of all.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16). Is not this verse very clear? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This is what God has done. He has loved and He has given. He has given the Lord Jesus to the world, to die for the world and accomplish salvation on the cross, so that everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus would have eternal life and not perish. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus, you have eternal life already and will no longer perish. John 3:16 is the most recited verse. But unfortunately, many people are not familiar with John

3:16 after all. John 3:16 clearly says that as soon as you believe in the Lord Jesus, you do not perish, but have eternal life. But many believers change John 3:16! If they have believed in the Lord as their Savior but consider that they are not yet saved, they change John 3:16! They change it without knowing about it! They change John 3:16 to something like this:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him will perhaps not perish, and perhaps have eternal life after a month, two months, a year, ten years, a few decades, or after they die."

Thank God that the Bible is not written this way. The Bible has not put those words there. The Bible links "every one who believes into Him" with "would not perish, but would have eternal life." Whenever we believe in the Lord Jesus and have our sins washed by the blood; at that moment, we do not perish, but have eternal life. "Every one who believes into Him...would have eternal life" (John 3:16), without waiting until they die to have it.

The parable of the goats and the sheep has been misinterpreted by the church throughout the centuries. It has been applied to the believers. The word "nations" in Matthew 25:32 refers to the Gentiles. God has divided the world into Jews, Greeks, and the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32). The church has nothing to do with the Gentiles anymore. The judgment of the goats and the sheep refers to the judgment of the Gentile nations at the coming of the Lord Jesus with His saints. We the believers will not be judged there.

Those who have believed in the Lord Jesus will not be judged with respect to salvation and perdition. The Lord Jesus' crucifixion on the cross has borne the judgment of their sins for them. He has taken the punishment of their sins. He has solved the problem of sin for them. Those who have believed in Him have accepted Him as their substitute. He has been judged and has died for them. Of course, they do not need to be judged or to die anymore. "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Please read again the words of John 5:24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life."

How sweet are the Lord's words! No one can speak like Him! These clear words are like music to a sinner's ears. Since He said "truly, truly," can they

be untrue? Surely they cannot be. The Lord Jesus says that the one who hears and believes "has eternal life." This is a "truly, truly" saying. He says that such a one "does not come into judgment." This, of course, must be "truly, truly" also. He also says that such a one "has passed out of death into life." This also must be "truly, truly." When He says that such a one "has passed," it surely means that it "has passed." When do we use the words "has passed" in our daily life? Does not "has passed" mean that something has already been accomplished and is over? The Lord says that a person who has believed in Him "has passed out of death into life." Why do we say that we have to wait until we die before we can know that we are saved? Brothers, those who have believed in Him have already passed from death into life even in this age. This is truly the gospel! Truly, truly I say unto you, a person who has believed "has passed out of death into life." He who does not believe "has been condemned already" (John 3:18). Both times that the word "has" is used in John 5:24 and 3:18, it refers to something that is decided now.

Perhaps when you read up to this point, you will think like many other believers, "Would it not be too proud of me to say that I am already saved? I am not better in any way in my conduct than others. How can I say this?"

Dear readers, for us to know that we are saved is not to be proud. The words "to be saved" are in the passive voice; they show that we are being acted upon. What is there for us to be proud of? To say that we do not need to be saved or that we have no need of salvation is indeed proud; it is indeed to consider ourselves better than others. But to say that we are saved indicates that we were sinners and were to perish, but that we are now saved by Him through trusting in Him. This shows how deep the Lord's grace is to us and how great is the saving work of the Lord. It shows how great the Lord's power is. It is not an exaltation of ourselves. If we know that we have received grace and are saved, of course, we will all the more praise the Lord. To sing of the Lord Jesus in our songs all the time is an exaltation of the Lord; it is not a self-boasting. The more we see the depth of our sins and the immensity of the Lord's forgiveness, the more we will love the Lord. We should say as Paul said: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

God says that we have eternal life already—that we are saved. Therefore, for me to say that I am saved is not boasting; it is to believe and to acknowledge that God is right. God is pleased when we believe in His Word. We must believe in God's Word.

It is true that our works are no better than others. But we are not saved because of our good works. The Lord Jesus did not come to save the righteous but the sinners. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul said that he was the foremost of all sinners, but that he had obtained mercy. If it is up to us, we will not be able to say that we are saved. Even the world cannot find one who can say that he is saved. If salvation is due to our merits and excellence, there will be no possibility for us to be saved. Those who trust in their works are shaky all the time. Sometimes their conduct is better, and they will hope that they can be saved. Sometimes their conduct is not as good, and they think that they will perish. These ones have never fully trusted in Christ. Dear readers, we are not saved because of our good works. We are saved because Christ has saved us. How great is His grace!

Many say: "I know that if one trusts in the accomplishment of the Lord Jesus on the cross, he is saved. But I do not feel anything. Am I saved just like this?"

Brothers! The Bible does not say: "I give these happy feelings to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe in the name of the Son of God." If the Bible were written in this way, one would not be saved if he did not feel anything. But the Bible says, "I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

"These things." What are these things? They are the words of the Bible, the Word of the Father. We know that we have eternal life and are saved, not by the way we feel, but by what the Word of God says. The Bible says that we who have believed in the Lord are saved. We are, therefore, saved. When God says that we are saved, surely we are saved, whether we feel that we are saved or not. We have believed in the Lord Jesus and have been washed of our sins by His blood. Therefore, we are saved because God's Word says so.

For example, a poor man may be very poor and cannot make ends meet; he may be living in extreme sufferings. He decides to write a letter to one of his friends, who is quite well off, to ask for help. After a few days, he does not receive any reply. He may think that his friend despises him and is not willing to help him, and his heart is in distress. The more he thinks about it, the more it seems unlikely that his friend will help him. He decides then to tell this

matter to his neighbors. Some say that a friend should always help one in financial difficulties and has no reason to refuse to help. Others say that this may not necessarily be true because it is a compassionless age. When the man hears the hopeful words, he rejoices, and when he hears the discouraging words, he is in distress. The next day his friend sends someone to give him a reply. When he opens the letter, his heart jumps within him; he does not know if a promise is within. After he opens the letter, he shouts to his family, "The matter is now settled. He has written a letter to me saying that, from now on, he will take up all my expenses. All right. The matter is decided. I do not care if others think that it is hopeful or hopeless any longer. He has said himself that he will bear all the responsibilities. I can live now in peace."

Are not many believers like this poor man? What a pity that many children of God listen to others' talk and to their own feeling; they are drifting back and forth. The poor man was assured once he had a word from his friend. The children of God are likewise assured when they have the Word of God. God says that if we believe in Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. He has said it Himself, and everything is settled. What more is there to worry about? What are our feelings worth? What are man's ideas worth? If God says that we are saved, it is enough. His Word is the final verdict. Since God has graciously declared His faithfulness, we should accept His Word without doubt.

Some may say, "What was said may be true. But I am afraid that my faith is not perfect, and therefore, I cannot be saved."

The Bible only makes a distinction between "believing" and "not believing." The Bible does not know what an incomplete faith means. We should know that there is no merit in our believing in the Lord Jesus. God does not save us because we have attained the merit of believing. This cannot be farther from the truth! To believe is to receive (John 1:12). John 3:16 says that God "gave" us His Son. When we "receive" Him, everything is done. One gives and the other receives. There is no merit of the sinner involved. Salvation is fully accomplished by the Lord Jesus.

Who among us is not a sinner? We were dead in trespasses and sins. How pitiful we were! The Holy Spirit came and caused us to realize our sins. How terrible is the punishment for sin! One cannot help but tremble at the thought of the future. It is all the more pitiful when we realize that there is no way for us to save ourselves. We were wallowing in the mud and yet had no way to

rescue ourselves! What an unspeakable deprivation! Thank and praise the slaughtered Lamb! He came and died for us on the cross. He stood on the ground of us the sinners. He loved us and gave Himself for us. While we were yet sinners, He died for us. He accomplished the salvation. When He died, He proclaimed, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). How precious is this word! O Lord! I can never thank You enough for Your great grace! To believe in the Lord Jesus means nothing other than a willingness on the part of us, the helpless and destitute sinners, to be saved by Him. He came to save, and when we are willing to be saved, the matter is settled. There is no question of complete or incomplete faith.

He says Himself, "Him who comes to Me I shall by no means cast out" (John 6:37). Since we have come, there is now only one question: "Has He cast me out?" Praise God, for Christ is faithful and trustworthy. There is no guile found in His mouth! He will never cast out those who come to Him. He will save all those who realize their sins and who will accept Him as their Savior. "Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37). This is the Lord's invitation.

Brothers, it is not just our faith that is saving us. Rather, it is His grace and faithfulness. God desires to save us. He will bestow grace on us. Will we not believe? What else is there to doubt? The Lord's love should fill our hearts and should drive out all drifting thoughts!

After some have understood this teaching, they may have a doubt in them: "If a man already knows that he is saved and has eternal life and is guaranteed heaven, will he not then sin at will? Will he not think that he is saved anyway and that he can, therefore, unbridle his lusts and sin at will? Will he not think that he is saved now, and that it does not matter anymore if he sins again?"

This is only a hypothesis. Many people think that if they know that they are saved, they will still want to sin. But this is only a hypothesis. In reality, something exactly opposite happens. If a man knows that he is saved, he will not want to sin anymore, and he will also bear heavenly characteristics in his thought and conduct. I can give you an illustration here. Today in China we are sending a few hundred people to study abroad every year. Most of them go to the United States. Suppose there is a father who wants to send his son to America. How should the son be dressed? Should he pay attention to the

Chinese gowns and consider the latest fashion? Does he need to study Chinese etiquette and manners? Does he need to know all the things associated with the Chinese culture? Surely he does not. He is about to go to America. He does not need to know more about China, but he needs to learn the customs and fashions of the other country. He should learn to eat with a fork and knife, to shake hands, and to doff his hat. He should study in detail the tastes, likes and dislikes, and individual habits of the Americans. He should study the mind and characteristics of the Americans. When he speaks in English, he should have an American accent with it. When he walks, he should walk like the Americans walk. He should pursue after American fashion in his dress and attire. In other words, all those who are about to go to America have a natural tendency to act and move like an American. If a believer realizes that he has eternal life already, and is a citizen of heaven, he will surely learn the heavenly pattern in everything, in word, conduct, and walk. Those who do not know that they are saved will imitate the world and try to be conformed to it. Brothers, there is no danger of sinning carelessly for those who know that they are saved. On the contrary, those who know this will set their minds daily on the things which are above. This can be fully confirmed by the spiritual experiences of the believers. Just like those who are going to America try to be Americans, those who are going heavenward will surely learn to be heavenly persons.

Dear brothers! You have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ already. This is the most important thing on earth. This is also the greatest blessing in eternity for man! You should know that the Lord has saved you. What a comfort and joy it is for us to know that we are persons with eternal life in us. "Rejoice that your names are recorded in the heavens" (Luke 10:20). What a precious message! This is indeed the glad tidings. We can know that we are saved in this age! Formerly we were the sinners. Now we have received grace. Should we not rejoice? What gratitude and affection we have to realize that the Lord has saved us from perdition and has given us eternal life. If we know this, we will praise God all the more. We know that we cannot save ourselves. As a result, all the authority, riches, wisdom, power, honor, glory, and praise be unto the slain Lamb for now and evermore!

Now you can see how much God loves us! Since He has loved us and saved us, we should love Him out of a sense of gratitude and should live as saved persons on earth. Since He has begun the good work in our heart, He will surely complete this work until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6). We cannot

please Him by ourselves, because "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). We can only allow His Spirit to work in us to effect a holy living. Although sometimes we may unfortunately fail, this does not mean that we will perish again. What the Lord has given us is an eternal life. When we fail, we should not be discouraged. We should rise up and ask for the Lord's forgiveness. He will surely lead us on.

Once I was preaching in a place. After a brother there understood this truth, he said to me, "I did not know before that I was saved. As a result, I lived carelessly in the world. I was afraid that if I gave up everything in this life for the Lord, and then the Lord apportioned me perdition at the time of the judgment, I would as the saying goes, ‘lose one's case before both the magistrate and the mandarin.’ I was afraid that I would have neither the joy of this world, nor the blessing of heaven! But now that I know this truth, heaven is guaranteed. Since I am a citizen of heaven already, I do not want to live foolishly in this world anymore." Indeed, if we know that our life is hid with Christ in God, we will surely set our mind on the things above. How wonderful this is! We have a wonderful Savior, and we have received a wonderful salvation. Is this not a cause for joy? Let us sing Hallelujah!