

Let's Get This Settled Right Now—Starting 2019 Confidently

You're starting the New Year maybe having made some resolutions. Or you're thinking about what lies ahead and how you'll handle it. One thing you need to get settled right from the start is: what's your standing with God? Are you on firm footing with Him? Do you know without doubt you're His child and He's your Father? That you can depend on Him, lean on Him for guidance, direction, help, comfort—all you need for the 12 months ahead?

Spiritual warfare rages around us. If you thought 2018 was rough with its political chaos, wildfires, financial instability, world refugee crises, rumors of wars, then fasten your seat belt for 2019. It promises to be just as volatile or even more so.

If you've found yourself asking, "Am I really a child of God? Are my sins truly forgiven? When I die, will God welcome me into His presence?" then you must get that settled today.

I once visited a dying woman in the hospital. She had no assurance of where she stood with God. I gently asked her if she would like to know how she could be certain that she was going to heaven. I then told her that Christ had died for her sins and paid her debt and that if by faith she would receive the Lord Jesus as her personal Savior; she could be forgiven, saved, and on her way to heaven with a divine certainty. She immediately prayed, asking Christ to come into her heart, forgive her, and save her. A peace came over her face that had not been there before. But as I turned to rejoice with her family, a son-in-law said to me, "No one can really know if he's saved. The best you can do is hope you're saved."

Our study this month, at the start of the new year, takes us back to the basics of salvation. Yes, you *can* know that you are eternally saved and on your way to heaven. We're going to look at a number of verses from the book of First John. You will want to turn there in your Bible for this study. A key verse is this:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 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. 1 John 5:11-13

1. In your own words, write here the **reason** the Apostle John gives for writing his letter, now known as the book of First John _____
_____.
2. In verse 13 he says (note this key word), "...that you may _____ that you have eternal life."

Every Christian can *know* if they are truly saved and have eternal life. You don't have to wonder or guess. You don't have to settle for a "hope-so" religion when you can have a "know-so" salvation.

The Apostle John understood that people sometimes have doubts about their faith. Having doubts doesn't mean you're not saved; everyone experiences doubts. John wrote to offer assurance in place of doubt.

Assurance of salvation is important. Your soul will last forever either in heaven or hell, so it's important to be confident about where you will spend eternity.

THE "WHO" AND "HOW" OF YOUR SALVATION

WHO is God Willing to Save?

3. God makes it very plain. Turn to chapter 5, verse 1 in this book.

_____ *believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"* (1 John 5: 1).

Compare this verse with John 3:16—

"For God so loved the _____ that He gave His only begotten Son, that _____ believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

4. In both of these verses, what word comes before "believeth" _____
No one is excluded.

5. God willing to save _____.
Does that include you?

Compare now Acts 16:31—

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

HOW Is A Person Saved?

6. The method of salvation clear. Being saved *does* require an action on your part. The word is repeated in all three verses above. "Whosoever" must _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

The Christian faith is just that simple: we are saved by believing in the Lord Jesus.

A CLOSER LOOK AT "BELEIVE"

The word *believe* doesn't mean just an intellectual assent. It's NOT saying, "Yes, I believe that's probably the case." At that level, all of us "believe" many things. James tells us that even the devil and his fallen angels "believe and tremble." But to believe in the Biblical sense

goes far deeper. When the Bible says “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,” believe means to have trust in, to commit to, or cleave to. You trust fully in and commit your life to this truth. You can “believe” that the next train will take you to New Orleans. But until you get on that train and entrust yourself to it, to take you to New Orleans, you haven’t “believed,” in the Biblical sense.

By WHAT MEANS Are You Saved?

7. If salvation depended on our own efforts, we would be in trouble. Ephesians 2:8-9 makes it abundantly clear:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Everyone is saved by _____.

Self cannot save. Your good works—however wonderful—cannot save. It is the GRACE of God through your faith in Christ.

Former mayor of New York City Michael Bloomberg believes otherwise. Read this excerpt from an interview published April 16, 2014 in the *New York Times*:

But if [Michael Bloomberg] senses that he may not have as much time left as he would like, he has little doubt about what would await him at a Judgment Day. Pointing to his work on gun safety, obesity and smoking cessation, he said with a grin: “I am telling you if there is a God, when I get to heaven I’m not stopping to be interviewed. I am heading straight in. I have earned my place in heaven. It’s not even close.”

If his statement didn’t send a cold chill down your spine, check your temperature.

Tragically, most people are counting on their good works in the end to tip the scales in their favor. That’s why they don’t have salvation: they are counting on their works!

You cannot save yourself by “being good.” I can’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me into Heaven. God isn’t Santa Claus, making a list and checking it twice to find out who’s naughty or nice. He isn’t weighing your good works against your bad works. You will never experience assurance if you depend on your actions.

You are dead in your sins if you don’t know Christ, and a long list of good works won’t balance the scales, because we aren’t saved by works but by grace.

A CLOSER LOOK AT GRACE

- ◆ Grace is the unmerited love and favor God shows to sinners.
- ◆ Grace is what makes God love us when we are unlovely. He doesn’t love you for what you’ve done, He loves you out of grace.

- ◆ Grace is the hand of God reaching down out of heaven. He says, “I love you; I want to save you.”

When you put your hand of faith in God's hand of grace, that's salvation.

Satan doesn't want you to understand that. He wants you to think salvation depends on what you do. But that's a trap because you will always be wondering if you've done *enough*!

Some people think their actions somehow contribute to salvation. That is dead wrong! Salvation is not a dollop of grace and a dab of works. It is *all* grace.

8. Has there been a time in your life—even after you believed on Christ—that you thought perhaps your good works might “polish the apple” toward your salvation? If so, what “good works” did you try to do? What did you imagine would count the most? Write your thoughts below

HAVING THE ASSURANCE OF YOUR SALVATION

It's possible that you are saved and have never experienced the full assurance of that. If that's the case, I want to share with you my story and tell you that you can. When I was a young man I was like that. My faith was a roller coaster, up and down all the time. One day I was sure I was saved, the next I didn't know. One night, I looked up into the heavens and said,

“God, I've got to have assurance. I don't know if I'm lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, or if I'm saved and the devil is trying to get me to doubt my salvation. But one thing I know: You said if I would believe on You, You would save me. So, Lord, right now, I trust You to save me.”

I wrote down the date and time. It was like making a tangible sign that I was indeed saved. If I hadn't been saved before, *I was that night*.

Whenever a doubt has crept into my mind, I've gone back to that piece of paper, read it, and said, “I know I'm saved because on that date I asked the Lord to forgive me and come into my life and make me a Christian.”

You can pray the same prayer. Then write down the date and time on a piece of paper—or create something meaningful to you that you can come back to and review when you experience doubts. Take a few moments to write out your testimony.

- Tell what your life was like before you received Christ.
- Tell what led you to make the decision to become a Christian.
- Tell how you accepted the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior.
- Finally, what difference has He made in your life?

Based upon the authority of the Word of God, you can know that you are saved. If doubts still plague you, make an appointment this week to talk with your pastor and get it settled once and for all.

