

PART I

LIFE IN CHRIST

At the foundation of our lives as Christians is the relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ. Through the blood of Christ we have forgiveness and salvation. Through the position of Christ as the Son of God we have a heavenly identity and all the blessings that come with it. Through the earthly life and ministry of Jesus, we have a role model to follow as disciples. This is why we consider Christ to be the center of our life. Chapters 1-3 will discuss this "Christ-centered" life.

CHAPTER 1

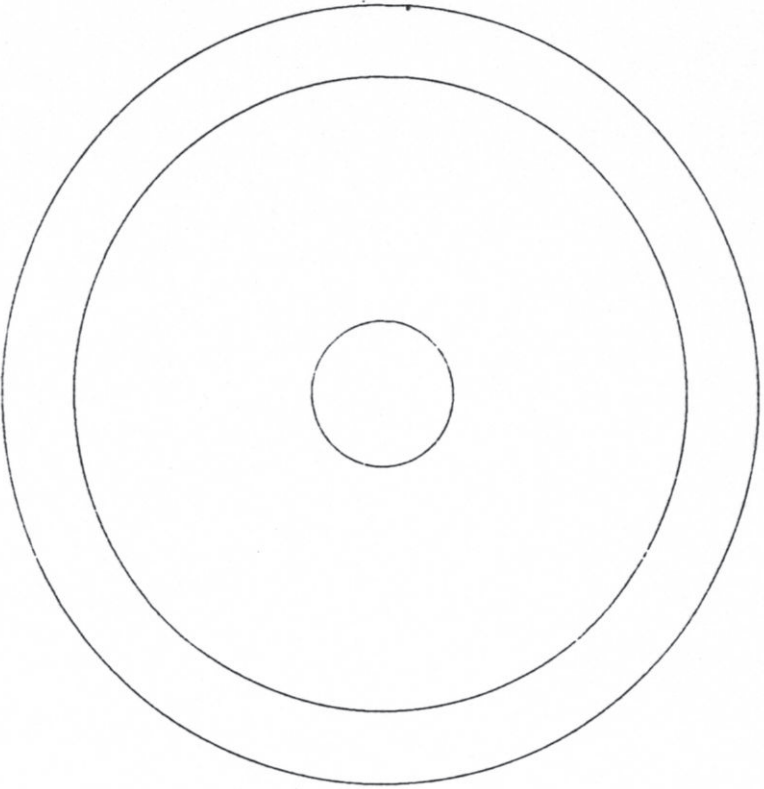
OUR ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Scripture Reading - 1,2,3 John
Read one chapter each day.
2. Prayer - Use the prayer list page to record your requests and answers.
3. Memorize - 1 John 5:11,12
Additional verse - Romans 8:16
4. Study and complete the material in the chapter.
5. Outline the pastor's Sunday sermon.

Outline your daily progress below:

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

CHAPTER 1HOW TO BE SURE YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN

Becoming a Christian involves receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of God's love and forgiveness, by faith. It results in a threefold commitment to a person, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a commitment to Him of our intellect, emotions, and will.

Our relationship with Christ can be illustrated by the requirements for a marriage relationship, which ideally must contain these same three ingredients: the intellect, the

emotions, and the will.

For example, a man may be convinced intellectually that the woman who is his intended bride is the "right" one for him. He may be involved emotionally and love her with all his heart, but marriage requires more than the intellect and the emotions. It also involves the will. It is not until the man and the woman by an act of the will commit themselves to each other before a minister or another person of authority that they become husband and wife. The two words "I do" make the difference. So it is in our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not enough to just believe intellectually in Jesus Christ, or to have an emotional experience. Though both are valid, we do not become Christians until, as an act of the will, we receive Christ into our lives as Savior and Lord.

Let us examine more clearly, one by one, each of the three elements of Christian commitment.

INTELLECTUAL COMMITMENT

Christianity is not a "blind leap of faith"; rather, it is built upon historical fact, documented by centuries of scholarship and research. Many leading scholars have dedicated their lives to investigating the life, teachings, death, resurrection, and influence of Jesus of Nazareth. As a result, we have more historical evidence proving His resurrection than we have that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo.

Professor Edwin Selwyn, in his work, The Approach to Christianity, said, "The fact that Christ rose from the dead on the third day in full continuity of body and soul, and passed into a mode of new relationships with those who knew Him on earth -- that fact seems as secure as historical evidence can make it."

That good news was the message of the revolutionary New Testament church. It is a revolutionary message today. It is a fact of history.

In order to make a proper intellectual commitment we must know the facts of who Christ is, and why He came.

THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

1. State in your own words what you think Jesus meant when he made the following claims.

a. John 10:30-33

b. John 14:8,9

2. State in your own words what others thought of Jesus Christ.

a. The apostle John (John 1:1,14)

b. Peter (Matthew 16:13-16; Acts 2:36)

c. The centurion at the cross (Matthew 27:54)

3. Who do you say Jesus Christ is and why?

Jesus of Nazareth was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary almost 2,000 years ago (Luke 1:34,35). Hundreds of years before, the great prophets of Israel had foretold His coming. The Old Testament, which was written by many individuals over a period of 1,500 years, contains more than 300 references to His coming.

At the age of 30, Jesus began His public ministry. In the three years that followed, He gave us the formula for a full and abundant life and for the life to come.

The life Jesus lead, the miracles He performed, the words he spoke, His death on the cross, His resurrection, His ascent to heaven-- all point to the fact that He was not a mere man, but more than man. Mohammed said he was merely a prophet; Buddha from his own admission was an agnostic; Confucius was an ethical teacher-- but Jesus claimed to be God. He asserted His diety when He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

THE REASON JESUS CAME

1. Why was it necessary for Jesus Christ to come?
(Romans 3:23)

2. Why did Jesus die for us? (1 Peter 3:18)

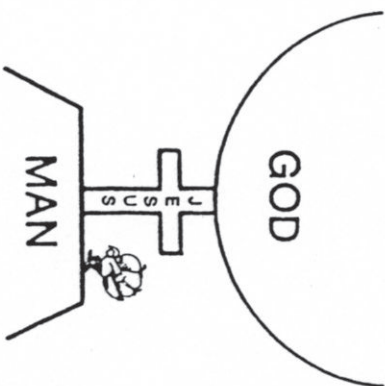
3. What has Jesus Christ done for our sins that no one else can do? (1 Peter 2:24,25)

4. What is the significance to us of the resurrection of Christ from the dead? (1 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:14,17)

In the Old Testament, the Israelites periodically brought animals to the priest to be sacrificed. The priest then slew the animal and sprinkled its blood on the altar as a temporary covering for the sins of the individual making the sacrifice. These animals had to be perfect, without spot or blemish, in order for the sin of the one making the sacrifice to be transferred to the innocent offering.

This was the picture of the coming of God's one special Lamb, the One whose blood would not just cover man's sins temporarily, but would wash them away forever.

"Without the shedding of blood," we are told in the Scriptures, "there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22b). That is why God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, who was without sin, without spot or blemish, to shed His blood upon the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.



In order to become a Christian, then, we must honestly and squarely face the claims of Jesus Christ and believe intellectually that He is God, that He died for our sins and was buried, that He rose again, and that He wants to come into our lives and be our Savior and Lord (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT

An emotion is a feeling or a reaction to a specific act, event, or experience. The failure to distinguish between different types of emotions has caused many people to be confused in their relationship with God.

People Respond Differently Emotionally

1. What was the apostle Paul's experience in coming to know God? (Acts 22:6-10)

2. What was Timothy's experience in coming to know God? (2 Timothy 1:5)

Emotions are a normal part of our life. Each of us has a unique personality with a special blend of emotions. God has created each of us just a little differently. One person may have a highly emotional personality, while another may be calm and reserved. Because emotions vary greatly, they are not to be depended upon. Depending on emotions or seeking an emotional experience has caused many to lack the assurance of a vital personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, "The righteous one shall live by faith," and "...without faith it is impossible to please God." "Everything that does *not* come from faith is sin" (Hebrews 10:38; 11:16; Romans 14:23).

The very act of seeking an emotional experience, therefore, contradicts the very thing that pleases God. Faith is another word for trust. Our faith must be placed in the person of God and in His holy, inspired Word rather than in our feelings.

Do Not Depend On Feelings; Emotions Can Deceive.

Assurance is based on the authority of God's Word. When we meet God's conditions as revealed in His Word, we can be assured that we are children of God. Christians live by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. *Consider this illustration:*



FEELINGS

FAITH

FACT

A tree grows strong and tall and eventually bears leaves, flowers, and fruit only because it has an established root system. The root system gives life to the tree by providing access to nutrients and water. So too God's Word (fact) provides our access to the source of living water. As we feed on God's Word, our souls are nourished. The trunk of the tree supports the growth and is a channel for the flow of life sustaining nutrients. In the same way, our faith should be the channel that allows the expression of God's commands and promises to become real in our lives. Our faith grows stronger as we develop more depth (roots) into God's word. The leaves, flowers, and fruit that are

the growth vary from season to season and are highly influenced by immediate circumstances. Likewise our feelings will change depending on our experiences. Just as a tree must grow roots before fruit, so we too in our Christian lives are to put our faith in God's Word if we want to grow strong in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

1. FACT:

The facts about the Christian life are in the Bible. Does a fact change?

2. FEELINGS:

a. Do our feelings change?

b. What determines whether our feelings are up or down?

3. FAITH:

a. If we put our faith in our feelings and our feelings are determined by circumstances, what will our faith do?

b. If we put our faith in facts (and a fact is true and does not change), what will our faith be like?

FACT.....GOD'S WORD
FAITH.....OUR TRUST IN GOD'S WORD
FEELINGS.....OUR EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO
EVERYTHING THAT WE
EXPERIENCE IN LIFE

Threefold Confirmation

God gives us a threefold confirmation that Jesus Christ is in our lives.

Our assurance of salvation is strengthened through:

- Trustworthy Word
- Confirming Holy Spirit
- Changed Life

First we have the external witness, or evidence, of the Word of God. Assurance is based on the authority of God's Word. When we meet God's conditions, as revealed in His Word, we can be assured that we are children of God. Read 1 John 5:9-13.

What phrase gives you the assurance that you are saved?

Second, there is the internal witness, or evidence, of the Holy Spirit. Paul writes in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

Our changed lives are a third witness to the fact we are Christians. Jesus explained to Nicodemus, a devout religious leader of the Jews, "You must be born again" (John 3:7). Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. The proof that we have experienced a new birth and have become children of

Assurance

God will be demonstrated by our changed lives.

Read 1 John 3:2-6. What are the results of a person becoming a Christian?

It is important to realize that emotional change does happen as a result of being a Christian. There may be times of great joy and happiness when we live in harmony with God (Matthew 5:3-11). We may also experience sadness and remorse over sin in our lives (James 4:8,9). We may take on the emotional state of those around us as we minister to them and become sensitive to their needs (Romans 12:15). But these emotions will never affect our salvation or harm our security in Christ.

VOLITIONAL (CHOICE MAKING) COMMITMENT

In addition to the intellect and the emotions, becoming a Christian and being sure that we are Christians involves the will. This is the actual step of commitment we must take to become children of God. Each of the verses below reveals a fact that is foundational to salvation. After reading each verse, in a brief statement personalize each fact (notice how they build on each other).

Facts To Put Your Faith In

1. God's love (1 John 4:16).

Assurance

2. Man's present condition (Romans 3:23).

3. The consequences of this condition (Romans 6:23).

4. Christ's response to our condition (Romans 5:6-8).

5. Our action to Christ's response (Romans 10:9-10).

6. My position now (1 John 3:1).

7. Confidence in salvation (1 John 5:10-13).

8. Security of salvation (John 10:27-29).

Deciding On The Basis Of The Facts

1. Is salvation something you earned (Ephesians 2:8,9)?

On what basis did you obtain it?

How do good works relate to your salvation?

2. Do you have the assurance that Christ is in your life? Are you certain that if you died right now, you would spend eternity with God in heaven?

If you cannot answer "yes" to the above question, make certain of your salvation by receiving Christ by a definite, deliberate act of your will right now in prayer. Here is a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. Thank you for loving me enough to die for my sins. I have heard your word and believe that you will save me. I commit my life to you. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. I will live in obedience to you; make me the person you want me to be."

3. If you have invited Christ into your life, now or earlier, where is He right now?

By what authority do you know?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How does a marriage relationship illustrate requirements for your relationship with Christ?

2. A simple head knowledge of the facts of the Gospel is not enough for salvation. However, these facts must be believed intellectually. What are the facts (1 Corinthians 15:3-6)?

3. How might your emotions cause you to doubt that you have a relationship with God?

4. What is the threefold confirmation God gives you that Jesus Christ is in your life?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Basic Christianity , John Stott

Know What and Why You Believe , Paul Little

What Every Christian Should Know About Growing ,
Leroy Eims