

If Indeed You Continue...

1. The Work of Salvation is CERTAIN

After Paul's 2 stanza hymn about the Lord Jesus Christ in vv. 15-20, he turned to the Colossians themselves and their spiritual history.

We saw this last week:

²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach- (Col. 1:21-22)

As we saw last week, this causes each one of us to think about our own situation and where the Lord has brought us.

That is how we give our testimony, "This is what my life used to be but then I came to Christ, and this is now what my life is."

Because of false teachers who were teaching about a false Christ and a "works based salvation," Paul wanted to remind them of the great change that the gospel had made in their lives...

... he wanted to remind them of what the power of Christ had done in them.

... Paul wanted to destroy any false teaching that implied that they needed more than the gospel.

... He wanted to defeat any false notion, any heresy that said the gospel that Epaphras taught was deficient.

One of the great enemies of the gospel is this self-righteous attitude that comes up time and time again ...

... “Well, you know, most Christians are incomplete, they are shallow because they don’t understand this or that ... or they have learned to do this or that...

... they haven’t yet received the ‘revelation’

... Oh, sure they are saved but they are just not “right” enough or “spiritual” enough.

I knew a man who was a security guard at the Sunny Point base in South Port NC, he was so much more spiritual than anyone else...

... he was so much closer to God than anyone else.

But he wasn’t part of any church, didn’t go to any church, didn’t contribute his money, time, or talents to any church

... but yet he was so much more spiritual.

Let me just go on record ... He was not more spiritual/holy/insightful ... He just had a more spiritual excuse than the rest of the sinners who didn’t love Jesus!

There were a few of those ‘false teachers’ running around Colossae.

And Paul says, STOP IT DON’T let they religious leader “wanna be’s” trouble you...

Paul wants these believers to know that by their faith in Christ Jesus ... in the Gospel of Christ Jesus ...

... their lives have already been profoundly changed, and they are already safe in Jesus.

Paul is trying to tell these Colossae Christians that they are ... their gloriously changed lives are the most profound evidence of the power of grace.

People are always asking ... “but how do I know I’m really saved?”

One of the reasons we doubt our salvation is because **the answer is so simple**, we can hardly believe that its true.

... our sinful nature wants an answer that is complicated ... an answer that makes big demands on us.

Here is how you can absolutely know you are saved ... even if you don't feel like you are saved.

Now when I give you the answer to the question "how can I know I'm saved" ... I'm going to give it to you from the very lips of Jesus

... and you are going to be shocked ...

Here is what Jesus said,

¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mk. 16:15-16)

How does Jesus say you can know for sure that you are saved?

... if you "believe" and "be baptized"?

The first one has to do with **possession** and the second one has to do with **confession**.

Both things will be obvious and present in the life of the true believer.

The Apostle Paul says almost the same thing but with different words.

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Rom. 10:9-10)

How do you know you've been saved? Because you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God and that God has raised Jesus from the dead.

How do you have the assurance in your heart that this true about you? Because you have confessed that Jesus is Lord of your life by following Him in believer's baptism.

One of the things I tell people when the Devil begins to whisper in their ear and say, “look how much you’ve failed, look at the sin in your life ... you’ve never been saved.”

... When the accuser of the brethren begins to accuse you like this ... **REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM!**

The most important thing you’ll ever do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ...

... the second most important thing is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in baptism.

“Satan, I know I’ve failed A LOT but Satan here is what you don’t understand, I have believed on the Lord Jesus and have publicly confessed HIS resurrection power over me by following HIM in believer’s Baptism.”

... so when the Devil tries to tempt me to doubt, I can sing...

[But it’s real, it’s real, OH, I know it’s real, praise God the doubts are settled for I know, I know, it’s real!]

Let me add one other thing to this point.

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 Jn. 5:13)

During those times when the devil is accusing you in your heart and you are struggling and doubting your faith ...

... that’s when you need to get your Bible and get alone with God ...

... because Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God

... and as John says, it is through reading God’s word that you “know” you have eternal life.

What Paul has written about Christ and his redemption is no unproven theory ...

... that salvation of the believer is certain ...

... my confidence may waver, but God does not!

2. The Work of Salvation is CONTINUOUS

if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Col. 1:23)

I want to be very clear: The Lord's death on the cross secures everything that salvation requires, past, present, and future.

We are justified by grace through faith (alone) in what Jesus Christ has done ...

... and the redemptive power of Christ's death is neither temporary nor partial.

You can trust in the finished work of Calvary.

“He whom the Lord sets free, is free indeed!”

‘But Nathan what about this verse 23 ... it says, “if indeed continue.”

... Nathan, that's conditional ... what if I don't continue? ...

Let's take a moment and look at what it says in the Greek

ei ge epimenete

If (*ei*) indeed (*ge*) you continue (*epimenete*)

(*ge*) is an indicative emphatic particle and when it follows the conjunction IF (*ei*) according to Greek scholars (Friberg in particular)

“IF (*ei*) with the indicative particle is used to express and emphasize that something is true and probable.”

Also, if you saw this week's Greek study on this verse you will remember that the word for 'you continue' *epimenete* also carries some weight.

This is a compound word which means to *continue and then some*

A clearer for this phrase, if it was standing alone would be "Since indeed you continue."

So, why do translators use "if" and not "since" ...

... the answer is simply CONTEXT.

Paul is being sarcastic.

In order to explain I want you to look with me at what Paul writes in 2:8-10

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, (Col. 2:9-11)

In a few weeks we will be focusing on this text and we will get deeper into it ...

.... but today I just want to touch on the surface

.... here we can see some of what these false teachers were teaching in the Colossian church.

- They denied that the fullness of the Godhead dwelled in Christ (v.9)
- They denied that believers were complete in Christ (v.10)
- They implied that these Colossian believers needed these other things to make them "fully" Christian.

[**circumcision**, in v. 18-**worship of angels**, v. 19-23-**ascetic lifestyle** "touch not, taste not, etc.]

Look back at what Paul wrote in Col. 2:18.

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, (Col. 2:18)

These false teachers were puffed up ... arrogant ... they believed their faith was better than those Colossians who had just simply trusted in the Gospel of the Grace of God that Epaphras taught ...

They were saying to them something like ...

“You’ve only believed what Epaphras taught you and that is only part of how to be Christian, you know have what we have so your salvation isn’t going to last ...”

.... and the arrogant boldness of these false teachers was so convincing that these Christians were beginning to doubt the strength of their salvation ...

So, Paul responds to their “fake news” with sarcasm.

... Paul uses almost the same approach writing the Ephesians...

²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him ... (Eph. 4:20-21)

Obviously, Paul knew that the Ephesian believers had heard of Jesus and been taught in him. ... But yet, here Paul uses sarcasm to emphasize how confident he was in their salvation.

That’s something of what is happening here.

To quote the Greek Scholar *C.F.D. Moule*: *“The particle does not imply doubt on Paul’s part but confidence with the assurance that they should continue in the faith and life of the gospel.”*

When I say the work of Salvation is continuous, **I mean 2 things.**

First, the work of salvation in the believer never ends ... what Christ has done in the believer is an eternal and permanent work. –that is **God’s Sovereignty.**

Second, the call to faithfulness in Salvation is absolute – that is **Human Responsibility.**

It would be an offense to scripture to say *“it doesn't what you believe or how you live or what you say if you're saved, you're saved.”*

NO! Salvation is entirely God's work, **but** faithfulness is our responsibility!

... that's why when you read the Bible, you will encounter a shocking number of warnings and exhortations.

... Pause ...

Listen, I've seen people who have lived a Christian life, they have been faithful to Christian things ... but then they-for whatever reason-they turned away, **THEY STOPPED!**

... I've seen it and if you're honest you know you've seen it too.

... that person is no Christian at all.

... They will not be able to stand before God and say, *“Lord I once believed,(I used to believe) isn't that good enough?”*

... *and He will say, depart from me...*

Continuing in the faith is the test of the reality of faith ...

In Acts 27 Paul is involved in a shipwreck off the coast of Malta

After a few terrible stormy days on the ship Paul comforted the passengers and sailors by revealing that God had revealed to him that everyone on the ship would be safe because of Paul's presence on the ship.

... *Paul told them they had nothing to fear.*

... *God had promised that they would all survive. But when the ship ran aground off the Malta shore, some sailors started to save themselves by heading toward land in the ship's boat.*

... *Paul told the commander that if the sailors did not remain on board they would perish.*

In the end everyone stayed on board the ship and they were all saved.

Now you can hear the nitpicker saying ... “Paul, you can’t tell them that they will perish if they leave the ship because you have already told them that God has promised that everyone would be saved.”

... but when that promise was given the assumption was that everyone was going to stay on the ship.

... but suddenly these sailors decided to abandon ship.

So, it was in Paul’s warning for them to stay on the ship that God’s promise was fulfilled and they WERE all saved.

They stayed in the boat and they were saved.

In the same way these warning and exhortations in scripture for the believer to run the race, fight the fight, finish the course

.... these warnings ... these exhortations keep us faithful.

... whom the Lord loves, he chastens.

Salvation is entirely God’s work, **but** faithfulness is our responsibility!

If it is true that all genuine believers will persevere to the end, then it is equally true that those who persevere to the end, are genuine believers.

3. Our Security in Christ is not in OUR DECISION but in GOD’S WILL

- “I lay down my life for the sheep,” Jesus said, “and no one can snatch them from my hand.”
- “This is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.”
- “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, together with him, graciously give us all things? Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord!

- “The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable.”
- “We were born again not of perishable but of imperishable seed.”
- “He who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

I dislike the phrase “once saved always saved” ...

... not because the words, but because of how it’s been taught.

Too many people believe that they or their family and friends are saved simply because they went forward at an altar call ...

... even though there is absolutely no evidence in their life of spiritual fruit or passion for Christ.

It is impossible to be saved if you have never submitted to Jesus as your Lord.

The Word of God doesn’t teach that we “cooperate with God” for our salvation ...

... the Bible is clear ... salvation is all God’s work ...

... but also, when you read the scriptures you will find IN EVERY CASE that true believers respond to exhortations and admonitions of Christ Jesus to abide in the vine and bear fruit.

... spiritual progress is the proof of spiritual life

This is how Paul says in in today’s verse:

if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Col. 1:23)

Paul says that this gospel transformed him and turned a murderous Pharisee into a minister of Christ—the apostle of grace.

... and keep in mind that when Paul got to heaven, **he was greeted by the ones he killed** ... that’s how the gospel works.