

Assurance of Eternal Life

By Dave Weatherly

Contemporary Christians have been conditioned to believe that because they recited a prayer, walked the aisle, or had some other experience, they are saved and should never question their salvation. It is a widely held misconception that anyone who questions whether he or she is saved is challenging the integrity of God's Word.

Scripture, however, encourages us to *"examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified"* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Peter instructs us to make our calling sure: *"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble"* (2 Peter 1:10).

Jesus taught that the inward condition of a person would become manifest externally: *"For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:44-46)

The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God's work in one's life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior: *"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God"* (1 John 3:10). Faith that does not result in righteous living is dead and cannot save: *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"* (James 2:14-17). Now, we know that our salvation is not by works or by our fruits, but by faith in Jesus Christ. *"One is justified by faith apart from works..."* (Romans 3:28). First comes faith, and then follows works (or fruit). Works are not for our own benefit, but for the nourishing of others.

Real salvation is not simply justification. It cannot be isolated from sanctification, nor ultimately glorification. Salvation is the work of God through which we are *"conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:29). Genuine assurance comes from seeing the Holy Spirit's transforming work in one's life, not in clinging to the memory of an experience or event. **This is what it means to be a new creation in Christ.**

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified"
(Romans 8:29-30).