

**BLESSED ASSURANCE**  
**No Sheepish Saints**  
**1 John 2:28**

Most of us have heard of the term, "A wolf in sheep's clothing." But what would you think if you found a sheep in lion's skin? More accurately, what would you think if you came face to face with a sheep that had the HEART of a lion? Well, that is what I want to encourage you to BECOME in your Christian life! You heard me! I know that God's Word makes it clear that we are SHEEP. Psalm 100 says "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." The most famous Psalm of all – Psalm 23 – joyfully declares: "The Lord is my Shepherd!" God loves to guard and guide us as our holy, loving Shepherd. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd, and he said, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me!" I am HAPPY to be one of God's sheep! But I do not for one second believe that God means for his sheep to live SHEEPISH lives! It is one thing to be one of God's sheep, but it is another thing altogether to live my life in such a way that I shamefully slink through life trying to be invisible because I feel as if something is wrong with me! Sadly, this is the way that many saints live their lives!

\*Yes, all of God's kids are also called SAINTS! [Saints=Holy, set apart ones]

This week and next, I want us to see how that we as Christians are not just described as sheep, but also as WARRIORS and WINNERS! We are called to be mighty men and women of God who fulfill God's will on this earth by his strength and power. Is this how you see yourself? Or, do you simply feel like a wimpy failure who doesn't feel worthy of any of God's blessings and who fails to appropriate any of God's PROMISES? If that is how you feel, then you are living FAR BENEATH your privilege as a child of God! It is time for you to discover how you can develop the heart of a lion! Today, I want to show you just how you may have been developing a SHEEPISH HEART!

**We become sheepish when we avoid genuine confession.**

The entire goal of John and Peter in their respective letters was to encourage us to live in close, intimate fellowship with God in our Christian lives. (See 1 John 1:3)

\*Understand the difference between relationship and fellowship.

Relation (ship)=Status (Facebook!), Connection (by blood or marriage)

Fellowship=Partnership, INTIMACY!

[Charles Shipman – 2 Fellows in the same ship, facing the same way, and rowing in the same direction!]

That being said, we must understand how fellowship with God is MAINTAINED.

**1 John 1:6-9 NLT**

6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the

blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

We have already talked about the fact that God's children will sin, but that they do not hardheartedly PRACTICE sin. This means that they do not sin without the experience of God's conviction (without knowing that what they are doing is wrong and harmful). When they sin, they experience God's discipline. This leads them to the practice of CONFESSION so that they can stay CLOSE to God! **Confession means, "to agree with or to admit."** When an OFFENSE happens in a relationship, that offense must be brought into the light and then DEALT with! If it is not, then the offense FESTERS and brings sickness and division. **Remember, sins by their very nature are HARMFUL.** They damage others and us. God's Spirit is actually demonstrating love and giving us protection by pointing out our sin! He is not a "thin-skinned God" who gets his feelings hurt all of the time! He is a HOLY GOD who loves us and is fully committed to us and to his will for us! This is why we must develop a BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF CONFESSION:

**Confession must be SPECIFIC.**

- \*Don't fall into the trap of simply confessing your sins GENERICALLY.
- The Lord's (Model) Prayer is a PATTERN for prayer, not a PANACEA.
- \*Jesus said, "after this MANNER you should pray."
- Fellowship is harmed or broken by every single sin!
- Every single sin must be acknowledged. [Confession in healthy marriages!]
- \*God's conviction is his way of making us aware of offenses.
- \*This is how we LEARN and GROW in our fellowship with God/others!

**Confession must be SOON.**

- \*The longer you avoid confession, the farther apart you feel from God!
- A guilty conscience only GROWS WORSE when it is ignored or denied.
- You do not have to come to his THRONE of GRACE timidly, but come!

**Hebrews 4:16 AMPC**

**16** Let us then fearlessly *and* confidently *and* boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].

**Confession must be CONSISTENT.** (Or, STEADY!)

- \*Keep SHORT SIN ACCOUNTS. [My old youth pastor's counsel to me!]
- Don't let them pile up over time because of hardheartedness.
- SHAME is cumulative!
- \*Shame only has the power over us that we GIVE it by our failure to confess and renounce our sin!
- \*Confession must not be wrongly viewed as PERMISSION to sin in advance!
- I have actually heard people say about their plans to sin, "God will forgive me."

This practice reveals another common way that we develop a sheepish heart before God. It is actually what PRECEDES our failure to confess our sins.

**We become sheepish when we betray our convictions.**

We have talked about this in other ways in this series, but it is something that I feel I must still address for those who doubt their salvation or those who are NOTHING MORE than MEDIOCRE in their Christian walk! Some of you live in a constant state of sheepishness because of your failure to live according to the convictions that God's Word and God's Spirit grant you. John describes it in this way:

**1 John 3:20-21 AMPC**

**20** Whenever our hearts in tormenting] self-accusation make us feel guilty *and* condemn us. [For we are in God's hands.] He is above *and* greater than our consciences (our hearts), and He knows (perceives and understands) everything [nothing is hidden from Him]. **21** And, beloved, if our consciences (our hearts) do not accuse us [if they do not make us feel guilty and condemn us], we have confidence (complete assurance and boldness) before God,

The Christian life is in a constant state of GROWTH. You and I are always learning about what is good and holy and right. John Ortberg, in his book Faith and Doubt, pointed out that we live with three kinds of convictions in our lives:

- \*PUBLIC CONVICTIONS – Beliefs that we want others to think we have.
- \*PRIVATE CONVICTIONS – Beliefs that we THINK we already have.
- \*CORE CONVICTIONS – Beliefs that we ACTUALLY have! [[Gravity](#)]

The goal of Christian growth is to turn private convictions INTO core convictions. This is done by LIFELONG CYCLES [of obedience that bring immediate and future rewards, or of failure, confession, and repentance that leads to obedience].

A PROLONGED experience of failure (betraying your convictions) without following up with confession and repentance will cause you to lose any sense of confidence before God. This is how we can actually SEAR our CONSCIENCE. We can become CALLUS to sins. Think about how much we excuse what we see on TV or in the MOVIES these days! Do you ever even try to FILTER what you listen to or watch? [[PLUGGEDINONLINE.COM](#) – Great way to filter movies BEFORE you see them!]

You and I have to guard our hearts when it comes to how we interact with this world! It is actively trying to get us to live against the will of God in our lives. This is why John gave us this warning: **1 John 2:15-16 AMPC**

**15** Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the

Father but are from the world [itself].

The fact that we are told NOT to love the world means that we could actually begin to love the world if we do not stay alert to its dangers and enticements! Admit it; this world has its attractions. We can be easily tempted to view life through a temporary lens that only sees what is before our eyes. We are constantly bombarded with VOICES that are telling us that we are FOOLS to trust what God says when there are such immediate pleasures available to those who indulge all their desires HERE and NOW! [My encouragement to young couples to stay sexually pure in their relationship and the mockery they receive.] How are you guarding your heart against loving this world?

When we betray our convictions and harden our consciences, then we will actually begin to FEAR the return of Christ more than we JOYFULLY ANTICIPATE it! That is so sad! This is why John said: **1 John 2:28 AMPC**

**28** And now, little children, abide (live, remain permanently) in Him, so that when He is made visible, we may have *and* enjoy perfect confidence (boldness, assurance) and not be ashamed *and* shrink from Him at His coming.

Do you want to be excited about meeting Christ face to face? You should realize that your obedience to God on this earth is not just a SIGN that you BELONG to God; it also becomes a key SOURCE of the CONFIDENT EXPECTATION you could experience as you wait to see God! Many of you are sheepish about seeing Christ. Know why?

**We become sheepish when we do not fulfill our calling.**

Simon Peter weighs in on this one in a big way! The flow of fruit in our lives that he gives in 2 Peter 1 is a description of what a believer who is living up to his calling looks like. Peter knew that the failure to do this would lead to sheepishness and doubt. **2 Peter 1:10-11 AMP**

**10** Therefore, believers, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you [be sure that your behavior reflects and confirms your relationship with God]; for by doing these things [actively developing these virtues], you will never stumble [in your spiritual growth and will live a life that leads others away from sin]; **11** for in this way entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly provided to you.

Did you hear what he just said? The spiritual effort that you give to grow in your faith and produce fruit that will bring glory to God will also do something amazing for you: It will create a grand entrance into heaven for you! This is not to say that you will waltz into heaven with arrogance and pride; it is a promise that you will enter heaven with great JOY and surrounded with the evidence of your GRATEFUL LOVE for God. The old saints referred to this as "BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES." This is a reference to a farmer who comes in from the fields with his wagons loaded with

the harvest! That was a fun day! Some of you are actually looking forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ because your life is bearing fruit for him right now. You know that your life is bringing him GLORY on this earth, and that he will REWARD you for that service in eternity future. **This time of judgment for Christians is NOT the time that it is decided whether or not you get to STAY in heaven, but it is the time where it will be disclosed what your RANK and DUTIES will be in heaven!** There will be LEVELS of RANK and OPPORTUNITY in heaven. All of Christ's disciples understood this very clearly. This is why Paul warned us that our actions will be MEASURED by God when we stand before him at the Judgment Seat of Christ. **1 Corinthians 3:10-13 NLT**

10 Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have--Jesus Christ. 12 Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials--gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. 13 But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. 14 If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

Do you really want to be one of the many who will stand before God in sheepish shame because you did not live a life of ABUNDANCE and GRATITUDE for all that he had given to you? This is why many of you have so many doubts about whether or not you belong to Christ. This is also why God will "wipe away all of our tears" in heaven. Yes, there will be tears in heaven! There will be deep grief in the hearts of those who dishonor Christ by their dismal offerings to him on that day. Yes, they will be in heaven forever by God's grace, but they will have entered heaven only "by the skin of their teeth!" (As my momma used to say!) I don't want to enter heaven this way. Do you?

Let me ask you again: Are you a sheepish saint? If so, where do you need to make some changes in your spiritual life?

**\*You need to TRULY give your entire life to Christ; not just pray a prayer!**

\*Specific, Immediate, and Consistent CONFESSION of your sin.

\*Letting go of your LOVE for this world.

\*Start turning PRIVATE convictions into CORE convictions BY FAITH.

\*Building on your faith with **fruit that will survive the fire.**

Let's pray.