

The Power of a Testimony

A. How We Got Here

1. Biblical Support for Testimonies

- a. The Gadarene Demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20)
- b. The apostle Paul (Ac. 9:1-22; 22:3–16 before the Sanhedrin at Jeru.; 26:9–18 before King Agrippa at Caesarea)
- c. Andrew and Simon Peter (Jn. 1:35-42)

2. My Story (Testimony re: Assurance)

- a. Salvation
- b. Confusion, Doubt, & Fear all the way through Bible College and beyond into “ministry” at Antioch Christian Church in MO.
- c. Then something happened resulting in: Assurance, Certainty, and Service with joy!

3. Jansen Bible Church

a. The FEBC

b. Nebraska Extension – Dr. Paul Nyquist, Doug Hornok, Dennis Goertzen, & Bill Axline et al.

- 1) Here I met a number of godly men who were on the same page with me. Through the years I have met several more including, but not limited to, Chuck Tschetter, Dwain Holsapple, Jerry Franz, Bob Vogt, Tim Reed, and Dale Howe.
- 2) Incidentally, one of the most godly men I ever met here or anywhere else was Melvin Epp who served as President of the FEBC in my early days with the Fellowship.

B. Theological Matters

1. The gospel

- a. This is the good news that Jesus has already done everything necessary for our salvation in His death, burial, and resurrection (1Cor. 15:1-5).
- b. We appropriate what He did by faith *alone*.
 - 1) This is made explicitly clear in Ac. 16:30-31.
 - 2) It is also clear in Gal. 1:6-7 et al., in the expr., “a different (ἕτερος – heteros) gospel, which is really not another (ἄλλος – allos),” only there were those who wanted “to distort the gospel of Christ.”

- 3) What did that mean? Simply this: They added conditions to faith alone in Christ alone, e.g., “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Ac. 15:1b). The Jerusalem Council settled that question (Ac. 15:7-11).
- 4) Even so, *many* false additions to faith have been put forward through the centuries including, but not limited to:
 - a) Repent and believe in Jesus.
 - b) Believe and confess Jesus, very often by walking an aisle in a church or building.

- c) Believe and confess your sins.
- d) Believe and turn from all known sin.
- e) Some say, “Believe and make a personal commitment to Jesus.”
- f) Countless thousands say, “Believe and be baptized to be saved.” Is that what Mk. 16:16 and 1Pet. 3:21 mean?
- g) Thousands would also seriously say, “Believe and observe the Lord’s Supper,” the Lord’s Supper in their view being efficacious in removing sin.
- h) Perhaps even more would seriously say, “Believe and keep the ten commandments.”

i) Perhaps almost all of us have been told,
“Believe and pray a prayer, generally the so-called sinner’s prayer.”

That is commonly known as praying to receive Christ. Rev. 3:20 is often intertwined with this notion. Very likely, almost everyone of us has prayed that prayer numerous times. **Why**, particularly in light of the fact that there *is no such prayer* in the Bible?

- 5) Can you imagine a witnessing encounter with such a person who cannot figure out whether he's saved or lost? "Excuse me, Friend, but I don't know if I have eternal life or where I'm going to spend eternity, and if you'll give me 10-15 minutes of your time, you won't know either!" ***We must do better than that!***
- 6) The biblical fact of the matter is that we are saved by faith (noun) or by believing (verb) in Jesus *plus nothing*, including the sinner's prayer. Again, we are not saved by *praying*, but by *believing* and the two are *not* the same thing. Praying is *working* (it takes effort cf. Col. 4:12) and believing is *not* working.

- 7) Paul said, “But to the one who does **not work, but believes** in Him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith** is credited as righteousness” (Rm. 4:5); and also, in Rm. 3:28, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith **apart from** (lit., ‘without’) **works** of the Law.”
- 8) How does this look in practice? The case of Cornelius will serve us very well. He had been seeking the Lord (Ac. 10:2), so God sent an angel to him saying to send for Peter, “and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved” (Ac. 11:14a). Peter preached Jesus to him saying, ““Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him

- 8) (cont.) receives forgiveness of sins.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.” Peter did not call for Cornelius and his company to do a solitary thing, not *one*, in order to receive forgiveness of sins beyond *believing* in Him.
- 9) This reality prompted my late friend, Dr. C. Norman Sellers, to say something simple but profound: “When you are leading a person to Christ, don’t give him *anything to do*, give him *something to believe!*” That’s *all* Peter did as he later confirmed at the Jerusalem Council (Ac. 15:7-11).

- 10) Remember Ernie Toews of Steinbach, MB, at the celebration of the Centennial of our Cornerstone Bible Church, during the FEBC Convention there in 1997.
- 11) What about 1Jn. 5:1?
- 12) Finally, let's consider further the doctrine of assurance. Faith carries its own assurance (Heb. 11:1), and *certain* knowledge of eternal life must be based on the promise *alone* (1Jn. 2:25; 5:13).
- 13) This frees the believer to love God and to serve Him *because* he loves Him!

C. Other Practical Implications

1. Once we understand these things, in order to communicate them to others, we must meet with them one on one, eyeball to eyeball, if you please, in order to communicate the truth of the gospel & assurance.
2. You will never again “minister” for your own assurance. Now you can go forth with a genuine, selfless love and concern for *others*.
3. Do not be deceived, *assurance* of salvation by works is really *salvation* by works masquerading as something else. If I do not know that I have eternal life right now based on the promise, then surely to work for the

3. (cont.) *knowledge* of my salvation is not different from working for my *salvation*.
4. Prepare for resistance. Legalists do not take kindly to people encroaching on their territory with their specious arguments that *theirs* is the path to righteous living with their “perform or perish” theology. It is not (1Cor. 15:56; Rm. 5:20; Gal. 3:19). We must boldly move forward by faith and watch God do amazing things in freeing people from bondage and tyranny (Heb. 2:14-15; Gal. 5:1).
5. Our own FEBC Articles of Faith reflect this perspective of justification by faith and assurance by the promise, which are really two ways of saying the same thing:

- **Salvation:** “We believe that salvation is by divine grace alone through faith alone, through Jesus Christ alone.”
- **Assurance:** “We believe that every believer can be assured of eternal life from the very day of their salvation, based upon the promises of God in His written Word, not upon one’s own worthiness.”

6. To reiterate the above truths, may I say this? Show me a person who is doubting his salvation, and I will show you a person who is looking to something *other than* the promise of God as his ground of assurance or basis for knowing. This inevitably fails.
7. For you cannot derive *perfect* assurance from *imperfect* works, e.g., Jonathan Edwards.
8. Perfect assurance or certain knowledge of eternal life can only be derived from the perfect promise of God: “This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life” (1 Jn. 2:25).

Conclusion:

Three examples from my own ministry; Jerry, Jon, and Tim.

For further study, what about salvation as opposed to discipleship? Compare Rv. 22:17 and Lk. 14:25-33.