

The Christian's Assurance of Salvation

Scripture: Galatians 4:1–6

Code: 48-20

This transcript is still being processed for Smart Transcript. To see an example of this new feature, [click here](#).

There is a bluntness in the gospel. The utter absence of ambiguity characterizes the truth. False religion is necessarily and typically ambiguous, the gospel is not. It is blunt, straightforward. The gospel tells the truth with candor, plainly spoken truth that is so straightforward and so unmistakable as to be blatantly offensive.

In fact, the introductory line of the Christian gospel goes like this: Every human being is a sinner. Every human being sins, because every human being possesses a corrupt nature, a wicked disposition. Beyond just that corruption and wicked disposition, all human beings are rebels against God. They have rebelled against God by the willful and constant violation of His holy law, which is a reflection of His holy nature. Consequently, all sinners are under divine judgment for their rebellion and their violation and their innate corruption. The sentence that comes from God on all mankind is condemnation to eternal punishment in hell. That is the blunt and shocking and stunning truth of the gospel. That's where it starts.

There are people who are eager to remove that part of the gospel, and therefore deconstruct the gospel and usually end up with a gospel that is no gospel. And we learned earlier in Galatians, "If anybody preaches another gospel let him be damned." We're all sinners, we're all under divine judgment, and we can do nothing to change that on our own. Now that causes me to pose some questions to get us into this text.

Question number one: "How do we know that we are all sinners? How do we know? What's the proof that we're all sinners?" Pretty popular to think of people as being basically good. "What is the evidence that we are all sinners?" Very simple: Everyone dies. Everyone dies. The Old Testament says, "The soul that sins it shall die." New Testament says, "The wages of sin is death."

If you say you're not a sinner, then you have to explain your death. If you say you're not corrupt, you have to explain your demise. And further, if you say you have not sinned, you lie, and you make God who says you are a sinner a liar, and that only compounds your guilt.

The message of the gospel initially is terrifyingly clear and absolutely true. But hastily after that first affirmation there is a second affirmation in the gospel, and it is this: God loves the world, and offers them forgiveness and salvation. And that answers the second question: "Is there anything that can be done about my condition?" The answer is yes.

God loves the world. God provides deliverance from sin, from judgment, from death, from hell to those who have faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world. There is eternal life in Him, forgiveness, escape from hell, and entrance into the glories of God's own heaven.

How do we know that that good news is true? The answer: the Bible gives us the proof of it. The Bible, obviously, a book written by God, authored by God, lays out the message of God's love and forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The proof of that second affirmation of the Christian gospel is found throughout the pages of Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament. God has the desire to save because He loves sinners, and God has sent a Savior who provided a sacrifice for sin that granted salvation to those who believe. The Bible is the proof of that, and the Bible stands on its own internal merit as inerrant and absolutely true.

Now that leads to a next question, very important: "How can I be sure that Christ is able to save anyone? How can I be sure that Christ is the Savior? If I'm going to turn to Him, put my faith in Him, how can I be sure that Christ is able to save me?"

Proof: He died and rose from the dead. He died a death that essentially was the wrath of God on Him, not for any sins that He had done, for He had done none. But the Father imputed all the sins of all the people who had ever believed through all of human history to Christ and punished Christ all their sins. He died in the place of believers. His was the death for the sins of all who believe.

How do we know that His death satisfied God? Because God raised Him from the dead. God was satisfied, His wrath was propitiated, and God raised Christ from the dead as a divine affirmation of the satisfaction of His own sacrifice.

Those are clear truths. Those are unambiguous truths. Those are the objective truths of the gospel. All men are sinners headed to eternal punishment. God loves and will forgive sinners who put their faith in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is able to save. He has offered the sacrifice that satisfied God, and therefore God declared that a satisfactory sacrifice by raising Him from the dead.

You're a Christian because you believe that. All those, again, unambiguous truths are the objective, historical realities about the gospel. All true Christians understand them, and embrace them, and believe them; that's why they're Christians.

But there's a fourth question, and this is the one to which I want to draw your attention today. It is this question: "How can I be certain that I have truly believed and received that salvation?" This is not the question, "Does Christ have the power to save?" We believe that. We believe we're sinners. We believe God loves us and has provided a way of salvation. We believe Christ has the power to save, as demonstrated by His sacrifice and His resurrection.

The question is a more personal question; not an objective question, but a subjective question; not about something that happened historically, but about our own hearts. "How can I be certain that I have believed in Christ and been saved?" This is subjective, and this addresses the difference between confidence, faith, and assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ has the power to save; and confidence, assurance, and faith that I have actually been saved by that power.

Now let's be honest. Even though we believe those objective facts of the gospel, as Christians, there

are times when we struggle to be assured of our salvation. One of the things you deal with as a pastor a lot is the problem with people who lack assurance of salvation. They don't doubt that they're sinful, they don't doubt that God loves and provides a sacrifice in Christ, they don't doubt that Christ has the power to save, they don't doubt the resurrection, but they doubt that they are saved.

What is it that steals a believer's assurance? Well, there are a number of things that will weaken your assurance. One – and we'll give you a few: lack of impact, lack of results in service. Some people look at their life and they say, "You know, I'm a Christian supposedly. I have been transformed, and I have power from on high. But I look at my life and I don't see any impact. I try to do some things to serve the Lord; I have to say I don't see much as a result of that." And someone in that kind of situation gets discouraged and wonders whether they actually possess the power, whether they've actually been given life.

And then another reality that steals your assurance is disobedience. You fail to obey the Word of God. You get caught up in transgressions, iniquities, and sins. And because of your disobedience, which is a willful disobedience, you naturally will question, "Am I genuinely a believer?" And I'm not talking about the occasional *paraptōma*, when you stumble; but I'm talking about the fact that you're realizing that there's something in you that continues to will to disobey. You see that and you wonder, "Have I really been saved?"

Another one is inconsistency. You go to the spiritual high occasionally. You're here today and your heart is lifted up in worship. You'll find yourself a day later in a situation that you shouldn't be in, and you looked at that situation and you see inconsistency in your life, inconsistency in your attractions and your desires, and you wonder whether you're really saved.

And then there's the presence of sort of habitual, indwelling sin. Here you are, you've been a believer for a while and you're still struggling with the same exact sins that have been beleaguering you for years and years, and you wonder, "If I'm really a believer, why can I not get victory over these besetting sins?"

And then you have to face the reality of temptation to doubt. Satan tempts us to doubt. And doubt is a temptation. You doubt the truth of Scripture. You doubt the glory of God. You doubt the truth concerning Christ. You doubt a lot of things. That's a temptation. So, your assurance can be very weakened by lack of results, lack of impact by your life, disobedience, inconsistency, the presence of habitual, indwelling sin, temptation.

Another one is sensitive conscience. There are some people who are more sensitive than others. They tend to be wired to be more introspective and more fearful, and they tend to be more doubtful in their own minds. And as they look at their lives and they begin to become introspective, they see things they don't like there. Their conscience causes them pain and suffering over their condition; and that begins to steal their assurance.

There are other things. Neglect of worship: you come now and then, and then you wonder why you're not certain of your salvation. You worship only on occasions with the people of God; in negligence of fellowship, negligence of prayer, negligence of boldness in the proclamation of the gospel. All these things are thieves that steal your assurance. We're not saying they steal your salvation. Your salvation is fixed as a true believer. Your assurance may waver.

But there's one other thing I want to talk about. There's another reality that has a way of stealing our assurance, and we'll just call it trouble, trouble, trouble with corollary disappointment. Things aren't going the way you think they ought to go. You find out about some illness, or the death of a friend, or some tragedy with regard to a child, or you wonder why your relationship, maybe even your marriage and your family is falling apart in horrific ways that are heartbreaking to you.

Some theologians have called this a frowning providence. The providence of God seems always to be frowning on you, and things never go the way you think they should go, and you begin to wonder whether you are a child of God. And if you are a child of God, why doesn't God pay more attention to you? And why does it seem that you're suffering in an undue way? These are the kinds of things that weaken and steal your assurance. And at some point, all Christians will have gone through a time where they will say, "Am I really saved? Am I really saved?"

Now our passage is going to give you an answer that is marvelous to this question: "How can I be sure that Christ has truly saved me?" The answer here is very powerful. Let's begin at verse 1 of chapter 4.

"Now I say, as long as the heir as a child, he doesn't differ at all from a slave though he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."

Now this is about sonship. This is about sonship. This is about the great doctrine of adoption, adoption. Verse 5: "We have received the adoption as sons." There are, as we saw last time, and looking at the earlier verses, there are many aspects of the doctrine of salvation, regeneration, conversion, justification. This is the doctrine of adoption, the doctrine of adoption, one of the magnificent realities in the glorious complex of our salvation. We have been adopted into the family of God, and are sons of God.

Now how does this work? Go back to – or forward to Ephesians 1. And I just remind you of how Paul begins this epistle in verse 3, blessing God. Listen to what he says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

He chose us, He predestined us to adoption as sons. This is adoption. Adoption is a choice. Adoption takes place when someone makes a child out of someone born into another family. Adoption is when you take a child born to another family and bring that child into your family. That is exactly what God does with us.

John 8, our Lord said, "You're of your father the devil. You're of your father the devil. He is your

father. You are children of disobedience; you are children of wrath; you are children of Satan. That's your family. But God has chosen you, predestined you to adoption as sons, according to the kind intention of His own will." This is part of realizing the richness of salvation. We were a part of Satan's family; but God has adopted us.

This only happens in Christ, in Christ. We are adopted, Ephesians 1 says, in His Son. "We are blessed" – verse 3 – "with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." Verse 4: "He chose us in Him." Verse 5: "Predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself," – verse 6 – "in the beloved," – verse 7 – "in Him," – and it goes on, verse 9 – "in Him," – verse 10 – "in Him," – verse 12 – "in Christ" – verse 13 – "in Him, in Him."

God only has one Son, and it is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are placed into Christ, and therefore we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, as we read in Romans 8. This is the great doctrine of adoption; and we looked at it in some detail last time.

"The Father loves the Son," John 3:35. And He loves those who are in the Son because they are one with the Son. This is the marvelous reality of salvation. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has, that He has made us" – 1 John 3:1 – "children of God." He loves us enough not only to do the negative, save us from our sins, but do the positive: adopt us into His own family, into His one eternal Son, to share His full inheritance.

God's astounding love is the cause, the motive, the drive behind our adoption. He loves the Son, He places us in the Son, and He loves us the way He loves the Son. We see that laid out so magnificently in the seventeenth chapter of John, where our Lord prays and binds those for whom He prays, all believers together with Himself and with the Father, in this bond of love. We are loved by the Father because Christ is loved. We are blessed by the Father because Christ is blessed. We inherit all that Christ inherits because we are in Christ.

This is how we are to understand our adoption. We have been placed into His true Son, and therefore are heirs of everything God possesses. This is adoption. God graciously places justified, regenerated, sanctified believers into His own family by placing into union with His beloved Son, so that in Him they become sons of God.

Now that takes us back to this question again: "How can I be certain that I have had that occur in my life? How can I be sure that have truly believed in Christ so as to be saved? And how do I know that I am really in Christ and have been adopted? How do I know that?"

Confirmation of that comes in verse 6; this is what I want you to see. The confirmation comes in verse 6. We saw the preparation for sonship, we saw the realization for sonship, and here's the confirmation. This is a familiar verse, but one not understood. You're going to understand it this morning.

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" "Because you are sons, God does this." That's exactly what it's saying.

The fact is, you are sons, and because you are, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our heart. That is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of His Son is the same as the Spirit of Christ, as He's called

elsewhere. The Spirit of God, same thing, the Holy Spirit. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts because we are sons.

Back again to Ephesians 1, and the end of that long section, down to verse 13. “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,” – you listened, you heard – “you believed also, you were sealed in Him” – that is Christ was your Savior permanently – “you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

When you were justified, when you were converted, when you were saved, you were sealed with the Spirit of promise. The Spirit of promise took up residence in your heart; that is what that verse is saying. The Spirit was given to you as a pledge of our inheritance, which is coming later at the redemption of our bodies when we enter into the presence of the Lord.

So think of it this way. You have a future inheritance. You have an inheritance that the Lord has prepared for you because you are a true believer. That inheritance is laid up for you in heaven.

Listen to this from 1 Peter 1: “We have an inheritance” – verse 4 – “which is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” That’s great; we have that. Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and I’ll come and take you to where I am, and you’ll be with Me always.” We have a place. We have a full inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and reserved for only us in heaven.

Then it says, “who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” So now we have this future inheritance, and we have a present protection, and that protection is the power of God; that is none other than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in us is the protecting power of God that secures us until we receive our inheritance. We are protected by the power of God, and that power is the Holy Spirit.

Peter says also, “You have become partakers of the divine nature.” That is to say, the very nature of God is part of you. You are partaking in the nature of God. Again, that is a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit who provides for us this divine life and transformation.

So if you are a true son of God, you possess the Holy Spirit. In fact, it’s so personal that verse 6 says, “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.” That is clear in Scripture. First Corinthians 6, “Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have of God; you’re not your own, but bought with a price.”

“Your body is the temple of the Spirit of God. Romans 8:9, I read it earlier: “If any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he’s not of His.” But you are His, and so you have the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36. The great new covenant passage in Ezekiel says that when we come to salvation, God puts a new spirit in us, His own Spirit. First Corinthians 12:13, “We are all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Jesus said in John chapter 7 that when you come to faith, and when you come to Him and come to salvation, something dramatic will occur in your life, and it relates to the Holy Spirit. Listen to verses

38 and 39: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, but this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive." The Spirit is a flood of living waters in us.

Now this is part of our understanding of the theology of the Holy Spirit, that He takes up residence in every believer's life. So this is the evidence that you are saved: you possess the Holy Spirit.

Now let me just make a brief aside here and say this. Some of you are saying to yourselves, "You keep talking about being adopted, adopted, adopted. But doesn't the Bible say we are born into the family of God? Doesn't the Bible that we're born again?" Yes, it does. John 3, "You must be born of the water and the spirit. You can't enter the kingdom of heaven unless you're born again."

First Peter 1:23 says that we're begotten again. We're born again by the seed, which is the word of God, the gospel seed which is the word of God. Yes, we are regenerated. We have been given new life. We are new creations. So it is true; we are born into the family of God. So mark it. We are both born and adopted.

Now that's not possible. That's not possible in the normal human world. But we're talking about two distinctly different analogies or metaphors. Look, the Bible does this a lot. You can talk about the church as a kingdom, you can talk about the church as a vineyard, you can talk about the church as a flock, you can talk about the church as a body, you can talk about the church as a family. The Bible uses lots of different analogies and metaphors to give us the full understanding of our identity in Christ.

So we are both born into the family of God by regeneration, and adopted into the family of God. Both are essential pictures to have us understand the riches of salvation. Let me explain what I mean.

Your birth into the family of God determines your nature. It relates to your nature. You have died to the old man, you have died to the old life; you are in Christ, a new creation. This relates to our nature. Our spiritual birth regeneration, being born again relates to our nature. It is the work of transforming our nature, regenerating us, giving us spiritual life. That is viewed as birth.

On the other hand, adoption does not relate to the receiving of eternal life, but relates to the inheritance that is ours. It relates to what God will grant us out of the love that He has for us. So when we talk about new birth, we're talking with reference to our nature; we've been recreated. When we're talking about adoption we're talking about inheritance; that's what we're going to receive. The Lord has chosen to give us the inheritance.

The reason that might be important to know is that there are plenty of sons who have been disinherited. Father will never do that. We're both born into the family and will receive the full inheritance of an adopted son. Adoption connects with election. Adoption connects with predestination in Ephesians chapter 1, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, predestined to adoption as sons."

Out of all the world, God looked into the kingdom of Satan, saw the children of the devil, and chose you. So in one metaphor, you are born into the family of God, which then is the metaphor that expresses the fact that you possess a new nature, the nature of that is divine, received from God.

You already have eternal life in you now. Adoption speaks of your inheritance.

So how do we know, how do we know that we have the Holy Spirit? Right? How do we know that we have the Holy Spirit? That's the next question. It's fine to say that. But how do I know that I have the Spirit of His Son in me? I get it.

Romans 8:11, "His Spirit dwells in you." Romans 8:14, "All who are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." First John 3:24, "We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." Or Romans 5:5, "The love of God had been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." So we are told the Holy Spirit is given to us. He is in us, in our hearts inside of us.

How do we know that? How do we know that? Jesus said in John 14 to the disciples, "The Spirit has been with you; He will be in you." How do I know the Spirit is in me? How do I know that Ephesians 3:16 is my experience? "According to the riches of His glory. You are strengthened in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit."

How do I know that? Well, there are a number of ministries the Holy Spirit conducts. He teaches us. First Corinthians chapter 2 says this about the Holy Spirit's ministry. "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who's from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God." The Holy Spirit shows us all the blessings that God has given us.

First John 2:27, "The Holy Spirit is the anointing that teaches us all things." So we don't need human teachers. So we've all experienced the instructing work of the Holy Spirit. That's why you're in this church, by the way, if you're here regularly. That's why you're not sitting in a dark room with strobe lights and rock and roll music, because you're far more interested in having your heart ignited by the instructing of the Spirit of God through the Word of God than you are in an emotional experience. That's why you're here.

In fact, that's alien to you. That's not interesting to you. You don't care about that; you don't want that. You have tasted of the instructing of the Holy Spirit. You have had a Luke 24 experience: "Did not our heart burn within us while He spoke with us from the Word." Your hearts have burned under the glory of the Word of God, His own inherent glory. So you have had the ministry of the Holy Spirit in instructing you.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit leads us. You've been led by the Holy Spirit. You don't know it when it's happening, you can't feel anything, but you certainly know it in retrospect, don't you. You look back and you see providence, after providence, after providence, after providence of the Lord directing every single step all the way; and you look back and say, "I had been led. There is no explanation for this except from the Holy Spirit."

You have also experienced the comfort from the sovereign companion. John 14, Jesus said, "I'm going to send the Comforter. I'm going to send the Helper, the *Paraclete* [???], the one who comes alongside and helps you."

You've gone through the trials of life, the difficulties of life, and you have found peace and comfort. It's a peace that passes understanding, and people don't know how you can be so calm and so joyful

in the middle of all that's going on. You've experienced the comforting work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

You've been filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5 says that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? When you're filled with the Holy Spirit you speak to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; you sing, make melody in your heart to the Lord. You come to worship and your heart is lifted up, and you love the music; and that is the work of the Spirit in you.

But there's another thing here, a specific, very specific thing that Paul is going to say to you. Yes, we've experienced His instruction, His leading, His comfort, and His feeling. We've even experienced His conviction. Convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. But Paul wants you to look at this, and I doubt whether you've really thought this one through.

How do you know when you're saved? Because you have the Spirit of God in your heart. How do you know He's in your heart? "Because He's in your heart crying, 'Abba! Father!'" That's not some generic idea, that is a very specific statement: "Abba! Father!"

The Holy Spirit in you is crying. The verb here means a loud, urgent cry from someone in profound suffering, someone in fear, someone terrified, someone in pain, someone in loss, someone who is deeply needy; that's the word. And what the Word of God is telling us here is that, "You know you're saved when you get to the point of suffering, and your instant response is to cry out, 'Abba,' which means that you are saying, 'Papa.'" That's the Aramaic diminutive. You're saying, "Daddy." This is the evidence that you are a true son of God; you rush to your Father's arms. You know He loves you, you know He's your Father, you know He has all the resources.

Unbelievers don't do that. An unbeliever might say, "Oh, God," but not, "Abba." An unbeliever might get mad at whatever god he thinks exists. But in the deepest and darkest experiences of believers, they cry out to God.

This is all of our lives, isn't it? This is what we do. This is what we do. And here when you do that, notice in verse 6, it is the Spirit of His Son crying, "Abba, Father," in you." He has linked with your faith, and He's crying in you. The Holy Spirit literally in you sends you rushing into the presence of God. This is how we live our lives.

I think back; there's some dramatic things in my life. My son Mark was told – I was told he had a brain tumor, it could be fatal. I didn't question God. I didn't get angry with God, I just ran to God. I just ran to Him in my heart and in my prayers, prayer and fasting for days and days.

When Patricia had a car accident and broke her neck C2-C3, my precious wife, there was no anger, I just ran to God. And that's the Spirit in me, sending me to my Father. That's not what nonbelievers do, that's what believers do. So the reality is, in the darkest of your hours, the reality of your salvation will have its most powerful proof.

I want to show you something further. Look at Romans 8:15, which I read a little bit ago, and we'll wrap up our thoughts. Romans 8:15. "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading us to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"

Wait a minute. Who's crying, "Abba, Father," in Galatians? The Holy Spirit. Who's crying, Abba, Father," here? We are. The Holy Spirit is crying, "Abba, Father," in Galatians; we're crying, "Abba, Father," here, which is to say that the Holy Spirit is operating through our faith.

When some people want to explain the Holy Spirit crying, they want to make it something outside of us. It's something inside of us. It is distinct; it's the Holy Spirit crying, "Abba, Father," Galatians. It's us crying, "Abba, Father," Romans. It's a distinction, but it's indistinguishable.

"It is" – according to Romans 8:16 – "the Spirit Himself testifying with our Spirit." There it is. It's the Spirit connected to our redeemed Spirit, and together the Spirit is empowering us to cry out to God. That's where that boldness to go to the throne of grace comes from.

There is not, in the life of a nonbeliever, any kind of filial attraction to God. There is not that fatherly draw. There is not that open-hearted, rushing into the arms of one you know loves you. It is both our faith and the Spirit's testimony together. It is both something apart from us, the cry of the Holy Spirit; and something within us, our own heart's cry. Again, it is a distinction without being distinguishable.

You say, "It's hard to understand that." I don't think so, and I'll show you why. Romans 10 says this in verse 9. Let's take the first part. "If you confess Jesus as Lord, you will be saved." Obviously includes believing God raised Him from the dead. "If you confess Jesus as Lord, you'll be saved." And you're to do that. I call on you: confess Jesus as Lord, and be saved. If you confess Jesus as Lord, you will be saved.

But listen to this. Listen to 1 Corinthians 12:3. "No one, no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." So it's you saying, "Jesus is Lord," in Romans 10; it's the Holy Spirit saying, "Jesus is Lord," in 1 Corinthians 12. It is the Holy Spirit empowering our faith. It's like all other acts of faith, all other acts of faith.

Reading the Word is an act of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Worshiping is an act of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Praying is an act of faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Crying out in need, crying from the depths of our broken hearts to God in sorrow. It's not something we do alone, it's a partnership with the Holy Spirit, it's an inexplicable one. But it's the same as all other connection.

I don't live my Christian life, the Holy Spirit lives it in and through me, and yet it's not apart from me. It is a distinction without being distinguishable. First Peter 1 calls this being distressed, "the proof of your faith being more precious than gold."

You want to know whether your faith's real? In your darkest hour, when you run to a loving Father and pour out your heart, you are crying, "Abba! Father!" That's the evidence that the Spirit is in you. Only truly saved believers do that.

Final illustration. Turn to Mark 14 and verse 36. They're in Gethsemane. Verse 33 says, "Jesus began to be distressed and troubled. He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and watch.'" This is the darkest hour in the entire life of Christ up to this point. This is the deepest, darkest hour in His life.

“He went a little beyond,” – verse 35 – “fell to the ground, began to pray.” In the deepest, darkest moment of His life, anticipating the bearing of the sins of all who would ever believe through human history, experiencing the fury and the wrath of God, the fury and wrath that all hell could never eliminate. But He would have to absorb in three hours of darkness.

In anticipation of the horrors of that, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood; in the hour of His deepest agony, what does He say in verse 36? He was saying over and over, “Abba! Father! Abba! Father!” This is the only time recorded in the New Testament that Jesus ever said, “Abba,” to His Father. And it’s because it’s connected to the deepest, darkest sorrows of life. And even Jesus in that horrendous situation ran to His Father.

You are a son, because the Spirit is in you. You know the Spirit is in you: yes, because He leads you; yes, because He teaches you; yes, because He comforts you; yes, because He convicts you. But specifically, you know He’s in you, because in your stress and disappointment and sorrow and pain, you run to the Father, and you say, “Papa! Daddy!” You say it without fear. You say it with love. You say it out of the desperation of your need. All fear is removed, and you run into the arms of your true Father.

Lord God, we are blessed beyond comprehension at so many levels and so many ways. But we seem to be unable to exhaust all the ways that You demonstrate your love to us. Every time we turn around some new reality of Scripture jumps out at us and sets our hearts on fire. We understand the fellowship of the burning heart, because our hearts burn within us when You speak with us through Your Word.

We thank You for the unambiguous and blunt gospel. We thank You because it’s clear to us. We’re sinful; we need a Savior; there is a Savior. He has the power to save. And we can even know that He has saved us, because we cry, “Papa! Daddy! Abba!” Just to think that we, unworthy sinners, would rush into the Holy of Holies because You are our loving Father.

And the Holy Spirit has granted us by His presence in us that rich assurance and confidence. There are no words for us to express our gratitude. May we rejoice in our true salvation. We give You all the praise. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).