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**That You May Know**  
**Part 5 – Blessed Assurance**  
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today we finish a series we started a month ago out of 1 John. If you have your bibles, turn to 1 John: 5. We are finishing this today, speaking on *Blessed Assurance*. We should always take an offering right after singing a hymn. That's what I tell them. Get that going right away. Those senior adults are like "Take me There." I hope the song of your heart today is "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long."

You've heard me share this before. There are going to be those in heaven you didn't expect to see there. There are also going to be people who didn't expect to see you there. And today, across this campus, and online, there are three groups of people among us today and in this room and across campus, and we want to talk to each one today.

There are those who are secure in their salvation, but not sure. They've struggled with doubt. That's one of the reasons we did this series. Our desire for this series was so that you may know, believer in Christ Jesus, that you can walk with confidence in your salvation. But then there are those in this room and I'll be honest with you, these are the ones that keep me up at night.

There are those who are sure... They are like, "Hey I go to church, and I've been here for a while, and I live my life however I want to live it." They think because of something they prayed maybe years ago or something... "I'm pretty sure. I think, I'm sure." But not secure. This is what we don't want you to hear one day – "Depart from me, worker of iniquity, I never knew you."

Here's what we want. And this is the many. the song in your heart already is this third group. And many of you can sing that song we just sang with passion and conviction. There are those that are secure. They have placed faith alone in Christ alone. They know of their salvation, and they are sure of it. Jesus is the source of their salvation and the source of their assurance. They trust in no one else and nothing else for their salvation.

Last week, I was on a trip with my daughter. We ended it in Tampa, so Monday morning, we woke up and the Tampa Club Marriot opened at 6:30. Some of you are like, "Oh, big deal, he goes to a club." It's powdered eggs and fake bacon, so don't get all excited. But I was going to be the first one in there at 6:30.

I walk in there... My family tells me that I sing a lot in public without even knowing it. I do know it because I'll be in a store and I think I'm by myself and I'll be singing and someone walks down the aisle. I'll be like, "Oh, sorry," and I'll stop" and they'll be like, "Hey don't stop for me."

I walked into this club. I have a voice that carries. I wasn't humming this song, I was, with a stage presence, singing "Blessed Assurance" at full strength, thinking I was alone. The lady walks out of the back room and begins harmonizing with me. It was kind of shocking as I was getting these powdered eggs. I stopped and she was like, "Don't stop!" We sang the first verse and chorus of Blessed Assurance together in the club. And when we finished, she goes, "Honey, do you know this one?" And we sang together "What a friend we have in Jesus." The problem was she was singing Aretha Franklin's version, and I was singing Alan Jackson's version. But we made it work, that's all I'm trying to tell you. This is 6:30 in the morning. And I mean the joy in that room... I go, "Ma'am, I've never had this happen. I mean like word for word. She said this, and it's been my sacred echo all week. She goes, "I've always believed if you have a song in your heart, you'll never have a bad day." So, I added Rice Krispies to my breakfast. Other people started coming in and I'm like, "We should probably be done with this right now.

By the way, this lady has worked for Marriot for 27 years. I just wonder what joy she has brought to that room or wherever she has been stationed. As I'm leaving, I looked at her and I go, "Ma'am, have a good day." She goes, "Already am." That is our prayer at this church, that you would leave here today able, with a song in your heart, to sing "This is my story, this is my song. Praising my Savior all the day long."

Here's where we start today. **What God says about me is more important than what I feel about myself.** We want you to have assurance of your salvation. Not because of what you are feeling, but because of what God says. And that you take his testimony and his word for it. Now, this is what we do in counseling all the time. People come in with feelings driving the bus. They're not feeling this or feeling that. It's one of the greatest joys if you do any sort of ministry with people, whether it's marriage ministry, family ministry, working people through trauma, or maybe a divorce. Whatever the situation may be, you find yourself listening to these people talk about lies, lies that have been written on their heart that they believe and that they move forward in. And we get to declare what the truth is.

A man once came to D.L. Moody and said he was worried because he didn't feel saved. Moody asked, "Was Noah safe in the ark? "Certainly, he was," the man replied. D.L. Moody said, "Well, what made him safe? His feeling? Or the Ark? The inquirer got the point. He said, "How foolish I've been."

It's not my feeling. It is Christ alone who saves. And that is where I'm resting today.

That's why when we worship, I need you to know this. I know we sang a hymn today, we sang more modern worship songs, and I appreciate all the work that Katie, Matt, and the team do with our worship each and every week. They labor over songs. We discuss songs and lyrics because the goal of worship is not just to stir our affection. It's not just to stir our emotions. It's to stir our affections with truth, to stir our affections toward Christ, not just toward what we're feeling. We want to worship in truth being stirred in us. So, that's where we're going today as we start with 1 John 5: 1. And it couldn't be any clearer.

**5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...** This takes us back to what John recorded in the interaction between Nicodemus and Jesus in the gospel of John 3. What did Jesus say? Jesus said, "If you want to see the kingdom of heaven, you must be born again. If you want to enter the kingdom of heaven, you must be born again." And here it is again. What does it take to be born of God, to become a child of god, to be called a son or daughter of god? You must believe that Jesus is the Christ. You must have faith and trust in Jesus. No one else, nothing else. Jesus is the source of your salvation. And it says it says, **...everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.** So, you're going to see these three linked today. Your faith in Jesus, love for the Father, and we looked at this two weeks ago, our love and care for and enduring and bearing with one another. We are called to this.

And my love for you and your love for me and the way we interact with one another is the overflow of this salvation. We need to know though that loving one another is an act of obedience, not feelings. You do a lot in your life that you don't feel. How many of you got up and went to work this week and didn't feel like it? You do the right thing. As Gary Smalley taught us – always do the right thing and let your feelings catch up. Because if we lived our lives with, "I don't feel... No, we went to work even when we didn't feel like it.

How many of you got up and fed a baby in the middle of the night and didn't feel like it? You do the right thing all the time without feeling it. How about this one? If you had good parents, your parents told you how to behave toward another sibling. And they would say, "Don't hit your brother." And you had to obey that, whether you felt it or not. The feeling was, *I'm going to punch him in the face.* And he *had it coming, and he deserves it,* but you obey your parents.

One last one. We're in Tax season. You need to pay your taxes. There's not a person in here that feels like paying their taxes. If you were to tell me you look forward to that, I would stab you in the neck with a fork because you're lying. It's not true. You do the right thing. You obey when you don't feel it.

And we don't love others based on how they treat us. We love others because it's been commanded by God. **Brothers and sisters in Christ, love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples.**

We also don't love others based on how they respond to our love. Why add that? Because a lot of people started with, "I did the right thing, I said the right thing. I showed them love. They didn't reciprocate, I'm done with them." Nope. I continue to show love.

<sup>2</sup> **This is how we know that we love the children of God...** Now watch how this is linked. **...by loving God and carrying out his commands.** It's an act of obedience. It's an overflow of our salvation. It's not of works that we are saved. We'll see in just a minute. This isn't the source of our salvation; it's the overflow of our salvation. <sup>3</sup> **In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands...** We need to know this today. This is a fundamental truth we need to know as we build upon this for our assurance. **...And his commands are not burdensome...** They don't weigh us down. They actually do just the opposite. They free us. God's commands lift burdens and bring joy. But are you always feeling that? Do you believe that? Going one step further, God's commands bring freedom to the believer.

Let's give an example of this in Ephesians from Paul for just a second. Let's look at what really brings us into bondage. ***Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, and slander, along with every form of malice.*** This is what weighs you down. Some of you right now are weighed down by this. You have resentment and bitterness in your heart toward someone. You've had it for a long time. You're not free. You're like, "Yeah, but you should see some of the fights I have with them in my head. I win every single one of them." That's bitterness and resentment. Rage and anger, brawling. Some of you have gone to fisticuffs with people over it. Slander – "I'm just going to go online and say whatever I want about them, whether it's true or not." This is what weighs you down.

When we follow the commands of God, this is what actually frees us and keeps us walking in the light. It goes on in Verse 32 – Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

One quote I read this week fits this. It helps us understand this freeing that comes with obeying the command to love one another. "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that that prisoner was you."

Some of you are in the bondage and the rage and the anger and the malice and the slander, the bitterness, the resentment is weighing you down. Here's where we start today, and you have to understand this if feelings have been driving the bus when it comes to assurance of your salvation.

God wants what's best for you. We understand this as a parent. I promise you this. No parent in this church got up last night and looked at the other parent and said, "You know tomorrow, whatever we can do to make their lives miserable, let's do that. Today was pretty good. They whined a little bit, but I think we can turn it up a notch." No parent is doing that. Some of you are like, "You don't know my parents."

I see it all the time, right? Something your parents were saying or doing when you were young, years later, you look back and go, *they were smarter than I thought. They really did have my best interest in mind.*

I had a counselor in the church come up to me and I loved it. I appreciated her heart. She said, "I've worked with a lot of people who feel weighed down and they're going to take this statement that God wants what's best for you, after what they've been through, whether it be divorce or a trauma, and be like, "He wants that for me?" Listen, God wants what's best for you. "I went through a terrible divorce." God didn't want that divorce. The brokenness in the relationship, the brokenness in the world, but guess what? He wants what's best for you moving forward. You're not done. You've heard people say it all the time. Your story is not done being written. God wants what's best for you, just like a parent wants what's best for a child.

Years ago, we got a letter from the school. I don't know what the sickness was, but something was going on and there was a preventive medicine that your kids could take that would take care of it, knock it out before it ever happened. So, Amy went and bought it for the kids and set up the little shots on the counter. It was nasty. It was chalky and we're sitting there looking at it. Corynn and Carson were small, and they were whining and complaining. They would not take it. You know, if you have kids, that they

sat there and look at medicine forever. I finally left the room. Amy was just going to have to deal with that. That's some of the parenting I'll teach you next week – when to get out of there. All I know is Amy was trying everything she could to convince them this was good for them. Even in the trials that we go through, you can learn from this, you can grow from this. But she's trying to convince them you've got to do this. They won't listen. Do you know she did? I'm in the other room listening. I hear Amy say these words, and this is what got them to take the medicine. She's exasperated. I hear her going, "Do you want worms coming out of your butt? Both of our kids, like Wyatt Earp at the tombstone saloon, just downed all the medicine.

Why is this important? Do you believe God? Do you believe the testimony of God? Do you believe that his commands are not burdensome? This is important because we are not just resting on Jesus as the source of our salvation. What God says about Jesus and our salvation is important. And to rest on that testimony.

**<sup>4</sup> for everyone born of God overcomes the world.** Why is this so important? If you're going through a tough time right now, God wants what's best for you, read to the end of the book. We know how the story ends. That's why we know and can rest and have assurance.

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. ***This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*** **<sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

So, the bottom line – you can know you have eternal life because God says you have it. It's not your feelings, but your conviction, your understanding, your belief. God said it, I believe it. God says it, I'm walking in it.

Now, when we go to Verses 6 – 10, it's very important as we jump into this that you understand the background of this and why this is worded the way it's worded. In that day, there was a false teacher who taught that Jesus became Christ at his baptism, but that was removed from him right before he went to the cross. It's important to have that understanding as you read these next verses because we are declaring Jesus. We don't even believe in the incarnational sonship of Christ. Jesus didn't become the son of God at his birth. He was there at the foundations of the earth. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, John's being very clear. Know who Jesus is. Be clear, So, it will make sense now when you read.

**<sup>6</sup> This is the one who came by water and blood...** Water referring to his baptism, blood referring to his death on the cross. —***Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, ... So he's clearing that up. ...but by water and blood...*** Meaning on the cross, Jesus, the Son of God died for you. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. That you have eternal life and you're sure of it. ***And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*** He clears this up even more... **<sup>7</sup> For there are three that testify...** So, all three of these are together. **<sup>8</sup> the Spirit, the water...** We have a human, historical account of the baptism of Jesus... ***and the blood...*** We have human, historical accounts of the crucifixion. ***...and the three are in agreement.*** **<sup>9</sup> We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.** **<sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.**

Timothy Keller puts it this way and maybe this will settle it for some of you who have struggled with doubt and the assurance of your salvation. Timothy says, in *The Reason for God – belief in the age of skepticism*. It is not the strength of your faith but the object of your faith that actually saves you. Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch.”

In other words, we look to the quality of our faith when we need to be looking to Jesus, the one who saves us.

An elderly man once came to Henry Ironside and said, “I will not go on unless I know I’m saved. I want a definite witness, something I can’t be mistaken about.” Ironside replied, “Suppose you had a vision of an angel who told you your sins were forgiven? Would that be enough to rest on?” The guy said, “Yes, I think it would be. An angel should be right.”

Ironside continued. “But suppose on your death bed, Satan came and said, “I was that angel transformed to deceive you. What would you say then?” The man was speechless.

Ironside then told him, “God has given us something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given us his son who died for our sin, and he has testified in his own word that if we trust him, all our sins are gone.

Ironside then read 1 John 5: 13 which we’ll get to in a moment. You may know that you have eternal life. Again, that is written to believers that you may know you have eternal life.

Then he said, “Is that enough to rest on?” it is a letter from heaven expressly to you. God’s spirit used that to bring assurance that day to that man’s heart.

We do not earn eternal life, we receive it. Why? Because it is a gift. It is a gift, and we need to understand, as we move to the last three verses we are going to look at today, starting in Verse **11. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** <sup>12</sup> **Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

Romans 6:23 puts it this way. **For the wages of sin is death but the gift of god is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** It’s not to be earned. You don’t earn a gift, you receive a gift. There are those in here and across campus today in all of our gatherings and online who are trusting in everything else. It’s like Jesus and... You say, “I come to church all the time. This is got to be what it takes.” You hear us say it all the time. Standing in a garage doesn’t make you a car. Sitting in a church doesn’t make you a Christian.

“Ted, I give. Certainly, that’s it.” “Ted, my parents were believers.? “Ted, I was baptized as a child.” We call all of this salvation by addition, salvation by subtraction. Salvation by addition is “Ted, let me tell you about all the good things I’ve done. Salvation by subtraction is like, “Let me tell you all the things I’ve walked away from. The people I’ve walked away from. The addictions I’ve walked away from. The lifestyles I’ve walked away from.”

Let me tell you that salvation doesn’t come by addition, salvation doesn’t come by subtraction. Salvation comes by Jesus and Jesus alone.

And that's why we read in Ephesians 2, ***For it is by grace you have been saved through faith.*** Again, it's this gift. It's not from yourself. Whatever you're pointing to, I want you to denounce all of that today. It is a gift of God, not by works so that you cannot boast about it.

We end in 1 John 5: 13 – John says,

***13 I write these things to you who believe...*** So, it's writing to believers who are secure in Christ Jesus to give them assurance of their salvation in eternal life. ***Those who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know...*** You're secure and sure ***...that you have eternal life.*** This is what we want for every single person leaving here today. Secure in Christ Jesus, you have repented of your sin. You have denounced all the ways you're held to. Today you're saying there is no one else and nothing else other than Jesus that I cry out to for my salvation. I receive this gift today. And then I rest in Jesus and God's testimony about Jesus for the assurance of my salvation. So, the song in your heart, whether you sing it in public or not, is "This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long." What I love about this is if you keep reading in 1 John 5, you're going to see that the assurance of your salvation brings great confidence. It will bring confidence to your prayer life. That's why I love, going back to my friend in Tampa... "What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

"So, how do I know for sure, Ted, that I'm saved from my sin? How do I know for sure that heaven is my home? How can I be certain? I want this."

The assurance of your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. You can't earn it, you can only receive it. It's not from your feelings. We've learned that if anything. Our feelings come and go. You don't have to suppress your feelings, just don't let your feelings drive the bus in all of this. Know the truth. Don't move toward in mysticism where you're looking for signs and even angels... No, with God's word. God with the testimony God has of his son for the assurance of your salvation, trusting in no one and nothing else.

What I love about this is if ***14 This is the confidence, we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*** ***15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.***

As I pray, if you've never accepted Jesus as Savior, never repented of your sins, and trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that today would be the day of your salvation. Remember, baptism is an act of obedience. It's not to be saved by something we do but as a first step of obedience. It's making an outward profession of an inward decision. It's proclaiming, it's stepping into the water. And when you do it, you're pointing to Jesus and saying, "He is the one who has saved me." And it's declaring that to family, friends, and to the church. That today is the day of your salvation, and you want to be baptized.

Father, we have so desired in this series for people to trust in Jesus as Savior. It can be very overwhelming, in a church our size with the faith backgrounds and traditions represented here each week, to get a lot of questions and a lot of people just confused on the issue of salvation. We hope there is great clarity today that people would see this as a gift, this is grace that saves us through faith.

We just pray people receive this free gift and no longer count on their works. And that after salvation their love for you and the children of God is stirred. Their affections for the church are stirred. Their desire to obey your word is stirred as they grow in their new faith, as many take the step today to step into the water and declare their decision to follow Jesus.

We thank you for what you continue to do in this church. Continue to use Woodland Hills, whether it be in song or in word or actions as we go out that we are declaring this is my story, this is my song, and with everything we say and everything we do, we're praising our savior each and every day throughout this town. We're grateful for it.

We pray all this in the authority of the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.