

# A Reason to Hope

By Henry Mahan

**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 3:15

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If you would like to open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter three. Preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ or what I thought was the gospel of Christ I followed basically the pattern of all fundamental and evangelical churches. That is, You bring a message with one end and goal in view and that is to get people to make a decision for Christ, to—as we said—accept Jesus. That is the goal of the entire service from the Sunday school up through the morning service through the special music, the message, the illustrations, the points, the poems and everything was to bring it to this final climax. And the choir would sing softly and the preacher would stand before the congregation and plead with people to come forward and accept Jesus and be saved. Come to the front and be saved.

Well, one day about 31 years ago the Lord was pleased by his grace to teach me the gospel of his glory, of his grace, that salvation, redemption was not something that men did for God, but something God through Christ for his glory did for men. It was not just a walking an aisle, a taking a man's hand or making a profession or giving mental agreement or assent to some facts or even going through certain religious motions and ceremonies. But it was a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. It was a new birth. It was a new creation in Christ Jesus. It was just like God speaking light out of darkness and God creating a world out of nothing, that men who are saved are born of God. They were brought forth from the grave by the voice of Christ. They were made new creatures in Christ Jesus. They were eternally and gloriously and finally saved.

And so I quit using these methods. I know we have to have some sort of methods, some sort of response, some sort of confession of Christ which is baptism obviously, but I quit using these methods. And since that time I have quit inviting people to go anywhere to be saved except to Christ. Not to come to me or to the front of the church or to an altar or to an ordinance or to a law, but to Christ the person. And then if God has done a work of grace in their hearts and redeemed them and brought them to know him and trust him, to confess him publicly and let people know about it.

But needless to say most of what we call successful preachers and evangelists today are still using these fundamentalist methods. They are getting people to make professions. And just this past week one of them wrote this in his monthly paper and I want you to listen to this. This is one of the nationally known, internationally known, world famous evangelists who uses these methods. And understand what I am saying. There was a day when you used them and I used them. So we are pitiful and trying to be courteous. And I

am not censuring him. I am simply saying that he is in darkness as we were in darkness. And he confesses himself that he is in darkness and they are in darkness.

Now listen to this statement. He said, "Fifty percent of our church members today could die and be buried and it would take six months for the church to find it out."

Now what he is confessing there is that 50% of the church members are lost, unsaved and do not know God. Actually the percentage...he was being charitable. It could be a lot higher than that and he knows it.

Who's fault is it, Jeff? Who made them church members? Who brought them down the aisle? Who gave them a hope? Who talked into profession? He did.

If I stood before this congregation and said, "Fifty percent of the members of this church are lost," well, Jay Windman would look at me and say, "It's your fault if you have been here 30 years. They everyone came into the church under your ministry. If they got a false profession, you gave it to them. If they have got a false hope, you gave it to them." If the yare betting on a false foundation, you laid it." Isn't that right?

So any preacher who stands before you and confesses that 50, 60 or 70% of his converts are lost, then he is a false prophet. He is a false prophet. That's not being uncharitable. That's just quoting their own words. Fifty percent and the percentage he knows and you know is higher than that.

I picked up the telephone a few weeks ago, two weeks ago, three weeks ago. A friend of mine in another state talked to me on the phone about his attitude, about his spirit, about his conduct. And he kept talking. I kept listening. And finally he said this. "Well, maybe I don't have anything."

And I paused just long enough for a little effect and I said, "That's possible."

And there was another long pause. See, the preacher...when the fellow says that the preacher is supposed to say, "Oh, no, you're saved." He is supposed to say that.

I don't say that anymore. I take men at their word.

"Maybe I don't have anything."

"That's possible."

And he paused a little while and then he said, "Well, maybe I'm just not saved at all."

I said, "That's possible."

My friend, the Word of God tells us this. Now listen. The apostle Peter. If you will turn over there to 2 Peter 1, just a page or two over. He says in 2 Peter one verse 10 and 11,

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If you do these things you will never, you will never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Don't take your relationship with God for granted. That's the most dangerous thing you could do. I tell you every one of us every once in a while pick up our bankbook, our checking book, especially our wives have been working on it a week or two and check to see if we have got anything in there. We take inventory.

See, you men in business, you don't just take for granted that the supply room is full. You check it out. You don't take for granted that your business is in the black, you hire an auditor. You keep account of these physical things. And yet you sit carelessly and presumptuously say, “Well, I'm saved. I was fixed up when I was 10 years old. I joined the church. I'm saved. I am on my road to heaven.”

The most important factor and part and area of your life you neglect the most. Peter says, “You give diligence.”

I would give more concern to the storehouse of my soul than I would the storehouse of my factory if I was you because it won't cost you too much if that business is bankrupt, but if your soul is bankrupt you are in trouble. It won't cost you too much if that checkbook is in the red, but if your soul is in the red you are in trouble. It won't cost you too much if you...most of you ladies haven't gone a year without a physical checkup. You go to the doctor every year. You care more for your bodies than you do your souls. That's dangerous. It would be a whole lot better for them to discover you had cancer than to discover you don't know Christ Jesus. I'd heap rather have cancer from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet than have a leprosy of soul that does not know God. Hadn't you?

Well, that's what he is saying here. And then over in 2 Corinthians 11, let's look at 2 Corinthians 13. Listen to this, 2 Corinthians 13. It says this in 2 Corinthians 13:5. “Examine yourselves.” Now we don't go to a physician or even to a preacher for this. We go to the Word of God. We are our own examiners. Now here is where we so often we mess up. We are sitting around trying to discover whether somebody else is saved or not. We are trying to figure out whether somebody else is lost or not. But you don't go to the preacher and say, “Preacher, do you think I'm saved.” It's not like going to a doctor and saying, “Now, doctor, you examine me and see if I am healthy.” And he examines you and he says, “You are all right. You are all right.” Pats you on the head, “You are all right. You are in good shape. Fit as a fiddle.”

We love to hear that. We love for the doctor to say, “You've got the body of a 30 year old.” You know, that...whoa, we leave that feeling good. “You go the heart of a 25 year old.”

But you don't go...and a lot of preachers are doing that. People come to them with their systems and they say, "Now this, that and the other."

He says, "Well, you're saved. You are all right."

But we are our own physician in this case. We examine ourselves and we use the Word of God to examine ourselves. That's where it is. See, "Examine yourselves," verse five, "whether you be in the faith." Prove your own selves.

Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you that is unless you are a reprobate?

Now look at our text in 1 Peter chapter three. This is something that needs to go on all the time. And I am not exempting the pastor. He, of all people, had better examine himself. I am not exempting the assistant pastor. I am not exempting you Sunday school teachers and you deacons and elders. We, of all people, are in most danger. Do you know that? Because the doctor can operate.

And this happens. They get hardened. A new nurse...One girl told me, she said, the first time they were teaching her she went to nurses school and they were teaching her to give a shot and when they put the needle in an orange she fainted. They are so squeamish, you know, about blood at first. They have to run out of the operating room holding their mouths and stomach. But that old doctor has been in there 40 years and he can slash them open, you know. No problem to him. This is [?] let the blood flow. Hardened.

I've seen preachers that way, Sunday school. You fellows have been around a long time. You better be careful. You better be careful. You can become gospel hardened. And I'll tell you that the good news of Christ better be as sweet to you as the first time you heard it, maybe more so. Now that's dangerous. That's dangerous. I have been around preachers that...in fact the only time they mention the gospel, the Word of God is some sort of levity and lightness and frivolity and foolishness, joke about everything having to do with the kingdom of God. They have become gospel hardened, gospel hardened. That's dangerous.

In verse 15 he says, "Sanctify," 1 Peter 3:15, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart." Give God the glory. Magnify and exalt his glory in your heart. Where? In your heart. Not with your mouth only, in your heart. Sanctify the Lord. Give God the glory. He is holy, sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent, just. We don't make him so. We regard him as so.

The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready, be ready. It doesn't say walk around and have a sign on your lapel, "I am a Christian." Be ready to give an answer. I am always worried about the fellow making the most noise, you know. He may be unsure of his position. But the fellow that knows where he stands, whom he believes, upon whom he is building. He is

quiet and confident. He doesn't have to have a bumper sticker reminding him of Jesus. He doesn't have to have a cross in his pocket when he gets in trouble to feel it. He is ready to give an answer. He doesn't walk around with an answer blowing it like a horn all the time or written across his forehead, on his lapel or on his bumper. He is ready to give an answer. He is ready.

And what is he ready for? He is ready to give to any man an answer that asks him a reason for his hope.

“Are you a Christian?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How do you know? Are you a child of God?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Give me a reason. Do you have...is your name in the book of life? Do you have hope of eternal life? Do you have a hope of the resurrection? Do you have a hope of reigning with Christ?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tell me why. Tell me why.”

And I will tell you the way he gives it. He doesn't give that old, “I despise this present day religion with a passion.” That cocky, cocksure. “One door and only one. I'm on the inside. Which side are you? I know I am saved and sure for heaven as if I was already there.”

Really now?

Oh, I tell you. How do you give this answer? With that cocky presumptuous attitude of pride? You made the decision, you know you are saved?

No, sir. You do it with meekness and fear, with meekness and fear. Be ready. Sanctify God in your heart. And be ready to give an answer. How? With meekness and fear and trembling.

“Are you saved?”

“By the grace of God I am.”

“Are you a child of God?”

“Yes, sir. I don't deserve to be, but I am.”

“Are you born again?”

”Yes, sir. But it is by his grace.”

And I will tell you this. If one sheep of Christ could fall away, I would fall 1000 a times a day. That’s meekness and fear.

And I tell you this, I tell you this. Yesterday I have a hope of eternal life, but it is all in Christ and through Christ and by Christ and for the glory of Christ and if God almighty is not merciful to me I will fail even yet. Huh? Do you believe that? I do.

Now that’s that meekness and trembling and fear. I didn’t deserve it. It’s not what I did for him. It’s what he did for me.

All right. Let’s...let me give you something here. You ask...you ask...he says...he says, “Be ready to give an answer to any man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

All right. What kind of answer do get from the average person. Now let’s just...I like to preach to present day people. I know I can talk about Job and Hosea and Micah and Nehemiah and all these fellows and David killed the giant with the slingshot and all of that, you know. We can always say, “Well, I’m glad David did it, you know?”

Let’s come down to 1981, June the seventh. Ask the average person in the congregation and say, “Are you a Christian?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Give me a reason.”

“Well, I believe in God. I believe in God. I believe the Bible is the Word of God.”

Well, the devil does, too. That’s not a good enough reason. James says, “You believe in one God you do well. The devil believes in one God and trembles.”

Or you come to another man. You say...the first man said, “Well, I’m a Christian. I’m not a heathen. I believe in God. I believe God created the world. I believe the Bible is God’s Word. I believe in heaven and hell.”

The devil does, too.

Then you come to another man. “Are you a Christian? What’s your reason for hope?”

“Well,” he says, “I was raised in the church. I was raised in the church. My parents were church going people.”

Maybe...and we have got different denominations. Now the little Methodist or Presbyterian or Episcopalian boy would say, "I was raised in the church and I was sprinkled when I was a child. I was sprinkled. My mother and daddy were faithful to church, had me sprinkled when I was a certain age they had me confirmed or whatever they do, catechized."

The little Baptist boy would say, "Well, I raised in the church, went to cradle roll, nursery, primaries, juniors and then we had a revival meeting and all the juniors met with the evangelist that Sunday morning and I made a profession and I was baptized. I was eight, nine, 10 years old and I joined the church. And I have been in church all my life. I have attended. I have been faithful to the church."

Ok, that's your reason? You want to hold it right there? Saul of Tarsus could say every one of those things. He said, "My momma and daddy were Hebrews. I was raised in the church. I went to school, to a Christian school or a religious school, Gamaliel. I was a nice boy. I was moral. Concerning the law I was blameless, but lost as lost could be."

All right, another man.

"Are you a Christian?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give me a reason."

"Well, I made a profession of faith and I was baptized. I made a profession of faith. I...one night I was listening to a man preach and I got disturbed and convicted about my sins and went down the aisle and I shook the preacher's hand, accepted Jesus and I was baptized."

So was Simon Magus. He did the same thing. He heard the apostle preach. He got disturbed and convicted. He made a profession of faith and a little while later we find him trying to buy the Holy Ghost.

This is what you run into so often. These people accept or they say they accept Jesus. That's their term. They make a profession of faith. They get religion.

And you know nine times out of 10 the acid test that comes to them later on has something to do with hard cold cash. That is usually what it boils down to. And they prove to be hypocrites. They prove to reprobates. That little old profession just wouldn't stand. It just wouldn't endure the trial. It has something to do with this world, with materialism or something like that.

Here is another man. He says, "I am a Christian. I am a teacher, a Bible teacher. I have

gone to Bible school. I have gone to...I have studied to be a teacher, a preacher. I am an officer in the Church.”

Well, so was Judas. Boy, that makes you tremble doesn't it? So was Judas. He held the highest office that the church has ever given, apostle. He was treasurer of the church, an honest man. So was Demas. He held an office in the church.

“Well, preacher, I believe the Bible and I study the Bible and I tithe and I live a moral life.”

So did the Pharisees. They were soul winners, too. Yes, they were soul winners. Christ leveled his finger in their face and he said, “You compass sea and land to make proselytes to your religion, sea and land.” They didn't just drive buses up and down the street. They caught boats. They compassed sea and land winning souls, winning souls.

Well, I tell you this. Well, wait a minute. “I have done some good works. I have done some good works. I...we built a church.” I know people that don't attend church anywhere that will tell you they are Christians and they will say, “I built...I helped a preacher build a church. We built a church. We built an educational building. We built an orphanage. We did this, that and the other thing.”

That's the very thing that people said at the judgment in Matthew seven. “Lord, we did many wonderful works in your name.”

“I never knew you. I never knew you. That's not a good enough reason.”

Well, here is another one people give. “Well, I'm not afraid to die. I'm not afraid to die. I'm not going to hell. I am not going to hell. I am not afraid to die. I am not afraid of the judgment.”

Read Isaiah 28. Our Lord said, “Ye scornful rulers of this people, hear the Word of God. You say, ‘We are not afraid to die. We are in agreement with hell. When the overthrowing scourge of God's wrath passeth through it won't come nigh unto us.’” He said, “I say unto you, ‘You have a false refuge and your hiding place is a hiding place of lies.’”

The bed is too short and the cover is too narrow.

“Well, brother Mahan, give us some scriptural reasons for hope.”

I'm glad you asked. Turn to John chapter six, John chapter six. And when I prepared this message I prepared it for myself, not for you. You can listen in. I prepared it, honestly, for myself.

What's my reason? What's my reason? And I should be able to give a scriptural reason.

All right, John chapter six, verse 66. Have you got it? John 6:66, “From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. And these were these...now these were the 50%, Jay. Here is the 60%. They quit. And you folks that have been around a while, you have seen a lot of folks quit, haven’t you? They quit. These folks quit. They left. They left.

All right. There were 12 disciples remaining with Christ and he turned to them, verse 67, and said to the 12, “Will you also go away? Will you? Will you? Will you go away? Henry Mahan, will you go away? Charlie Miller, will you go away? Will you go away, Ralph Little? Will you go away?”

What’s your answer? If I don’t have my way I’ll go away.

No here is their answer. Listen to it. Then Simon Peter answered and said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

That’s the reason, Cecil. And that’s the reason I’m not leaving. There is no place to go, no place to go. I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in him a resting place. He has made me glad.

I believe he is that Christ. That’s what Peter said. I have no reason to leave. I have found, I have found what I have been looking for. I have found in him the ransom.

Now I don’t have any confidence in my flesh or your flesh. I haven’t found my refuge in the church. I found it in Christ. This church may fold up. It may fail. It may pass away. Spurgeon’s church is gone. Calvin’s church is gone. Luther’s church is gone. Wesley’s church is gone. Brainerd’s church is gone. McCheyne’s church is gone. But the Lord’s church still stands. He is the Christ.

They all began to leave for one reason or another. They got their bellies full and left. They saw the miracles and left. They got their socializing done and left. They are all these things. They turned to the 12 and said, “Are you going, too?”

And Peter said, “To whom? To whom? Thou hast the words of life and we believe and are sure that thou art thou Christ.”

When our Lord pinned down the Samaritan woman and he said, “You worship you know not what and so forth,” and when she broke down all her alibis and excuses and reasons were used up she finally said—and I believe with tears—“when the Christ comes, the Messiah, he will tell us.”

And Christ said, “I am he.

And she went running down to the village and she said, "Come. Come see a man that told me everything I have ever said and done and thought. Is not this the Christ?"

The Christ. That's what the Scriptures are all about, the Christ. That's the message of the ceremonies and sacrifice. The Christ. That's the message of the apostle. Peter stood at Pentecost and said, "God hath made this same Jesus whom you crucified Lord and Christ."

If thou shalt believe in thine heart that Jesus is the Christ, do you? That's my reason. That's my reason. The Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we may know him, the true and living God.

All right, secondly. Turn to 2 Timothy. Are you with me now? I think I can help both of us if you are because I am preaching to me and you. And I am interested in not building a congregation or building a name. I am interested in your coming to know Christ and I am interested in knowing him myself. Oh that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

All right, 2 Timothy 1:12. Paul says, "For this cause also I suffer these things. Nevertheless I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed. I know whom I have believed. And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Now there is a second reason for my hope. The first one is I believe and am sure that Jesus Christ is the Christ of whom the Scriptures speak, of whom the ceremonies and types of the Old Testament speak, of whom the prophets and apostles speak. He is that Christ, that Messiah, that Redeemer.

Second, I have committed all things to Christ. That's what Paul said. I am not ashamed. I haven't committed my soul to the Baptist church or the Catholic church or to Mary or the pope.

Like brother Joe Wilson said last night when he heard on the radio the holy father had been shot. He turned to some friends and says, "No, he hasn't either." That imposter over there has been shot, but the one of whom Christ spoke in John 17, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name thou whom thou hast given me." He hasn't been shot.

I have committed everything to him, everything.

Let me tell you something. My grandson will come over to the house. He is eight. He is eight this month. And I give him a little allowance. And the little boy is kind of careless with money. You know, you keep your money in your billfold and you pull out three or four five dollars and hand it to them and they'll wad it up and stick it in their bathing suit or something, you know. Whoo. It makes you cringe.

Or else they'll pick it and lay it down on the table, you know. Give them three or four dollars. They'll just lay it down on the table. And you'll say to him, this is what I say. I say, "Son, give that to your grandmother and let her keep it for you." What I am saying is, "I don't trust you with it. Let her hold it. I do trust her with it. She will protect it. She won't lose it. She'll keep it. And when you want to use it she'll have it."

This is what Paul is saying, "I have committed my soul to Christ. Everything of any value to me I have put in his hands. I can't be trusted with it."

Don't commit it to me. Don't commit it to a church. Don't commit it to anybody else. Take all your valuables. If you love that boy, commit him to Christ. If you love your soul, commit it to Christ. If you love your immortal, eternal life, give it to Christ. Put it all in him.

Barnard used to say, "Put all your eggs in one basket, but be sure it is the right basket. That's Christ. That's Christ."

That's what Paul is saying here. "I have committed my soul to Christ as my prophet to teach me God. I have committed my soul to Christ as my mediator to plead for me, as my high priest to sacrifice for me, as my king to reign over me, as my shepherd, provider, physician, redeemer, sovereign." It is the Lord. Let him do what he will.

That's pretty good reason to hope. That's pretty good reason. My money is safe that little boy says. It's not in my bathing suit. It's in the hands of my grandmother. And I [?].

He said, "My money is safe."

Where is it?

"I don't know, I stuck it under my bicycle seat."

No, sir. My grandma's got it and she wouldn't let nothing happen to it for the world. It's safe.

Well you say, "Give me a reason for your hope that your soul is safe."

My Lord's got it. I gave it to him. Put it in his hands. Vested it in his keeping and it is safe. It's safe. That's so.

All right, the third, the third thing. Look at John eight. I'll give you another reason for my hope, John chapter eight. And I believe yours, too. John chapter eight. Now notice I haven't said anything about a profession or joining up or anything like that.

"Well, preacher, you're not going to get any members that way."

Good. That's right, isn't it? Good. Boy, I'll tell you. Some folks just liable to meet Christ, though. Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't that be something? Oh, I just can't hardly contain myself when I think of somebody just liable to hear me and believe what I'm saying and lay hold on Christ. Wouldn't that be something? Wouldn't that be a thrill of somebody laid hold on Christ and you got to glory and met him and didn't know they was going to be there.

John 8:46. Look at this. "Which of you convinceth me of sin? Now if I'm telling the truth," this is our Lord speaking to the religious people. "If I'm telling the truth why don't you believe me? Why don't you believe me?"

Look at the next verse. "He that is of God heareth God's Word." That's a good reason. "He that is of God heareth God's Word." You don't hear them. You hear them not because you are not of God. You know one reason, you know one answer that I give for the reason for the hope that is in me? I believe that book. I really believe that book. I really, really do believe that book, Jay. I really believe that book. I don't understand everything that is in that, but I believe it. And I know that is something I didn't get...but flesh and blood didn't teach me that. It's a miracle of God's grace. But, my friend, I believe this book. I am as confident that what God says here is true as I see that hand in front of my face right now. I know it. I just believe it.

I don't have any trouble with young people. I don't have any trouble with evolution. I believe that book that says that God created the heavens and the earth. I believe that.

"Well, preacher, explain it."

I can't explain it, Jay. I believe it. I believe that man fell, Adam and Eve fell and God cast them out of the garden and they died spiritually. I believe that. That's sufficient for me. I believe that God told Adam he is going to give...going to send a man into this world to redeem sinners. I believe God gave Moses the 10 Commandments on that mountain. God wrote them with his finger in the stone. I believe that. I believe the Red Sea parted. I don't have any trouble with that. I believe the sun stood still. I believe the great fish swallowed Jonah. I believe he was delivered by the power of God. I believe David reigned in Jerusalem. I believe Jesus Christ was born of Mary. I believe that. I believe it. I believe he suffered and died on that cross as the Savior of sinners. I believe he died, was buried and rose again. I believe he ascended to the right hand of God and that's where he is. I believe that.

There is not a doubt in my mind that God's Word is as sure as the throne of God. I don't have any doubt about the Word of God. Like Abraham said, "He is able to perform everything he promised." I believe the head of every man is Christ and I believe the head of woman is the man. I believe that. I believe whosoever believeth on the Son of God and confesses him in baptism will be saved. Brother, I believe that. It's not...I don't have any struggles with it to be honest with you. I believe the woman is not to teach or usurp authority in a church. I just believe that. That's what God says. I believe children are to

obey their parents. I believe what the Bible says about a man doing a good day's work. If a man pays you, you are supposed to work.

I heard some fellows talking last week about some folks bragging how little work they did and how much they got paid for doing nothing. Shame on you. God have mercy, but he won't.

I believe a man that doesn't work ought not eat. That's what that book says. I just believe that with all my heart.

"You are against welfare."

No, I'm not. No, sir. I just believe what that book says. If a man doesn't work, Cecil, it says don't let him eat. Don't give him a handout. I believe the Bible.

And that is the reason. He that is of God will hear God's Word.

Some little old feisty smart aleck fundamentalist comes in and you preach election and sovereignty and predestination.

He says, "I don't believe that."

You're lost, man, because God said that. I didn't say it.

"Well, I sure don't believe in election."

Well, you have missed Christ. You are not of God because this book teaches that. I can't explain that God in eternity past picked out a people in Christ and made them his own. But that is what this book says. And he that is of God heareth God's Word. He doesn't try to explain it away or make excuses for it for a bunch of compromising liberals. He believes it.

Well, you are getting worked up.

That's something to get worked up over.

Christ said, "My Word hath no place in you."

Look back at John 8:37, right up above there. You got it over in John eight. Look back at 8:37. "I know, I know you," he said. "I know you are Abraham's seed. I know you are religious. I know you are brought up in the church. I know you have the ancestors, preachers and deacons. I know that, but you seek to kill me. Why? My Word has no place in you, no place, no dwelling place, no place of honor, no place of respect." That is what he is saying right there.

If you are saved this Word has a place of respect in your heart. You don't worship the Word. You worship the incarnate Word. But I will tell you this. My father, I respected my father. My father was pretty rough sometimes and all this, but his...you could take him at his Word, take him at his Word.

I know some men who are good as their word. They tell you something, you can bank on it. You can respect.

I'll tell you this. I respect my father's word. I don't want to hear anybody casting any reproach upon it or putting any question marks on it. My Word.

All right, look at this, 1 John 5:10. Let's go to another fourth reason, 1 John 5:10. Now here is another reason. He says in 1 John 5:10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, hath the witness."

Now, brethren, a man is not saved because he feels saved. I am not emphasizing experience. I am not saying, but neither am I discounting it. There are times when I don't feel saved. There are times when I have a good relationship with Christ. There are times when I am in the valley and despair and doubt. And you are, too. Many of you have told me that.

But there are times when you are just on the mountain top of fellowship with the Lord and, Jack, right now you are just rejoicing in his Word, aren't you? When I was talking about believing the Word you said, "Boy, I do, too." I [?] him. I do, too. I do, too.

But, boy, sometimes you get out there and the world just before your eyes and thoughts get in your heart and these feelings arise and you say, "I'm just not saved. Oh how I hate myself. I wish I wouldn't do that. I wish I hadn't said that. I..."

Don't you feel that way, son? Here we are, you know. Here we are.

But he never moves. He is on the right hand of the Father. He is my surety, my righteousness, my wisdom, my sanctification, my everything. He never moves. And in him I never move. I never move.

But let me tell you this. A man who is saved...I am not saying to the...I worry about folks who are always saying, "I never doubt." Don't you worry about them? "I never doubt. I'm saved. If you doubt, you're damned."

I don't believe that. I'm more worried about you than I am the man you are talking to. If you run around saying, "If you doubt, you're damned," I'm more concerned about you than I am the man you are shooting at. I'd heap rather be in his place. The fellow that feels the most secure is the man in the false profession usually. Do you know that? That's so.

But I am saying this. A man who is saved has the witness. What witness? There are three witnesses. Number one, he has the witness of the Word of God. That is what this is talking about here. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar because he hath not believed the record God gave of his Son." This is talking about the word here, Bob. The man that...the witness of the Word, that's where assurance is born and that is where it is raised, on the Word. That is the witness of the Word. You have got the Word. And when you are doubting and fearful where do you go? Well, the man that is foolish goes to the preacher. The man that is even more foolish goes back to his experience. The man who is wise goes to the Word. That is the witness.

All right. Here is another witness: the Holy Spirit. The very fact that you hate sin indicates the Holy Spirit dwells in you, because the Holy Spirit is the one that's hate sin, not you. It is not you. You don't hate sin. Your old nature loves sin.

Isn't that right, Jay? Am I telling the truth? You don't hate sin. Just like Paul said, "When I sin it is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." You are...there is a nature. Every believer has a divine nature that cannot sin and an old nature that can't do right. Your old nature would choke him. Your new nature will forgive him. That's right.

And the Holy Spirit who dwells within you in every man who is saved has the Holy Spirit. If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.

I'll tell you another witness. It is not only the Word of God and the Spirit of God who dwells in us, but the grace of God that is operative in us. Now you know, you see some signs of life, don't you, some signs of grace?

Turn to 1 John three. Let me show you something here. I don't see as many signs as I would like to see. I like what John Newton says. He said, "I'm not what I am going to be. I am not what I want to be." You are not, either. "I am not what I ought to be, but I know I am not what I used to be. I know that."

The man who was made whole, who was given sight, said, "I was blind and now I see." And I believe every saved person here not only has the witness of the Word and the Holy Spirit, but he has the witness. Something has happened to him.

Isn't that what you told me, David? Something has happened to me. I know it has. I know it has. I am not the same person. And I am not what I want to be. I am not what I am going to be. I am not what I ought to be. I am not even what you expect me to be. But I am not what I used to be.

In 1 John 3:14, "We know," John says, "We have passed from death unto life because we do love the brethren." Yeah, we do. And nobody can deny that. God is no stranger to me. And I do love the brethren. I do. You do, too, if you are saved.

Here is the last one. Turn to Colossians chapter one. I think these are good reasons. They

helped me. They gave me a little comfort and gave me a little confidence and a little strength in my assurance and I believe they will help you. But here is the fifth one.

Do you want a reason? He says, verse 23, for he has been talking here about verse 19, "It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell. And Christ made peace through the blood of his cross and reckoned all things, sought all things to himself. And you," verse 21, "that were alienated enemies, he has reconciled in the body of his flesh." He is going to present you. Look at verse 22. "holy, unblamable, unreprouvable in his sight if you continue in the faith."

Now this is what I am saying, folks. I am not saying...I am not saying that you have to come to the 13<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church and you have to be under the ministry of this preacher. But I am saying that this is your family and if this preacher is your pastor and if this is your place in the kingdom of God, you will continue in it till death do you part. I believe that.

By God's grace we persevere all the way through life, by God's grace we persevere. And a pretty good indication that a man is not of God and does not have a valid reason for help is if he can leave that which is supposed to be most precious. If he can just lay aside that which is supposed to be most valuable and which is to a believer. If he can just walk off and be happy, if he can just walk off and be content, if he can just walk off and depart, ho, they have missed it, Jerry. I believe he is, as Paul said in Hebrews, like the sow that returns to the wallow and the dog that returns to his vomit.

"My soul hath no pleasure," God said, "in them that draw back."

So, my friend, I am saying some of you all have been around a long time. And if anybody asks you the reason for your hope, you can tell them. "I believe he is the Christ. I have committed my soul to him. I have committed my soul to him. He has changed my life. I have the witness in my heart. I believe God's Word. I love God's Word. I hear God's Word."

And, old buddy, I've been around 31 years and by God's grace I am going to stay right. I believe those are good reasons. I believe those...and they are pretty hard to imitate. Satan is an imposter. And I know that the greatest trials sometimes come in the sunset years of life. It may be. I may yet depart. I may. I hope not. But I will tell you an evidence of salvation: if you continue in the faith. And be not moved away, but grounded and settled in the things of Christ.

Young people, set your heart on Christ. Look to Christ. Cling to Christ. I have seen young men who make such loud professions and such rapid growth and such bold statements about their faith and their salvation and all. And then some business opportunity comes along and they say, "I just couldn't pass it up." And they lay hold on it. And they are gone.

Hey, where is that fellow? Where is that faith you are talking about?

I'll see you later. I'm still saved, you know.

Here is a young girl. Boy, she is just out and out for Jesus, you know. I'm sold out for Christ. Some old handsome broad shouldered grinning [?] toothpaste ad boy comes along and winks at her, you know and where is that faith you were talking about?

See you later. See you in heaven. I'm saved. I just got no time for you right now, preacher. I am having too much fun.

Ok. That's all right.

Old Joshua said, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." It is all right. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That's a pretty good reason for hope, a pretty good reason. It's not easy. Who said it was? But that's a good reason. Perseverance.

*Our Father in heaven, I how refreshing, how reviving is thy Word, how we love thy truth. Enable us this morning to lay hold with our hearts upon thy Word, thy promise in Christ Jesus the truth. Lord, deliver me from Satan's subtlety and deception. He is a crafty enemy. I am no match for his subtlety or power. I flee to Christ. Hide me oh, Rock of Ages. Hide me. Cover me. Protect me. Keep me in the hollow of thy hand for eternity. Let my hope and trust be in Christ alone. Don't let me be deceived. I pray, Lord, we pray together every one of us. This is our prayer. Unanimously, in a unity of spirit and heart oh, that we may win Christ and be found in him, that we may know him and the power of his resurrection, that we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. We have not already attained. We are not already perfect. We have not laid hold upon that for which we have been laid hold of by Christ. But forgetting those things which are behind, we press forward toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of Christ our Lord.*

*Bless the service tonight, the message. May it be for thy glory, for Christ's sake. Amen.*