

Blessed Assurance

By Daniel Mark

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the son of God." – 1 John 5:13

Having doubts about one's salvation is so universal among believers, it's exceedingly rare to encounter a Christian who hasn't had an experience with thoughts of uncertainty concerning their eternal destiny. Doubts, if not nipped in the bud, tend to unsettle us with haunting fear and anxiety, and stymie further growth in grace.

In his eponymous epistle, the Apostle Peter writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives a clue as to how doubts can effectively be overcome. For starters, it's heartening to appreciate that uncertainty in the matter of salvation is never from the Lord. Peter writes about the means of coming to faith in Christ when reminding suffering saints of the immeasurable role the Word of God plays in God's gracious offer of salvation. *"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."* – 1 Peter 1:23. The Apostle straightforwardly tells us salvation is through the indestructible Word of God, and hence, assurance thereof is rooted in the same foundation. Whereas feelings, moods, emotions and experiences fluctuate, God's Word is immutable.

The Gospels record a highly instructive encounter Peter had with the Lord. Initially Peter made a bold move of faith in walking on the water with Jesus. Then presto! A sinking Peter quickly offered perhaps the briefest prayer in the New Testament. *"Lord, save me!"*

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Family Christmas Dinner



"Blessed Assurance," continued...

— Mathew 14:30 Peter's attitude took him right on the edge of disaster until the Lord pulled him out and rebuked him for doubting.

Just take a little inventory of your spiritual journey. At the outset of our salvation, we experience such a holy fervor and spiritual effervescence, we could have been mistaken for visitors from heaven to planet earth! Then a whole host of influences kick in, and our faith begins to wobble and wane, our commitment loses its integrity, and there is a persistent disquiet and unease that generate, you guessed it, doubt.

Be warned that doubt as stated earlier, must be dealt with immediately lest it wreaks havoc with our spiritual mettle. Some, having failed to do this, have despaired of the Christian race and relegated themselves to Christian has-beens. This needn't be and is altogether regrettable.

What is the antidote to wavering and uncertainty? As in all things about God and faith, God's Word stands as the perfect, fail-safe rebuttal to attacks from the enemy, Satan would have us live in perpetual doubt because it weakens us with fear and borderline unbelief. The Word of God saves, and the same Word assures. The Bible, habitually meditated upon with prayer, will undoubtedly devastate doubts.

The New Testament teems with excellent passages about salvation. John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5, and Romans 6:23 readily come to mind. But for me, one of the most reassuring of passages is found in Romans 10:9-11. *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."* Did

you catch the last statement? All honest – to goodness believers will never experience any shame as to where we spend eternity. Forever embed this passage in your heart. Whenever doubts beckon, simply internalize and externalize the never-changing promises of God!"

Prime Timers

On January 22, during the 11th Hour, you and your friends are invited to watch a one hour, expertly produced documentary, "Mining for God." This DVD features Lee Strobel, William Lane Craig and other Christian apologists and will help us to understand how seekers are looking at today's world and encourage us to invite our friends to visit Windsor Chapel.

Perisseia

All women are invited to join us as we look at relationships in the Bible—the good, the bad, and the ugly. This eight-week series will begin on Thursday, January 19.

*Congratulations to
Lisa and Kentaro Yamamoto
On the birth of their first grandchild
Cameran Allaire Yamamoto*



*"Cammie" was born on December 19, 2016.
She weighed 6 pounds and 1 ounce
Her parents are Akira and Jaime Yamamoto*

Elders' Corner

By Pastor Andy Straubel

Old Paths, New Power

Old Paths, New Power is my chosen theme for 2017. "Arguably, no time in church history has more closely approximated the first century beginning of the church than now" (Richard Mayhew in *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*). Few doubt the contemporary church has entered a pagan, post-Christian, and postmodern world. Consequently, the biblical model of the first century has never been more appropriate than it is today (Daniel Henderson, *Old Paths, New Power*).

Oz Guinness said, "The church always goes forward best by going back first." To go back to Acts 6 is to see the church experiencing unprecedented challenges—needs were overwhelming their limited resources, widows were being neglected, and people were complaining. The Apostles soon realized their plight and invited others to leadership, to get involved. Their priorities, however, as Apostles, were to "prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). That is the path to which I think we need to return as well.

Prayer is simply dialogue, talking with the One who alone has the wisdom, direction, power, and grace to enable His work to happen. But, I must confess, I am not that good at it. Too often the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. As the pastor of Windsor Chapel, I ask you to join me in prayer. Pray for me, pray for my family. Pray for the elders of the church. Jesus said, "without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). I believe prayer can change us from being aimless wanderers to becoming mighty warriors. Andrew Murry has said, "The powers of the eternal world have been placed at prayers disposal. It is the essence of true religion, the channel of all blessings."

Regarding the Word, to be awakened to hear and apply the Scriptures is an awesome and sometimes mystical experience. The Word of God is said to be "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12) as the Holy Spirit of God "moves upon" us (2 Peter 1:21). It exposes the hidden recesses of our thoughts and actions. It awakens us to the seriousness of sin, to powerful repentance, to prayer, and most of all, to Christ. This is perhaps what the Apostle Peter had in mind when he spoke of growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:21).

Old paths, new power is a call to revival! I invite you to join the leadership in discovering "Old paths, New power" in 2017!

*Ken and Cindy Bills have been blessed
with their second grandchild,
Eleanor Ann Bills*



*Eleanor was born December 27, at 8 am.
She weighed 8 pounds and 8 ounces.
She joins older brother Samuel and her
parents, Matt and Melissa Bills.*

"He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9:36-37(NIV)

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Beyond a Happy New Year

So here we are, face to face with a new year. Over the past many years, I have expressed dismay at the traditional New Year's resolutions ritual in which we inflict a performance review on ourselves and then decide what we need to do to improve ourselves. My objection to this annual exercise is that it promotes a focus on ourselves and greatly minimizes a focus on God; it also engenders a self-righteousness that moves us away from God and others rather than toward them.

I would like to suggest an approach that I believe is more biblical and more constructive. Please consider with me the Apostle Paul's words in his letter to the Philippians: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." This passage expresses the mystery of the Christian life: that we are responsible for our part, but it is God who is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

But how do we go about following Paul's command? How do we do our end of the "work" while remaining focused on our Lord? I think King David can help us here. King David knows something about falling short. After initiating an illicit love affair with a married woman (adultery in David's time was punishable by death by stoning), David responds to Bathsheba's resulting pregnancy with a cover-up plan designed to deceive Bathsheba's husband Uriah and the public. When that plan fails, the King of Israel resorts to having Uriah killed, again in a deceitful way.

We don't have to wait until a New Year and a personal self-examination by David before the story continues. The Lord sends Nathan the prophet to confront David, and David responds with an honest confession. David also remains focused on the LORD rather than plunging into some self-directed, self-improvement project. We can read a more in-depth passage about David's wrestling with his own sin in Psalm 32:

*How blessed is he whose transgression is
forgiven,*

Whose sin is covered!

*How blessed is the man to whom the LORD
does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

*When I kept silent about my sin, my body
wasted away*

Through my groaning all day long.

*For day and night Your hand was heavy upon
me;*

*My vitality was drained away as with the fever
heat of summer. Selah.*

I acknowledged my sin to You,

And my iniquity I did not hide;

*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the
LORD";*

And You forgave the guilt of my sin.

It is easy to think that since none of us is the King of Israel with a personal prophet at our disposal that we might need to take the personal sin issue upon ourselves. But please consider with me another passage in the Psalms written by David:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

And see if there be any hurtful way in me,

And lead me in the everlasting way.

(Psalm 139:23-24)

David most helpfully models for us an open
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"Beyond a Happy New Year," continued...

heart that invites the LORD to search his heart. By doing this David not only exhibits humility in resisting the option of examining himself, he also demonstrates his desire for genuine holiness by involving the LORD into the examination process, the LORD who is not deceived by even the most deceitful heart.

I still do not entirely understand how this working out our salvation as God works in us comes together. But I believe that King David has given us a good start. It seems to me that cultivating a humble heart before God is essential. To be sure, God can search the proudest and most self-focused of hearts, but it is the humble heart that will be able to hear Him. Humility is hard to fabricate, but we can follow King David's model and study and meditate on God's Word. As we do that, we will be better able to recognize who He is and who we are before Him. And as we add prayer to Bible study and our daily life routine, we will be putting ourselves in a position to see and hear Him personally. And finally, like David, we can be wise about the company we keep. By pursuing relationship with one another and by remaining open to learning and hearing about the less than pretty parts of our hearts and lives, God can do His sanctifying work in us.

The wish for a happy new year is nice, but may we not stop there. May we begin 2017 in full pursuit of our loving and sanctifying Savior, walking before Him with open and humble hearts.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or clbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....

"As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you."

— C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

2017 Upcoming Events

New Year's Day Service

January 1, at 9:30 am

We'll begin the New Year worshipping our Lord together. There will be no 11th Hour classes.

Budget Planning Meeting

Sunday, January 15, 11th Hour

Bring your questions and be informed as we discuss the budget for the upcoming year.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 29, 11th Hour

Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend the Annual Meeting.

Youth Group

Winter Blast Weekend - All Youth Group students and their friends are invited to sign-up for the Winter Blast weekend retreat at Camp Orchard Hill. This exciting weekend will be held March 3 - 5, and will include inspiring worship, games, sports, and fellowship. Please email Jean LaRosa at bluehonda@att.net, or let Pastor Andy know immediately if you're interested.

Financial Update

(Through September 2016)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$200,504	\$283,750
Expense	\$289,413	\$313,884

Windsor Chapel has sent \$38,298 to our missionary partners this year. That's 19% of your giving!

Not a New Year's Resolution

By Janet Berrill

Birthdays. Why do we celebrate birthdays? For me, I like to celebrate the birthdays of those I love to show them that I am glad they were born and that they are a part of my life. Sometimes that involves giving the person a gift, sometimes it is just a card with a personal note telling them how I feel. In our family, we give gifts and the birthday person gets to pick what to have for dinner. We have a cake or special desert of the birthday person's choosing and sing Happy Birthday. Sometimes as a family we do an activity that the birthday person especially enjoys. In all these things, the birthday person is at the center.

I know this is January, but please indulge me as I share a few thoughts about Christmas. Toward the end of December this year, I woke up about 5:30 and couldn't go back to sleep. I started thinking about this feeling of unrest I have about Christmas. If Christmas is about Jesus' birthday, and if we celebrate birthdays by buying gifts for the birthday person, how come I was buying gifts for so many OTHER people? And how are all the other Christmas preparations for Jesus? How does sending Christmas cards to friends and relatives I don't see all year or enjoying baked goods honor Jesus? If Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus' birthday, then why is so much of my time spent on activities that aren't focused on Jesus?

I dwelt on this question for a while and I finally came to a place of peace. The origins of Christmas are based on the celebration of Jesus' birthday, but over time many traditions have risen up that have nothing to do with Jesus. That may sound simple and obvious to many people, but for me it was a revelation and freeing when I finally admitted it. I wanted Christmas to be about Jesus so I was trying to force Jesus into Christmas traditions. For example, consider the practice of exchanging gifts. I've heard it said that we give gifts to each other because God showed His love to us by giving us a gift. So we show our love to others by giving them gifts on Christmas. Sounds reasonable, but how

does giving my son a DVD celebrate Jesus' birth? For me, it doesn't, and I finally faced it. The peace came when I acknowledge that most of what I do for Christmas has nothing to do with Jesus and that is okay. It's okay to make cookies, send out cards, give gifts, etc, even if it is not because of Jesus.

So if I truly want to celebrate Jesus' birth, how could I do that? The same way I celebrate the birthday of others – giving Him a gift. I could donate to a cause that helps people in Jesus' name or I could volunteer my time to help people somewhere. Although those are good options, I don't think they are the right gift for me to give. What would God really want from me? What could I give Him that would make Him happy? Time. My time. I am such a do-er that I find it hard to sit and just be in God's presence. As a parent of two sons in college and one who is now out on his own, I truly appreciate it when they come home and spend time with me one-on-one. So that is what I gave Jesus as His gift this year: one-on-one time. For me, once I get started with my day I am off and running and it is hard for me to stop. So I have decided as my gift, for 30 days I will get up early and spend one-on-one time with Jesus—not to prepare for Sunday School or for my Bible study, but just to be with Him.

As the New Year rolls around, many people make resolutions, and unfortunately most of them never last. But this is not a resolution, this is a gift. This is my gift to Jesus to show Him that I am glad He was born and that He is a part of my life. I'm okay with all the traditional Christmas preparations (especially the cookies!), but I am no longer going to tell myself they are for Jesus. It is so freeing to admit that! Next year I will once again send cards, bake cookies, decorate, and buy gifts, but I will celebrate Jesus' birthday by doing something special just for Him.

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter please e-mail:

Susan Seiboth at

susan@quiltingsquare.com

Dorothy Soi at

dsoi@windsorchapel.org

Chapel Office (609) 799-2559

www.windsorchapel.org