

Book 14

40 DAYS



Prayers *and* Devotions on the
Assurance *of* Salvation

D E N N I S S M I T H

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Day 1

First, a Clarification

Many years ago, some Adventists believed it was presumptuous to say that they are saved, that they have eternal life. They would quote Ellen G. White's statement, "Encourage every soul to have hope and faith, but never. . . say of any man, 'He is saved' " (*This Day With God*, p. 260). At first one might conclude that it is wrong for the Christian to believe he/she is saved. However, that cannot be correct. For John wrote, "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, emphasis added).

What then is Ellen G. White saying? If one looks closely at the context, it becomes clear that she is warning of looking to self for victory. She refers to Peter's self-confidence and spiritual fall outside Pilate's judgment hall. Plus, the chapter where this quote is found has the scripture heading, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psalm 34:2).

So, one's focus when seriously considering their assurance of salvation is to look to Christ only and not to themselves. Ellen G. White emphasized this point when she wrote in the same chapter about Peter, "Had Peter earnestly and in humility looked for divine help, had he been searching his own heart in secret, he would not have been sifted when tried. Satan cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, he who walks prayerfully before the Lord. 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard' for him against the enemy" (Isaiah 59:19). Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a

retreat, and the wicked one cannot overcome Him" (*This Day With God*, p. 260).

Again, and again in her writings, Ellen G. White counsel's the Christian to continually look to Christ and not to self. Concerning this tactic of Satan she wrote,

When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. The pleasures of the world, life's cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices. Many who are really conscientious, and who desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ he hopes to gain the victory. We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears. Say with the apostle Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' (Galatians 2:20) Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than con-

queror through Him that has loved you (*Steps to Christ*, p. 71, 72).

Note carefully her warning to Christians about dwelling “upon their own faults and weaknesses.” She then wrote, “We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved.” Instead of focusing on one’s faults and failings the Christian should focus on Christ, trusting His promise to save them. They should not have anxious doubts about if they are saved. No, every sincere Christian should focus on Christ and His promises to save them. When they do this, they can “know they have eternal life,” as John encouraged his readers to be assured of because

they trust Christ 100 percent for their salvation, and not any good works on their part.

In this devotional we will study the gospel of our salvation. We will review what Jesus has done and is doing for every believing soul. My prayer is that as you study day after day in this devotional that you will see what an all-sufficient Savior Jesus Christ is, and why you can put your complete trust in Him to give you the victory necessary to spend eternity with Him. Knowing that, you can truly “rejoice” in the assurance of salvation Jesus gives to every believing soul. For, how can one rejoice in their salvation if they are not sure they have salvation? How can one praise God for saving them if they are not sure they are saved?

Personal Reflection and Discussion

Is it wrong for a Christian to believe they are saved by Jesus Christ? Why?

What did Ellen G. White warn was Satan’s “constant effort” in the Christian’s life?

Where should the Christians daily focus be?

Prayer Focus

Ask God to

- fill you with the Holy Spirit,
- bring revival in your life and church,
- help you keep your focus on Christ and not your own faults, and
- hear your prayer on behalf of those on your prayer list.

Day 2

Adventists Need Reassurance

There are two groups of Protestant Christians in reference to the assurance of salvation. The early Christian scholar Augustine of Hippo who lived from 354–430 AD. proposed what became later known during the time of the Protestant Reformation as “Reformed Theology.” Martin Luther, who was an Augustinian monk, revived Augustine’s theology along with John Calvin and many other Protestant reformers.

My purpose is not to delineate “Reformed Theology.” The one point I will make is that this view of the gospel teaches “eternal security,” or what some call “once saved always saved.” Many Protestant churches today teach this aspect of Reformed Theology.

As might be expected, not all agreed with Augustine’s theology. Pelagius first countered with a view that fallen man did not need God’s grace to be saved, a view that was quickly rejected by the church. Then a view called semi-pelagianism developed, which was also rejected. Later Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), a Protestant, developed the view known as “Arminianism,” which taught that one can lose their salvation, along with other distinct beliefs different from the Reform Theology view. In essence, the controversy has been over the issue of man’s free will after Adam’s fall. The Augustine and the Protestant reformers taught that fallen man has the moral condition of “total depravity,” having lost the ability to choose God. Arminianism teaches that man in his fallen state still has the ability to choose God. The analogy would be that according to Arminianism fallen man is not totally dead in sin. Rather He is terminally ill with just enough strength to take the “medicine” God offers, the gospel of Jesus Christ,

and be saved. Along with this view comes the natural conclusion that man can also turn away from God even in a saved condition and be lost. But the natural conclusion of Reformed Theology is that God will preserve the “elect,” guaranteeing their salvation.

Today Protestant Christians fall into one of these two categories, with some variances on detail. Seventh-day Adventists follow the view of Arminianism, which teaches that one can lose their salvation. Because of this view concerning salvation, it is natural for many Adventists to question whether they are saved or will be saved. My point in this devotional is not to biblically support or disprove one view or the other. My purpose is to address the doubts and questionings that Adventists can have about their assurance of salvation.

I write from personal experience. Throughout the more than fifty years I have been an Adventist I too have had times of doubting my salvation. I have been saddened as I have come to know very sincere Adventist Christians who have faithfully served the Lord for many years, and yet they have a “gnawing” doubt as to whether they are saved or not.

Because of my own personal questions, and seeing others with the same doubts, I have felt the need to look more deeply into the subject for my own encouragement. Hopefully, what I have learned will enable me to bring encouragement to others on this important matter.

Both the Reformed Theology and Arminian view in Protestantism have their pitfalls. Those of the “Reformed Theology” belief of eternal security need to be clearly reminded of the importance of obedience to God’s Word. They can have a hope and joy in their salvation, but Satan can lead them to disregard some of

the more personally challenging admonitions God gives them in the Bible.

On the other hand, those who hold the Arminian view of the possibility of losing one's salvation need words of encouragement from the Bible about the assurance of salvation God gives them. Satan will attack Christians of both theological persuasions.

There are sincere Christians in both groups. Individuals in both groups will at times question if they are saved. I don't see these differences in interpretation as a salvation issue. Individuals in both groups who allow the Holy Spirit to lead them will be saved. Both groups believe in salvation 100 percent through Jesus Christ. We also know that just prior to Christ's return many Reform Theology, Arminian Theology, and Roman Catholic Christians will ultimately take their stand on the side of God's truth when the loud cry of Revelation takes place. This last-day call is given to Christians in all Christian churches.

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the

earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, *my people*, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Revelation 18:1–5, emphasis added).

My prayer is that any Christian of “Arminian” theological persuasion—including Adventists—will come to the point that all doubts about their assurance of salvation will be removed, and they will be able to truly rejoice in their salvation that Jesus Christ paid such a dear price for them to have and believe they have it.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

What is the difference between the Reformed view and Arminian view concerning one's assurance of salvation? _____

What do those holding the Reformed view need to be reminded of, and what do those holding the Arminian view need to be assured of? _____

How does God's warning to “come out of Babylon” reveal that there are sincere Christians in all denominations? _____

Prayer Focus

Ask God to

- fill you with the Holy Spirit,
- bring revival in your life and church,
- give you the assurance of salvation that is taught in His Word, and
- hear your prayer on behalf of those on your prayer list.

Day 3

Rejoice in Your Salvation

God wants His children to rejoice in the salvation He has provided for them at such an infinitely high cost. As we have previously seen John wrote to the Christians of his day, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 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 5:11–13).

Throughout the Psalms we read of God’s children rejoicing in the salvation the Lord gives them. “I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. . . I will rejoice in thy salvation” (Psalm 9:2, 14). “But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.” (Psalm 13:5) “We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions” (Psalm 20:5). “I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy” (Psalm 31:7). “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise. . . Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee” (Psalm 33:1–3, 20–22). “And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation” (Psalm 35:9). “Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Psalm 97:12).

Remember, if you have accepted Christ as your Savior, you are “righteous” in God’s eyes because you have Christ’s righteousness covering you.

Here is what all Christians should proclaim, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10). “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:18).

Because of our being free from the guilt and penalty of sin, and being declared righteous in Christ, Paul wrote, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1, 2). Throughout his letters Paul admonishes the Christian to rejoice, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” (Philippians 3:1) “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Throughout God’s Word His children are called to rejoice in the salvation He has provided. New Testament Christians even have more reason to rejoice because the “mystery” of the gospel has been clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. Every aspect of the salvation that is presented in Jesus Christ gives abundant reason to rejoice.

Satan wants to take away from God’s children the joy of salvation that God wants them to have. However, rejoicing in one’s salvation presumes that one believes he/she has the assurance of it in Jesus Christ. There can be no real, heartfelt rejoicing if one doubts they are saved.

Ellen G. White understood the importance of the Christian expressing praise and thanksgiving to God. She often expressed the necessity for the Christian to

experience emotional, physical and spiritual health. Speaking of Christ she wrote, “Christ took upon Him human nature, that He might be able to sympathize with all hearts. . . . His spirit was never so full of worldly cares that He had no time or thought for the heavenly. He could give evidence of His cheerfulness by singing psalms and heavenly songs. The people of Nazareth often heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God. He often held communion with heaven in song, and all who were associated with Him, who often complained of their weariness of labor, were cheered by the sweet melody that fell from His lips” (*Christ Triumphant*, p. 244).

In this counsel we read that our praise and thanksgiving is used by God to lift the spirits of those around us. There is a law of relationship. We can be either an influence for good or bad on the lives of our associates.

As Christians, we of course, want to influence others for Christ as well as help them on life’s journey. Our expressions of praise and thanksgiving to God play an important role in achieving this.

Ellen G. White wrote often of the relationship between praise and faith, and health. “Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul.” (*Counsels on Health*, p. 344). “Gratitude, rejoicing, benevolence, trust in God’s love and care—these are health’s greatest safeguard” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 281). “We should encourage a cheerful, hopeful, peaceful frame of mind; for our health depends upon our so doing” (*My Life Today*, p. 151).

A heartfelt assurance of one’s salvation will play a significant role in experiencing the positive attitudes and health benefits Ellen G. White described above.

Personal Reflection and Discussion

What did John say was the reason he wrote to those who believe in Jesus?

Write in your own words how the Psalmist expressed their assurance of salvation?

How can one’s assurance of salvation lead to the health benefits Ellen G. White described?

Prayer Focus

Ask God to

- fill you with the Holy Spirit,
- bring revival in your life and church,
- strengthen your assurance of salvation so you can experience the health God desires you to have, and
- hear your prayer on behalf of those on your prayer list.