**Introduction**

You have just made the most important decision of your life. As a way of review, let us go over some things that will help you to better understand the changes that have happened to you.

*All men are born into this world apart from God with no desire to look for or have a relationship with God.*

**SIN**

Paul writes to the church at Rome and says that there is none who does good or seeks after God. Turn to Romans 3:10-12 in your Bible and do the following exercises.

A. Use a dictionary to find out the meaning of the word “righteous.” Write out the definition here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

B. If there is none righteous and none who seeks after God, what is it that brings a person to God? For help with this question, turn in your Bible to John 6:44. Write your answer here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

C. Is there any doubt in your mind that God has drawn you to Himself? If there is doubt, begin to pray that God would reveal Himself to you and assure you that you belong to Him. You might want to talk to your pastor about your feelings. Do not tell anyone else about your doubts for men will lead you astray in this area. Only the Holy Spirit of God can give you assurance that you belong to Him. Others may tell you that you are born again when you really are not. Trust God to give you assurance that you belong to Him. However, if you are sure that you belong to Him and positive change has begun to happen, thank God for His work in your life and continue with this study.

D. Since we do not seek God, something must happen to bring us to a point of desiring God before we can be saved (converted, or born again are similar words). Look up John 16:8 and write out what the job of the Holy Spirit is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The word “convict” means to convince or prove to be true by bringing a matter out in the open. This is what God’s Spirit does in the life of a sinner as God shows the sinner his/her helplessness and hopelessness.

No one can “accept” Jesus as their Lord and Savior. He is the One who does the accepting. No one can come to Christ unless they are drawn to Him by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is plain about this doctrine or teaching. It is not that a sinner comes against his will but that God changes the will. It is like a bird with a broken wing. The bird was made to fly but cannot. The wing must be healed and God is the Healer. So it is with sinners that God gives the ability to believe in Christ. Without being given that ability, no one would ever be saved. Why not thank God right now for drawing you to Himself and saving you from your sins?

*All those who are drawn to Christ by God will believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.*

Go to John 6:37 and read what Jesus said about whom God gives to the Son. Notice the wording of this verse. In Scripture, the word “all” is used in one of two ways. It is used as all without exception or all without distinction. From the context, it is plain the word is used as all without exception. Keeping your place in John 6, complete the following.

1. Who will come to Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What will Jesus do when one comes to Him?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Can anyone come to Christ? Think carefully about your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Did you come to Christ on your own or did God draw you to Christ? Explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*Knowing you are a believer in Jesus is a key concept in living the Christian life.*

The apostle John wrote a Gospel account, three short letters to the churches and the last book of the Bible, Revelation. In his first short letter, called 1 John, he gives proof or assurance of conversion. In this next section, we want to look at those assurances and examine them to see if we are in the faith. Turn in your Bible to 1 John and let us begin. Beginning in verse 6 of chapter one, notice what John says. If we claim to have fellowship with Jesus and walk in darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth. Do the following exercises to see the character of a true believer.

A. According to verse 7, what two things will happen as a believer walks in the light? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

B. What is your understanding of walking in the light? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

C. What are believers to do when they fall into sin (9)?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

D. If we say our sinful deeds are okay, what we are making Jesus out to be (10)?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

E. What three results happen when we do not obey Jesus Christ (6-10)?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

F. Are you walking in such a way as to please Jesus? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This is the first assurance we see in John’s letter to the churches. The first assurance is this: A true believer will *want* to walk in obedience to Jesus’ words; that same believer will not be a hypocrite (a person who says one thing and does another), or a liar. We see the second assurance in 1 John 2:3ff. John tells us how we can know we have come to know Jesus; if we keep His commandments.

G. Is it your greatest desire to keep the words of Jesus? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

H. What does the Scripture say is the result of one who doesn’t keep His commandments (4)?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

I. If you hate someone in the church, what does Scripture say about you?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

So, we can see the second assurance is obeying Jesus’ commands by loving one another in the church. As easy as this sounds, it is not easy in practice. Practically every letter the apostle Paul wrote dealt, in some measure, with relationships between one another in the church. You will find this to be a great challenge but also a worthwhile challenge. Loving one another in the church is one proof of salvation.

How else can a person know they are in the faith? Again, 1 John offers help. John says in chapter 2, verse 15 we are told not to love the world or the things in the world. Turn there and read the entire verse. We need to consider this verse in the light of first century culture. What is John saying? Can we not love the mountains, the forests, the oceans and all of God’s creation? Why would John say such a thing? The problem lies in our understanding of the word “world.” The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. Greek is different than English and cannot be translated word for word. Some Greek words require a sentence to translate. The word translated “world” is from the Greek word “kosmos.” It sounds like our English word “cosmos.” It can mean several different things. It can mean the inhabited world, or the universe. It can also mean an ordered arrangement. However, in the context of this Scripture, it obviously means this world system. The world system with its pleasures and power is what is meant. John says not to love the world system with these things. All these things are temporary and not permanent.

Verse 17 says the world system is passing away but the one who does the will of God lives forever. With these things in mind, what are you doing with your affections? What do you treasure the most? Where is your heart? The answer to these questions will show whether or not you love the world system.

Often we can look at assurance of salvation from a negative perspective and find help. In 1 John 2:19 we see a negative statement that shows us a valuable principle concerning assurance. Turn there and read the verse. You will see John is talking about those who were once in the church and doing the will of God but they left and never came back. When you read the context (the surrounding verses) you see that John is talking about false teachers. However, the principle applies to those who do not continue in the faith. They show by their attitudes and actions that they were never in the faith to begin with. Answer the following about this verse.

1. What is the ultimate test of assurance according to this verse?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. What is the result of not staying in the faith?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Another verse that sheds some light on this passage is found in John 10:27-28. Turn there and read it. Notice what Jesus says and the way in which He says it. The sheep hear His voice, Jesus knows His sheep, and His sheep follow Him. The result of hearing and following is eternal life in which His sheep never perish and no one can take them out of His hand. The sheep do not just listen; *they follow*. If a person professes to be a Christian and will not follow, that person is, according to Scripture, not one of Jesus’ sheep. Are you following or just listening? If you are not following but now see that you must, ask God to give you the desire to follow Jesus for the rest of your life.

*Can a person fall away from the faith after being converted?*

This is a question that bears considering. Some Christians believe that you can lose your salvation after you have become a Christian. Is this possible? The only way to see the answer to this question is to go to Scripture. Turn to the book of Hebrews. If you cannot find it, go to the table of contents. The table of contents is there to help you get familiar with your Bible. Turn to chapter 6 and read verses 1-8. Then answer the following questions.

1. To whom is the writer speaking?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

For more help with this question, look at the introduction to Hebrews at the front of the book. If you do not have a study Bible, ask your pastor for help.

2. Is the writer saying that believers can fall away from the faith? If so, what is the result of their falling away?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Do you see anything in the context that would tell what would make one fall away? What would it be?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Often in a Bible book, the clue to an apparent problem in the text can be remedied by considering the whole book. Look at chapter 2, verses 1-3, and at chapter 3, verses 12-19 to see reasons for falling away and write them here.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

It sure looks like a believer can lose their salvation. However, the key to understanding this passage is in verses 7 and 8. There are two types of ground mentioned in these verses. What are they?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Would you agree that rain falls on good and bad ground? If so, the ground that brings forth good vegetation is called good and the ground that brings forth bad is called bad. The same rain falls on both. Whether the ground is good or not can be seen by the kind of fruit it bears. This is true of the Christian life also. A true Christian will bring forth good fruit and a so-called believer will bring forth bad fruit. The writer is explaining the truth of the verses that seem to teach loss of salvation. He wants us to know that what kind of fruit we bear tells us what kind of person we are; whether a believer or a so-called believer. It is not what one says but what one is that makes the difference.

Turn in your Bible to John 15:1-11. Read this passage carefully and do the following.

1. Who are the four characters in this passage?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. The two branches represent two different kinds of people. Who are they?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. What happens to the non-fruit bearing branches?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. What happens to the fruit bearing branches?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Notice that both are branches, both have the capacity to bear fruit, and both are connected to the vine. However, what makes the difference is not that both are attached, or are branches, or have a capacity to bear fruit, but rather, consider the result of their attachment. One bears fruit; the other does not. If you are familiar with gardening or farming, often the reason a branch does not bear fruit is because there is no sap reaching the branch. It may look like all the other branches, but because of something inside, no fruit is grown. The same principle is in effect in the Christian life. The problem is not outward but inward. Is the person really a believer or do they just look like it? God knows and we should know also. [(1Sa 16:7) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."] God sees the heart whereas we only see the outward appearance.

The problem is that many today think they are converted but according to Scripture they are not. Satan is able to deceive many into thinking they are okay with God when in fact, they are enemies of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Out of the 16 million Southern Baptists, only 5 million show up on the average Sunday. Some go to the lake, or do yard work, or go shopping. Are they really saved? If a person does not make worship a regular practice, there is something seriously wrong with their life. That is why great care will be taken with you to make sure you are in the faith. Assurance does not stop with this material. Being assured of your salvation is a lifelong process. No wonder Peter would write these words in his second letter: [(2Pe 1:10) So then, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election certain, for if you keep on doing this you will never fail.] We are to make certain God’s calling on our lives and this will be a constant practice that goes through life.

How do we do that? By putting into practice the things that have been discussed in this material. It is not enough to base one’s salvation on an experience when the Biblical idea is to show evidence of faith in actions and attitudes, and to remain faithful to God until the end. There is no assurance of salvation without these two characteristics. If you cannot prove you are a Christian, you probably are not one. If you do not remain faithful until the end of your life, you have no assurance of salvation. But how does one show he/she is in the faith? James gives us help with this question. He says in [(Jas 2:14) What good does it do, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but does not prove it with actions? This kind of faith cannot save him, can it? (15) Suppose a brother or sister does not have any clothes or daily food (16) and one of you tells them, “Go in peace! Stay warm and eat heartily." If you do not provide for their bodily needs, what good does it do? (17) In the same way, faith by itself, if it does not prove itself with actions, is dead. (18) But someone may say, "You have faith, and I have actions."] Show me your faith without any actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions. What James is saying is, there is no faith apart from showing that faith by good works. Helping the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, all of these are things believers should do. But our works go beyond that. We are to share our faith with others, pray, read and study the Bible, fellowship with other believers, and worship with the church. It is not possible to just sit and expect others to know we are in the faith. Something must be done to show we are followers of Jesus Christ and that something is good works.

Do not misunderstand what is being said. Works do not save; they simply show faith is in existence in the one performing the work. It is not possible to love some people apart from God giving the capacity to love. It is not possible to witness apart from God giving the desire to do so. God must give the desire and ability to do good works. What about good works that unsaved people do? Many give to the poor, visit the sick and orphans, and do all sorts of good works. Why do these not count? The problem lies in the proper concept of sin. There is enough sin in this material to send the one writing it to hell. However, God takes that work and adds His grace to it and it becomes something that pleases Him. Unconverted people do not have that luxury. Their works will judge them on Judgment Day. Their works will show they could never pay for sin in the same way as Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus takes our pitiful efforts to please Him, adds His goodness to them and God is pleased. Jesus said in [(Joh 15:5) I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.] No matter what is done, it will make no difference unless it is done as we abide in Him, bearing our fruit for His sake and not our own. According to the previous verse, how much can we do apart from Christ? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

[(Isa 64:6) But we are all as the unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as a menstruation cloth. And we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.] The best one can do apart from Christ is nothing. Therefore, we as children of God must make every effort to use what He has given us as a means of grace. The Holy Spirit keeps us, prayer keeps us, Scripture study keeps us, fellowship keeps us, and worship keeps us in His hand. These are what we as humans are supposed to do. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate means of us being in Christ. All these together are what God expects us to make use of. We are to make use of what He has given us and we will continue in abide in the vine (John 15). Why not ask God to make you more aware of the means of grace He has given? Will you commit to using all the means of grace that He has given?