

James T. Jeremiah
Christian Vitality
January 22, 1975

Transcript

James T. Jeremiah:

Personnel office has asked that I make an announcement today, so I will read it. It's announcement to all students, students who believe they must leave chapel early to eat lunch because of consecutive 11:00, 12:00, and 1:00 classes on any given day or days, please check with the Dean of Men or Women by Friday to make arrangements. All other students, except those needing to leave early because of employment responsibilities, are expected to remain in chapel until the conclusion of the service. That goes today and the days ahead after you've made arrangements, those of you who have to leave. Underclassmen who have not had pictures taken for the yearbook, please report to Faith Hall Lounge anytime Tuesday or Wednesday between 9:00 AM and 4:30 PM. Otherwise your picture will not appear in the yearbook. Pictures of seniors will be taken by appointment on Thursday and Friday.

James T. Jeremiah:

You've probably heard of the man who went to a church one day, gave the invitation. He went forward and knelt at what they called an altar. Two people came up to him, one on each side, and they began to pound him on the back in no uncertain fashion. And they kept saying to him, "Let go, brother, let go, brother." And he stood that for a while, until I guess he got through whatever he was trying to get through. And finally it was all over. He left the church and as he came to the door, there were two more of the brethren who said to him as he left, "Hang on, brother, hang on, brother." Now that experience, fictitious thought may be, is not too far removed from actuality in some places, represents what happens sometimes in the Christian life. We spend a lot of time letting go and and hanging on, and in-between we don't have very much assurance.

James T. Jeremiah:

There is a difference in all between insurance and assurance. Someone has put it this way. If you drive your automobile down the road and you come to a bridge that collapses, the automobile is ruined and your life is lost. You had insurance if you paid your bills and your wife will have enough money to buy a new car and another husband, but the better way to do it is to pay your bills on your insurance all right, but drive your car to the bridge with the absolute knowledge that it won't collapse. That's assurance.

James T. Jeremiah:

A lot of people live their lives in the insurance bracket. They get saved or they trust the Lord, they say, to get them through, over or around their problems and they're forever and a day wondering how they're going to make it. The child of God really knows, can go to the problems and face them. And though he faces them sometimes with great concern, he has no doubt at all that the old car will take him over the bridge. Assurance.

James T. Jeremiah:

When we met last time and I talked to you a little bit about salvation, I was earnestly, desperately trying to get anybody in this school who wasn't saved to admit it. God has been dealing with some of you and I'm grateful. Far as I know, every one of you knows what it means to be a Christian. I don't know anything to the contrary. It's hard to believe though that in a crowd of a thousand students, there may not be some who are unsaved. If you're not a Christian, I appeal to you to make a decision that needs to

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be made in your life. Talk with somebody and pray with them and let them show you from the Bible what it means to be saved.

James T. Jeremiah:

My objective this morning is to try if I can to give you some vital signs of life. I been in the hospital a little bit and I hear people talking about vital signs, whether the person is breathing or there's any blood pressure, something about his pulse and so on. Well, there's some vital signs in the Christian life, and we want to talk about them. How to know we're saved. Many years ago, a man by the name of Cutting wrote a little pamphlet entitled Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment. And he pointed out in the book that there are three classes of people, three classes of folks in the world. There are those, he said, who were saved and know it. Those who are not saved and concerned. And those who are not saved and could care less. Now that's a Jeremiah translation of the last point, could care less.

James T. Jeremiah:

I'm concerned about the people who are saved and know it and I thank God for that. And I'm also concerned about those who are saved and they're not sure. To be saved is to be safe. This kind of salvation is not being saved from one burning room to go into another one, not to be rescued from perishing over a precipice to find yourself in another identical spot shortly, not to be rescued from the front end of a truck and only to be put back in the same spot. To be safe in Jesus Christ is to be safe now and forever. How can we know, or can we know?

James T. Jeremiah:

Well in your Bibles, if you believe in underlining them and if you don't believe in it, underline them anyway, on this text. In I John 3:14, it says this. We know that we have passed from death unto life. We know that we have passed from death into life. Underline it. And then if you have this problem of wanting to know for sure whether you're a saved person, in your devotions or in your Bible study, make a thorough attempt to go through the first letter of John and underline in your New Testament in that book, the word know. You will find it written in that book at least 27 times. Now it seems to me rather ridiculous, if God spent a whole book telling us we could know, that we ought to spend the rest of our lives, trying to prove to ourselves that we can't. Now there are certain things that are evident in the life and the experience of a believer that ought to persuade him beyond any shadow of a doubt that he either is or is not one of God's children.

James T. Jeremiah:

I want to list five of them briefly. One who is born of God will have a hatred for sin. And first John 3:6, and especially verse nine, it says this. No one who is born of God practices sin, because his seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. Now I want you to notice what that says and what it doesn't say. It says that one who is born of God does not practice sin. That means that he will have an antagonism to sin. He will be opposed to sin. He will endeavor by the grace of God to live victoriously over sin.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now notice the one who has this blessing. Not the one who has come to the place where he is sinlessly perfect. Not the one who has had his old nature eradicated. Not the one who's had the so-called

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experience in speaking in tongues. It simply says that one who is born of God, born of God, does not practice sin. One who has been born of God will not practice sin because having God's nature, he will hate it. It's utterly impossible to conceive of the idea that when you're saved, you partake of God's nature by the exceeding great and precious promises, and at the same time, having the nature of the holy God living in you, still love the sin that he hates. So if you have an antagonism to sin, you hate sin and you don't practice sin, there is something you can rest upon so far as a word of assurance. One claims to be born of God and is not sure, it may be caused by unconfessed and unforsaken sin. It's conceivable that sometimes as Christians, we go through our lives doubting God and wondering about our experience with Christ because we're living in sin, known sin, and we don't confess it. We don't get rid of it. We just live with it.

James T. Jeremiah:

It's inconceivable that a child of God will happily live with sin. And if we are, then according to this text, we ought to be thinking seriously where we stand with regard to our salvation. Sin grieves the spirit we're told in Ephesians 4:30.

James T. Jeremiah:

And then the sense of assurance leaves. When the spirit of God is grieved, he doesn't leave you, but I'll tell you what does leave you. The joy of your salvation leaves you. And when the joy of your salvation leaves, you're without assurance. And the spirit of God has been so kind as to include in the context of the reference grieving him, certain things that do grieve him. It speaks about corrupt communication. And one translation puts it, I think the NASB puts, it rotten words. That's pretty plain, pretty blunt. Rotten words. Let me ask you young man, young woman, when you got saved, did God clean up your language? Did he take away your bent for off-color stories? Did he sanctify your tongue? Rotten language grieves him. Bitterness grieves him. Bitterness. Oh how that can come into the child of God. But if you're saved, you'll hate it and you'll want to get rid of it. Wrath, anger, clamor, unkindness. These are the sins that grieve the spirit of God. And when he's grieved, then certainly the sense of assurance departs because the joy of the Lord is not there. One vital sign then is a hatred for sin. It's very simple. Sin is like mold, rust, corrosion in the Christian's life. And it hinders him, not only in his service, but hinders him in his own personal enjoyment of assurance.

James T. Jeremiah:

The second vital sign, he'll have a desire for righteousness. Now these are not very complicated. I'm not dealing with great theological and philosophical principles. I'm dealing with just bare outline facts of what the vital signs are. Hatred for sin. A love for righteousness. I John 3:10. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. On one place he said, if you practice in you're not of God. In another place he said if you don't practice righteousness, you're not of God. Everyone also who practices righteousness is born of him, we're told in chapter two, verse 29.

James T. Jeremiah:

Now what does it mean to practice righteousness? Well, I'd like to give you what I think it means. I believe it means that we as believers, when we're saved and have God's nature, we're going to practice our right relationship with him. That is to say that this business of being a Christian is something more than making a statement, something more than having some kind of a profession, but it involves a life of

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practice. Practicing righteousness. We're told in Titus chapter two, 11 to 12, with the grace of God appeared teaching us that denying ungodliness we should live righteously, soberly, godly in this present world. And I think this is obvious, that one who was saved has a different life, his lifestyle changes, his way of conduct changes. God doesn't change the old nature. It's the same old nature you had that you were born with. But God changes the life of an individual who trusts Jesus Christ in his outward walk with God. There's something happening in the life of a person who is saved. And if it didn't happen, then I would suggest there may be something we ought to examine.

James T. Jeremiah:

One day, a very intellectual college student, may have been a seminary student. Let's take him to seminary, get him out of college. Seminary student came home after studying about three years of Greek and Hebrew. He came to visit his old grandmother who hadn't, I suppose the only Hebrew she knew it was the people who run the dry goods store. Maybe the only Greek she ever met was the fellow who run the restaurant. But anyway, she listened to this boy. He was telling her that she couldn't understand the Bible. I hear this once a while, you can't understand the Bible unless you're a Hebrew or a Greek. That limits the place quite sincerely, doesn't it? And I'm not trying to discourage you. And certainly you guys go to Greek class now, if this as an excuse, forget it, because you better study the Greek.

James T. Jeremiah:

Anyhow, he was trying to impress his dear old grandmother. She wasn't too bright and all, she hadn't been through all of this. And so he said, "I want to tell you, grandma, that these things I've learned in Greek tell me things about the promises of God. The translations I've made have been tremendous." I bet they were. She looked at him and she said, "Son, I want to tell you about a translation I know. I've translated a good many of God's promises into my own life. And they're the ones that mean the most to me."

James T. Jeremiah:

I think she had a point. It's conceivable that we can go through college and through seminary and through university and turn out to be the greatest intellects the world has ever seen. Or at least we think these are the greatest intellects the world's ever seen. And we've never learned the simple truth of letting the promises of God and the word of God dwell in us so that out of our lives there lives righteousness. Don't you talk about being a Christian and wallow in sin. There is an opposite side. Walk in righteousness. God's word makes it plain.

James T. Jeremiah:

Number three, another vital sign of life. A love for believers. I John 3:14 that we started with. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. John 2:9 says the one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in darkness until now. The one who loves his brother is walking in righteousness. Now what is this love business? We have a great lot of it today. don't we. Do you ever go by a car up and coming back of a car that says, if you love Jesus, honk your horn. There ought to be another way of testifying beside that. Honk your horn. You might put, if you like Richard Nixon, honk your horn. Something like this. Or if you have somebody else you want to honk your horn at. But why bring it down that way? Love Jesus. What's it mean to love Jesus? It means to love Jesus and

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love your brother. You'll read this epistle and you'll come face to face with this. If you love God, you love those God loves. And that should help us a little bit. Love involves concern. Love involves sacrifice, putting somebody else first. Love involves patience, understanding, kind acts, protection. Somebody says something about one of your dear friends, do you sit there and agree or do you defend him or her?

James T. Jeremiah:

If you're saved by the grace of God, then you're going to love those who he loves, the brethren, believers. If you'd rather have your Saturday night on the town so that you'll miss your fellowship with the saints on Sunday, you better not only rearrange your priorities, you better do some examining to see whether you're in the faith. But you see, you can know that, if you have a concern to be with God's people and love them and want to help them, that's a good sign.

James T. Jeremiah:

Number four, it'll come to an end after a while, before lunch. That is the attitude of obedience. I John 3:22. And I John 3:3-4. Let's read that one first. And by this we know that we have come to know him. How do we know that? If we keep his commandments. The one who says I have come to know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. Now that's pretty plain language, about as plain as anybody could put it. Somebody said, "Well, I want you to know, preacher, I'm saved under grace and I'm living under grace and I don't have any law. Forget the law." Well, you go ahead, but God says commandments. Is he talking about the 10 Commandments? Well, I don't see there's any reason why we ought to plan on breaking them. But I think he's talking particularly about the teaching in the words of Christ. And if we have his commandments and don't do them, then the obvious answer is that we're not born of God.

James T. Jeremiah:

Christian will want to know what God says. He'd want to seek in every way to understand his plan for him. And he will not want to disobey knowingly the commands and the will of God. Say, "Well, why talk to a Christian college like that?" Because over a period of some years, I discovered some people and observed them and talked to them who've gone through college, rebelling against the leading of God and the will of God, going out to wreck their lives. Maybe they weren't saved to begin with. I don't know. I believe dear friend, that attitude we have towards what God says we ought to do is very important. Obedience to God's word is a vital sign that we ought to think about. Obedience. We have all kinds of formula recommended for victorious living. There isn't anything quite like obedience. If you mind God, he'll bless you. And if you mind God, it's a good evidence that you've been born again. And if you don't mind him, you're still rebelling and fighting the will of God in your life and God's direction to you and you better think about it. It's a vital sign.

James T. Jeremiah:

Last of all, person who was saved can be sure he is, at least in some part because of a personal experience. Now I put that last for a reason, because we're living in a day of what some have called experience theology. It isn't what God says to me, it's how I feel. It isn't whether God teaches us a thing is right or wrong, it's how I feel about it. But in the word of God, in I John 5:4-5, it says for whatever is born of God overcomes the world. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the son of God. This involves a commitment or a trust, confidence. He that believes, involves a crisis.

James T. Jeremiah:

There was a crisis in your home when you were born, did you know that? Boy, they looked at you and said you looked like everybody else. And they looked at you and said, "Well he looks like his father." And one woman said about her newborn babies, "He's just like his dad already. I talk to him and he goes to sleep." And there was a crisis.

James T. Jeremiah:

A crisis happens when you get saved. Salvation begins with a crisis and continues as a process. But there has to be a time when you see you're lost and trust him. And then we're told that there's a conquest, ours overcometh the world. Do you want to know what that world is, you can find it in I John 2:16. The world can be your conqueror. It can be the conquest under your feet because you've been born again. Now, I'm not trying to point out now that you have to say I was born again on January 22nd, 21st, 11:30 at night on Friday evening. I'm not saying that. You'd ask me to tell you the day I was saved, I couldn't tell you. You'd ask me to tell you the week I was saved, I couldn't tell you, but I know I am. There is a place somewhere along the line in your life where something happens and you know it. It's inconceivable that one would have an experience with Jesus Christ and not know it.

James T. Jeremiah:

Paul knew it. He said, well, I don't have any light from heaven, but you have something just as definite, the word of God. God speaks and he assures you. Young people, this is simple and I haven't tried to complicate it. I hope it's simple enough so you can understand the vital signs. And if you don't have them, I would suggest that you do some investigating to see whether you've been born again. I think you have been. Some of the evidences indicate it. And may you find help from God to be so sure that with the apostle Paul you can say, I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day. I know. May God help us to know.

James T. Jeremiah:

Shall we quietly stand for prayer as we close. With every head bowed now before we close, just this one question before we pray. How many of you in this room today know beyond any peradventure of a doubt, any question that you have been born again? Let me see your hands. Well, that's great. Great. Thank God. And if you are one who couldn't raise your hand then see someone today can help you know that you've passed from death into life. Dear Lord, we thank thee for these hands, indicating the assurance, the positive attitude toward thy word and toward thy son. As we leave this place today, may we go out confident in a God who takes care of his people. Guide us, lead us and make us a blessing to others. May these vital signs be evident whenever anyone seeks to examine us and whenever we think about it in our own hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.