Assurance of salvation is an issue every believer struggles with at some point in his/her life. We have all looked within ourselves and wondered how we can be saved since we sin like we do; the truth of matter is, every human being has a “sin problem.” Probably the most bewildering problem regarding the assurance of salvation is not the problem of whether or not the objective facts of Christianity are true, but whether we are personally saved by those facts — it all boils down to whether or not we have “saving faith” — this is the issue of “assurance of salvation.”

What makes this such an agonizing issue for many Christians is that there are people who “think they have saving faith but don’t.” Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21). Obviously that’s a pretty provocative statement… therefore it is natural for many believers to wonder if they really do have saving faith? Is their faith real? Or have they been self-deceived? Most of us as pastors have counseled numbers of Christians who have doubted their salvation, and many of them have become deeply depressed because of it. The key issue behind all such thinking is that “Christians believe they should be doing better than they are if they are really saved” — as such, they have serious reservations as to the genuineness of their salvation.

The question of what constitutes “the marks of real saving faith” has been asked by Christians down through the ages. For example, during the time of the “Great Awakening” in America that occurred between 1725 and 1750, many responded to the preaching of such theologians as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. A few years later, however, some critics charged that there was nothing real about the Awakening because many who claimed to have been converted showed no evidence of it. To respond to the Awakening’s detractors, Jonathan Edwards (one of the most brilliant minds in American history) took up his pen to write his famous “A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections” — in it he shared his thoughts on discerning the true spiritual condition of a person who claimed to be a Christian. Scripture and Edwards both correctly state that being a genuine believer involves more than just signing a card, walking an aisle, being baptized, and participating in religious activities. Obviously there is a personal recognition of one’s sins, a willingness to repent of sin, and a placing of one’s trust in the work of Christ on the cross (Mt 4:17; Acts 2:38; 16:31; 17:30). The born again experience will result in Godly affections that bear fruit — all believers have a new appetite that they didn’t possess prior to placing their trust in Christ… the new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) has new affections and has a hunger for genuine spiritual food, and these new affections exhibit themselves in the life of the believer in some form or fashion. James, the blood brother of Jesus, says, “Real saving faith will manifest itself through a person’s life” (Jam 2:14). Edwards described it this way: “The principle evidence of life is motion; so the principle evidence of saving grace is holy motion” — you can tell someone is spiritually alive by their movement toward the things of God and the spiritual fruit that results. Jesus said, “The tree is known by its fruit” (Mt 12:33). Does this then mean a true Christian won’t struggle with sin? No, not at all. The apostle Paul makes it clear that every believer will struggle with his old sin nature (Rom 7), but a true believer will not continue to live comfortably in a sinful lifestyle or in a state of perpetual unbelief — according to Scripture that is not possible (1 Jn 3:6-9). Why? Because the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is at work in him slowly conforming him to the image of Christ (Ps 32:3-4; 38:1-4; Jn 16:8; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 6:18-20; 2 Cor 6:14-18; 7:9; Phil 2:13; 3:21).
The 19th century Anglican preacher “J. C. Ryle” preached a sermon titled “Authentic Religion” (www.BibleBB.com), and in it he states that authentic religion is genuine, sincere, inward, solid, substantial, intrinsic, living and lasting; as opposed to being mere show, pretense, and a skin deep feeling. Jesus denounced mere outward religion as being that which is hypocritical, because it essentially was nothing more than false profession (Mt 23). How much of our religion is nothing but churchmanship? J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) said the following five signposts should be helpful in determining whether or not our religion is truly authentic —

1. **The place it occupies in your inner man.** It is not enough that religion is in your head. You may know the truth and believe the truth to a degree, but your religion must be in your heart: it must hold the reins... it must sway the affections... it must lead the will... it must direct the tastes... it must influence the choices and decisions... it must fill the deepest, lowest, inmost seat in your soul. If it does not, you may have reason to doubt whether or not your religion is authentic and true (Acts 8:21: Rom 10:10).

2. **The feelings toward sin that it produces.** The religion of God will always have a very deep view of the sinfulness of sin. It will not merely regard sin as a blemish or a misfortune which makes men and women objects of pity and compassion, but it will be the abominable thing which God hates. It will look on sin as the cause of all sorrow, unhappiness, strife and war. Above all, it will see in sin the thing which brings eternal ruin, unless we can find a ransom and get its chains broken. If this is not your religion, you should doubt its genuineness.

3. **The feelings toward Christ that it produces.** Authentic religion will cause a man to glory in Christ, without whom he would have no hope at all. It will produce confidence in Him, love toward Him, delight in Him, comfort in Him; in short, He will be the light, the life, and the peace of the soul. If this is not your religion, you have serious reason to doubt your religion.

4. **The fruit it bears in your heart and life.** The religion of God is from above and will always be known by its fruits. It will produce in man repentance, faith, hope, love, spirituality, humility, kindness, self-denial, unselfishness, a forgiving spirit, moderation, truthfulness, hospitality, and patience. Though the degree these various graces appear may vary, the germ and seeds of them will be found in every believer’s life. If this is not your religion, you have reason to doubt its authenticity.

5. **Your feelings and habits about means of grace.** What are your feelings about the preaching of the Word, public worship, and the administration of the Lord’s Supper? Do you merely tolerate them as being proper and correct, or are they things in which you take pleasure and joy? Do you find your quiet time with the Lord, studying His Word and praying, essential to your comfort? Or do you find these practices boring and drudgery, and often neglected? If the means of grace are not as necessary to your soul as food and drink are to your body, you may well doubt whether your religion is authentic.

Obviously, judgment day will reveal every man’s religion, of what sort it is. Sit down quietly and examine yourself, and find out the authentic character of your religion. With the Bible in hand, and honesty in your heart, resolve to find out its genuineness. False religion will supply no comfort in the hour when comfort is most needed; that is, in the time of affliction, and on the death bed. Your repentance may be feeble, but let it be authentic... your faith may be weak, but let it be authentic... your desires after holiness may be mingled with much a lot of self, but let it
be authentic. Never be content to wear a cloak of religion. Be all that you profess... though you may sin, be authentic... though you may stumble, be true. Keep these principles continually before your eyes, and it will be well with your soul throughout your journey from grace to glory (www.BibleBB.com).

We all have our struggles and we all need to take into account the fact that we still sin and that we are going to struggle with our sinfulness. If you as a believer begin to doubt your salvation because “you don’t feel saved,” you are trusting your feelings instead of taking God at His word. Ask yourself this question: “Am I struggling against sin in my life?” If you aren’t, then you probably aren’t saved — but if you are, then that is a good sign that you are very much alive in Christ. Only spiritually alive people “struggle against sin” (Rom 7:14-23; Gal 5:17) — spiritually dead people don’t struggle against sin (self-rule) because they have no life force in them that counters the kingship of self. The key here is that you take your eyes off your feelings & failures and focus on Christ, the cross and His word (Heb 12:2). We need to draw our assurance of salvation from faith in the facts of Scripture and not from our feelings. Feelings are the responders of the soul or heart — they follow and respond to our understanding of Scripture, or what we have chosen to believe at some particular moment; as such, they are never a safe guide to what we should believe or of the state of our salvation.

Furthermore, we do not draw our assurance from our works. Works or the spiritual changes that occur in our lives as a result of God’s grace and His indwelling presence can confirm the reality of our life with God, but we must be extremely careful not to make such a subjective ground the basis of our assurance — because when a believer is out of fellowship he can have the appearance of an unbeliever especially if the condition lasts for any length of time (1 Cor 3:1-4). If we depend on works or obedient living to prove our salvation then we are faced with the following dilemma: If we are living obediently now, the possibility exists that could change in the future — and we would then conclude that we are not really true Christians. Scripture clearly warns against basing assurance or true relationship with God on performance (Mt 7:13-23; 12:31-37; 1 Cor 3:1-4; 6:19-20). God didn’t save you because of “your works or your goodness” (Rom 4:1-7; Eph 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-9; Tit 3:5-7)... He did not save you because of what is or is not in you... He saved you because of what is in Him — love and truth (Jn 3:16; Eph 1:7; 2:1-5; 1 Jn 5:5-12).

If salvation depends in any degree on “personal goodness,” none of us would be saved (Rom 3:10-12, 20). Salvation is not offered to those who have purposed to be good, or religious, nor is it guaranteed to those who hope God Himself will be good and gracious to them in the end. It is offered to all “meritless, helpless sinners” who are willing to believe that God has already been good to them through His Son on the cross. No life would ever be good enough to merit anything but condemnation from a holy God if judged on the grounds of moral equity. On the other hand, no sinner has fallen so low, or is so weak in himself, that he cannot find absolute rest and assurance of salvation in looking to Christ and the finished provisions of His grace (Heb 12:2). There are certain general facts about “Christian assurance” which should be stated: God has promised to save and keep all who put their trust in Him (Jn 6:37-9; Rom 8:29-30; Phil 1:6; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 5:10). Therefore, having put one’s trust in Him for salvation, one either believes Him to do what He has said, or in the measure in which one fails to believe, he supposes Him to be untrue. It is not possible to grow a deep conviction of assurance in the heart where the mind is still wondering whether it has really believed in a saving way, and where the impressions of certainty have not been allowed to take root (Jam 1:21). Confidence in the faithfulness of God will not thrive where one
has serious questions with regard to the integrity of God’s Word — because that’s the basis of faith (Heb 11:6). Moreover, one cannot expect to enjoy the fruit of a committed life (love, joy, peace, and assurance) if he is not growing in his faith and in his relationship with Christ (Rom 6:12, 13, 19; 10:17; 2 Cor 3:18; Heb 11:1, 6; 1 Pet 2:2). So prayerfully affirm the truths of God’s Word until they settle peacefully in your heart (Acts 16:14). Remember, to doubt salvation is not to trust/please God.

**The normal Christian experience is this:** “Old things pass away and all things become new” (2 Cor 5:17). The message of Scripture is clear: *Christ does not come to live in a human heart and leave it unchanged.* The first epistle of John is full of references to the outward evidence of the inward fact of the newly imparted divine life. The possession of the indwelling Son of God is the abiding fact of the newly created life in Him — *His presence most naturally leads to blessed new realities in experience.* The key question in anyone’s life is this: Do you believe there is only one God, that Jesus is God in the flesh, and that He died for your sins and rose from the dead three days later? If you answered “yes” to the foregoing, then it is highly probable that you are a believer. Notice what the apostle John said in his first letter: “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father” (1 Jn 2:10); “every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus is not from God, this is the spirit of antichrist” (1 Jn 4:2-3); “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 Jn 5:1); “the one who believes in the Son of God has the witness (Holy Spirit) in himself, whereas the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son”(1 Jn 5:10-11). John then concludes his letter with these words: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 Jn 5:13). The apostle Paul said, “The unsaved man (the natural man) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God — such things are foolishness to him, he cannot understand them, because these things are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor 2:14). Carefully consider what John and Paul said… then consider the “opposite position” of each of the statements listed above, so that you can better understand the position of the unsaved (the unbeliever). Are these things *foolishness* to you? If they are, you are not a believer. If you concur with the words of John and Paul, that is pretty strong evidence that you are indeed “*spiritually alive in Christ.*”

**The Bible teaches that being born again means “our life is changed”** — “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; all things have become new” (2 Cor 5:17). **Charles Spurgeon** and John’s First Epistle identify a number of changes that take place in the lives of those who are truly born again (www.spurgeongems.org) —

1. **They will no longer habitually sin.** The apostle John wrote, “No one who is born of God practices sin” (1 Jn 3:9). The regenerate person cannot continue to walk in darkness and walk in sin as a pattern of life; that is, he cannot live a life of perpetual sin and unbelief (Rom 14:23).

2. **They will seek to live a holy life.** John writes, “Everyone who practices righteousness is born of God” (1 Jn 2:3; 2:29). Where the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to an individual, a principle of holiness is imparted to him, and the Holy Spirit’s work becomes evident in his soul (Ezek 36:27; Gal 5:16-17-24; Eph 5:17-18).

3. **They will love fellow believers.** Writes John: “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren; he who does not love the brethren continues to abide in death” (1 Jn 3:14). It is a remarkable fact, when a person is saved he has an entirely different
attitude toward fellow-Christians; he no longer finds them strangely different or weird, or people with whom he does not want to associate.

4. **They will love others, regardless of who they are.** John writes, “Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God; the one who does not love does not know God” (1 Jn 4:7-8). All of the fruits of the Spirit are summed up in the word “charity” or “Christian love” — this is the sum of all grace. Believers have a tenderness in their hearts toward others that unbelievers don’t; there is a genuine compassion in believers for the well-being of others. How is it that they can love even the unlovely? Paul writes, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22).

5. **They will not place their affections on the things of this world.** Writes John: “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15). Paul says, “Those who are according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh; but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit…. and the Spirit of God indeed dwells in him” (Rom 8:5, 9). The puritan writer **John Owen** put it this way: “If our principal [is] as we profess, in things spiritual and heavenly… on them will our affections… and desires and thoughts be principally fixed.” These changes are not the cause of our salvation for we are saved by faith (Eph 2:8-9), but they are the evidence that we truly have been born again.

**The five main reasons people lack assurance are** —

1. **They do not remember a specific time when they received Christ.** The issue for people is to know that there was a defining moment in their life when they really placed their trust in the person and work of Christ.

2. **They question the procedure they went through when they accepted Christ.** Many evangelists and preachers emphasize the need for some form of public confession (walking the aisle or raising one’s hand); if people receive Christ privately, they may wonder if they should have made a public confession or prayed a different prayer.

3. **They struggle with certain sins.** They wonder if a true believer would have these kinds of problems. The real problem here is an ignorance of man’s sinful nature, the spiritual warfare of the believer, and the process of growing and maturing in Christ.

4. **They suffer from doctrinal misunderstanding.** They fail to understand the sufficiency of the work of Christ that solves the problem of man’s sinfulness.

5. **They look to their own works as the primary proof of their salvation.** The great reformer **John Calvin** emphatically warned us against looking to “our works” for the certainty of our salvation — we must look to Christ as the objective basis for assurance. To look to ourselves produces doubt and detracts from the saving work of Christ. The basis for knowing that I am a Christian is not what I do but what God’s Word says about what Christ has done and continues to do for those who have placed their trust in Him (Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 5:13). The truth of the matter is, our behavior as the saints of God is not always becoming of Christ — we are imperfect and incomplete this side of glory. That is why the apostle Paul admonishes believers accordingly: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Cor 6:18-20; 1 Th 4:3-4; 7:2, 9; Gal 5:17; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:5). Paul instructs us to not let the sin nature have dominion over us, that we should obey its lusts.
If you are basing your assurance on works, by what set of criteria do you then conclude that you have actually “born enough fruit”?

Believers struggle with their faith because they haven’t completely broken away from the “old mindset of the flesh” that ruled their hearts before they accepted Christ. When we commit ourselves to the person of Christ, the old way of thinking that characterized our lives prior to accepting Christ seeks to pull us away from the narrow path of righteousness — if we resist its pull and say “no” to the old man (i.e., we crucify him) through faith, the grace of God will begin to remove the condemnation we feel. As believers, we are to live our “new life” according to the teachings of God’s Word. When we decide to walk in ways that are contrary to the world and our old nature, however, we will be thoroughly challenged in our inner man to not do so (Gal 5:17). This is why Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, *he must deny himself*, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mt 16:24). Obviously you will be challenged in life to not deny your old nature, and to not follow Christ, and therein is the battle that must be fought — but to conclude that you are not saved because you are “*strongly inclined*” to live according to the dictates of the flesh (all of us are!), is to base your salvation on “your own goodness” and not God’s.

THE ESSENCE OF FAITH

The author of Hebrews describes faith as “the assurance of things hoped for… the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1) — that is, faith is being confident and sure of what is hoped for (that which Christ has promised), and is based upon the unshakable evidence that the unseen, spiritual blessings of Christianity are absolutely certain and real. In other words, faith brings the future into the present and makes the invisible seen. Faith is confidence in the trustworthiness of God; it is the conviction that what God says is true and that what He promises will come to pass. Faith is not a leap in the dark, belief without proof, or belief despite the evidence, rather faith is a complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Faith, of necessity, must have some revelation or promise from God as its foundation. It demands the surest evidence in the universe, and finds it in the Word of God. The challenges, afflictions and difficulties of life are the “crucible” God uses to test, prove and strengthen our faith (1 Pet 1:7). So to conclude that you don’t have faith simply because it is such a struggle for you, is to contradict what the Word of God says. George Muller put it this way: “Difficulties are food for faith to feed on.”

The believer is enjoined to live and grow in his faith through the study of the Word (Rom 10:17; 14:23; 2 Cor 10:15; Gal 3:11; Col 2:6-7; 1 Th 3:2, 10; 2 Th 1:3-4; 2:13; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:1, 6; 6:12; Heb 12:2; J am 1:3; 1 Pet 2:2; 1 Jn 5:4). We grow in our faith when we affirm the truths of God’s Word — by prayerfully reflecting upon the Word, and affirming it over and over again in our minds, God causes it to settle peacefully and confidently in our hearts — obviously without the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives this would not be possible (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor 2:14; 1 Jn 2:20, 27). As believers, we must do our part (read, study, believe & affirm His Word), and when we do, God will do His part (1 Cor 3:6; Phil 2:12-13). One of the main reasons we struggle with our faith is that we don’t know the God in whom we profess to have faith very well. Obviously the more intimately we know someone, and the more we have seen them in action, the more likely we are to believe what they say… so we must get to know Christ better (Eph 4:13; Phil 3:10; 2 Pet 3:18).
Paul exhorts us as Christians to “walk by faith, and not by sight” (or feelings – 2 Cor 5:7). The difference between these two ways of walking is “walking according to the truth,” or “walking according to perception” (what appears to be right from a human perspective – Prov 14:12). The main reason we struggle with a lack of faith is that we follow our perceptions of what is true rather than what in fact is true (i.e., what we know to be true by faith – Rom 10:17). For example, we are clearly told in Scripture that “God loves us,” but many believers do not really feel that God loves them — why? Because they don’t feel they are lovely enough for God to love them. And part of that answer is true! You are not lovely enough to be loved! Nobody is! But God doesn’t love us because we are lovely; He loves us because HE IS LOVE! The amazing thing about salvation is that God indeed does love us! That’s what inspired the great hymn writer Charles Wesley to pen that wonderful hymn — “Amazing Love, How Can It Be That Thou My God Shouldst Die for Me?” The truth of the matter is, there has never been a mature believer at any point in history who deep down felt that God loved him because He was worth loving! That is just the reality of what it means to be human! No one is lovely! We are all sinners! (Rom 3:10-12). Saved sinners indeed, but sinners nonetheless! The incredible, wonderful truth of the gospel is that GOD LOVES SINNERS! (Rom 5:8). So stop beating yourself up because you are one, and start worshipping the One who loves you and died for you! Get your eyes off yourself — that’s your problem! — and get your eyes on Jesus! (Heb 12:2). By the way, if you don’t love God, you’ve got a proud heart and you don’t realize how sinful you are… and how much you need a Savior. Believe me, none of us have anything to write home about — not even to mama! — and until we learn that, we haven’t even started down the road to maturity. Stop beating yourself up because of your sinfulness. Carefully reflect upon the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the greatest English-speaking preacher of the 20th century: “As long as you see your sins as a detriment with regard to your acceptance before God, you will negate the work of the cross in your life.”

The road to maturity & assurance involves spending more time in God’s Word, and getting to know God better — “to know Him is to love Him!” (Jn 17:3; Eph 3:16-21; 1 Jn 4:8, 10, 19). The Word is God’s communication to our soul — it not only reveals the Lord Jesus to us, and the path of life wherein to walk, but it also acts like a “mirror” that exposes all of our blemishes and imperfections. God has called us to a life of holiness, which essentially amounts to surrendering the control of our lives to Him… listening to Him… and walking with Him. Remember, without listening to God and obeying Him (that’s faith), it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6). The president and founder of New Life Ministries, Steve Arterburn, describes the essence of what “healthy faith” really looks like in his book, “More Jesus, Less Religion.” Let me close this study by sharing some of his thoughts with you —

A “healthy faith” is based in reality — The psalmist David wrote, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” (Ps 23:4). That’s the expression and expectation of a healthy faith — not only that God’s presence will go with us wherever we go, but that there are some dark, deadly shadowy places that each of us must traverse in life; such dark things exist because we live in a fallen world. A healthy faith gets us through those dark valleys… whereas an unhealthy faith likes to pretend that the valleys don’t really exist! David also penned these words: “Troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me” (Ps 40:12). Notice how honest and transparent David is before the Lord — he told the Lord the precise condition of his heart, and it wasn’t pretty. This is also an expression of a healthy faith. Earlier in the psalm he wrote: “I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to
me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” (Ps 40:1-3). 

Slimy pits and dark valleys exist in our world, and just as surely, every believer will pass through them (there are no exemptions!); we all occasionally fall into the mud and need to be rescued, cleansed and comforted. David never shrinks from telling it like it is. Healthy faith helps us embrace who we are, what we are, and where we are — not who we wish we were, and who we think we should be! David declares a failing, fallible humanity… and a loving, merciful God who chooses to involve Himself in our lives. A healthy faith acknowledges vulnerabilities, short-comings and weaknesses, and the need to depend upon a loving God to get us through all the valleys and slime pits of life. We have to embrace the fact that we are a people who must live by grace (we constantly need it!) through faith every day of our lives, because we are going to bumble and stumble all the way to the end! That may be humbling, but that’s reality!

**Reality can hurt** — Discomfort, pain, conflict and spiritual warfare is reality. A healthy faith helps us embrace these realities, and trusts Christ to walk with us through them. **A healthy faith is based in reality** — we all fail, we are all sinners, we all stumble in many ways, we all land in the mud more often than we will admit, and the dark valleys are a fearful thing for all of us. The truth of the matter is, we are all 100 percent, certifiably fallible! David reminds us that God never forgets that fact: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows our frame and is mindful that we are but dust” (Ps 103:13-14). By the way, whether you admit it or not, you’re just as big a “mud ball” as I am! The apostle John also reminds us that we will continue to sin every day: “If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to God, He can be depended upon to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong…. If we claim we have not sinned, we are actually calling God a liar, for He says we have sinned” (1 Jn 1:8-10). When we walk in the light we admit who we are, we experience daily cleansing, and enjoy the companionship and fellowship of other humble Christians and the Lord Jesus Himself (1 Jn 1:7).

**The way it really is** — Growing Christians strive to see the world and themselves as they really are, not through some rose-colored lenses or stained-glass filter. They do not feel compelled to explain away hardships or events that mystify them; they’re willing to live with some ambiguity in life; and they trust God to rule the world in righteousness (even if it means difficulty for them). As with Job, we must sometimes come to that humble place where we say to God, “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I say to You? I lay my hand on my mouth” (Job 40:4). Healthy faith refuses to ignore daily struggles or sweep them under the rug — instead it brings those issues into the light of Scripture and the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit. Unhealthy faith runs from reality, avoids confronting it, and even denies it. The healthy believer does not look to God to magically change his circumstances, but looks to Him in the midst of trials for the strength and comfort he needs to weather the storm. Believing God is faithful to help us through our trials and tribulations, we have no need to run from them, but rather embrace them. Healthy believers see the problems before them… do what they can do to resolve them… and trust the Lord to do the rest.

**The Bible commands Christians to “take a close look at themselves”** and ensure that they are truly in the faith, to make sure they aren’t self-deceived into thinking they are truly saved when they are not. Paul says, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” (2 Cor 13:5). Peter says, “Be diligent to make your calling and election sure” (2 Pet 1:10). If you are still not sure whether or not you truly are a believer, let me encourage you to establish in your
mind, once and for all, that you are indeed one of God’s children. Simply pray this sinner’s prayer that has been prayed by countless millions all over the world —

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. I ask You to come into my life and forgive me... I now surrender my life to You, Lord... take it and make me the person You want me to be... and grant me the grace to trust You and follow You as my Lord and Savior. Thank You for loving me and forgiving me and making me Your child. This I pray in Your name. Amen.

For those of you who have really struggled with “the issue of assurance,” I would like to encourage you to prayerfully work through this study three or four times, so that you can affirm over and over again the wonderful truths of Scripture in your life. In a sense, this will amount to “reprogramming your thinking” — after years of affirming wrong thoughts, you may find that the “ruts in the road you have traveled” are deep and difficult for you to navigate. Ask God for the grace to travel the road of life without the hindrances of satanic deception and untruth that have plagued you. Remember, above everything else, Satan wants to keep you bound-up, bewildered, enslaved and defeated (1 Pet 5:8-9; Jam 4:7); such is his primary objective in your life. This is the essence of “spiritual warfare,” and the immediate battle before you is the most important one of all — your identity in Christ. I have included a study on “Sanctification” on my new website — it’s a verse-by-verse study of Romans 6-8, and should be downloaded on to the website by the end of the month. Check if out at: www.TheTransformedLife.com — and prayerfully and carefully work your way through it. My prayer is that you will find it a very liberating study — remember, God’s will for your life is that you be “free indeed!” (Jn 8:31-32; Rom 8:2; Gal 5:1).

In addition to the various individuals stated in the foregoing material, some of the themes of this study were taken from the following authors/sources —

**John Piper** — Renowned Author, Pastor and Theologian
Website: [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

**Lewis Sperry Chafer** — Founder of Dallas Theological Seminary
Website: [www.wholesomewords.org](http://www.wholesomewords.org)

**J. C. Ryle** — Material from a sermon he preached on “Authentic Religion”
Website: [www.biblebb.com](http://www.biblebb.com)

**Matt Slick** — President & Founder of Christian Apologetics & Research Min.
Website: [http://carm.org](http://carm.org)

**GotQuestions.org** — This is the parent company for “CompellingTruth.org”
Website: [www.compellingtruth.org](http://www.compellingtruth.org)