

Keys to Prophecy



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#4 - The Antichrist Syndrome

As we have seen in Daniel 7 - The church Jesus Christ started lost it's grip on the Gospel - And became anti-Christ
 Claiming for itself the prerogatives and position of Christ - Speaking great words against the most high
 Interposing itself between the people and God - Claiming to be in control of people's salvation
 Adding human rituals and sacraments as necessary steps to salvation - In place of the finished work of Jesus
 Isolating people from the word of God - And corrupting Bible truth with human ideas and perversions
 Using physical violence against all who refused to accept it's claimed spiritual authority and teachings
 All contrary to the teachings and character of Jesus - And corrupting the Gospel of salvation

If the church as a whole loses its way - How can we as individuals keep our bearings and stay on track with Jesus?
 How can we avoid falling in to the same ditch of apostasy as so many before us and around us?
 How can we avoid the Anti-christ Syndrome - and stay true to Jesus - growing in grace - walking in truth?
 I believe we will find the answer by taking a close look at the subject of FAITH

The Bible says we have been SAVED by GRACE through FAITH

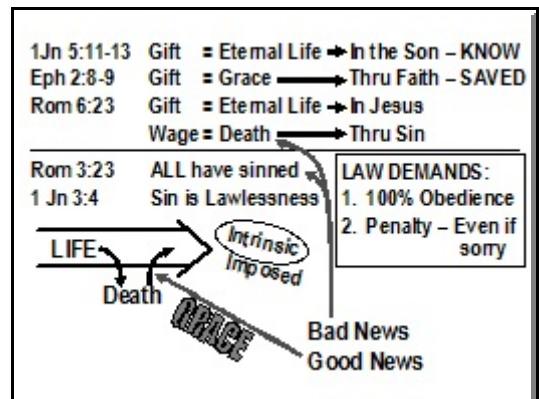
Ephesians 2:8-9 (1125) *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

In a previous study we took a look at Grace - The Bus God has built that will take us from death back into life

God has a gift for us - Called GRACE or ETERNAL LIFE
 It comes packaged in the person of Jesus Christ
 We receive it through a trust relationship with Jesus
 When we have Jesus - We HAVE LIFE

We have all sinned - Sin is living contrary to God's laws of life
 Those laws - like all laws - have very simple demands
 Perfection - or Penalty - 100% perfect obedience
 And a penalty for even one infraction
 And the penalty applies even if you are sorry

The penalty for breaking God's laws of life is DEATH
 That penalty is intrinsic - a natural result of the infraction
 Like breaking the law of gravity - No judge has to sentence you to fall - it happens naturally - automatically
 You can yell, "I'm sorry" all the way down, and you will hit just as hard
 So God does not threaten anyone who sins with death -
 God informs us and warns us that stepping outside the laws of life is lethal
 You are stepping into non-life - which is death

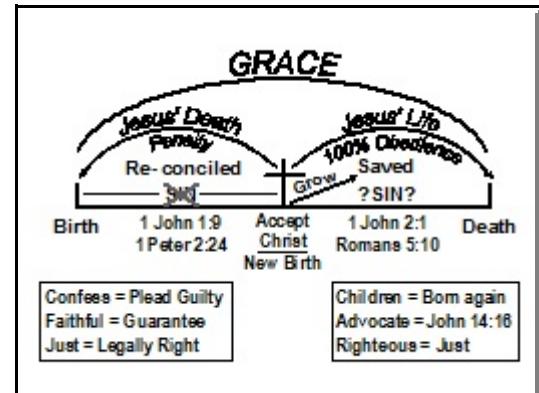


God does not kill sinners - Sin is killing us - Jesus is God, trying to save us from what Sin is doing to us
 Not Jesus saving us from what God is going to do to us because we sinned
 God does not say, "Serve me or die." - God says, "You are dying. Serve me and live!"
 Sin is in the killing business - Sin is telling God, our life-source, to go away and leave us alone
 If you disconnect from the life-source - You will cease to live
 Therefore the INTRINSIC wages of sin is death - Romans 6:23

The BAD NEWS of the Bible is that we have all sinned - And as a result we are all dying - We are all terminal
 The GOOD NEWS is that God, in Jesus, has made a way for us to survive and thrive - Called GRACE

- Jesus came to earth - God in human flesh - to SAVE us from sin
 He lived a perfect life - fulfilling the first demand of the law
 Then God laid on Him all our sin - And it crushed out His life
 He died for all sin - fulfilling the second demand of the law
 There is no demand the law can make that Jesus has not already completely and perfectly fulfilled

When I enter a trust relationship with Jesus - I HAVE eternal life
 My past sin is covered by His death - He died in my place
 My sin is blotted out - Gone - Nailed to the cross
 My future is covered by His life - He lived in my place
 It is Jesus' perfect life that guarantees I "will be saved"
 Even if I sin in the future - Jesus has me covered by His life
 My current life is empowered because Jesus lives - Now
 I don't have to keep on sinning - I can live a new life
 In Jesus I have been set free from the bondage to sin
 Through the Holy Spirit - Jesus writes the laws of life in my heart - and lives them out in my body
 But living a new life now - Does not gain or maintain my eternal life - It is part of the gift
 The quality of eternal life begins today - the moment I believe - and will continue for eternity



The past no longer condemns me - Jesus DIED - Once for all on the cross
 I am not condemned to repeat the past - Jesus LIVES - Alive in heaven with power to transform
 And the future cannot knock me out - Jesus LIVED - A perfect life on earth

And we concluded - If I am covered by ALL that Jesus is, there is no way in the universe I can be lost
 That is GOOD NEWS - I can KNOW I have eternal life - And live in that confidence and peace
 Truly we are SAVED by GRACE

GRACE is all God - Designed, built and operated by God
 Grace IS - It exists totally apart for any one of us - Totally independent of my participation or actions
 Grace will do what it is designed to do whether we get involved or not
 I cannot add to grace by my good behavior - I cannot subtract from grace by my bad behavior

So then - Where do I fit in to the picture - Where does human participation come in the salvation process
 Where do my actions and decisions come into play?
 Where does obedience come into the equation? - Is obedience even important?

This brings us to the subject of FAITH - We are saved by grace through FAITH
 FAITH is where we get involved
 FAITH is how we receive this wonderful gift of Grace
 FAITH is how we get on the bus that goes from death into life
 Any human involvement or participation falls into the area of FAITH

- Let's talk about FAITH

Ephesians 2:8-9 (1125) *For by grace you have been saved through faith...*

- What is FAITH? - What are two synonyms for faith? - BELIEF and TRUST
- I would like to define "belief" as INTELLECTUAL
- I would like to define "trust" as COMMITMENT

Let me illustrate with a CHAIR

Suppose I came to visit you in your home - And you offered me a chair and invited me to sit down and relax
 Have you ever sat down on a chair that did not hold you up? - It can be embarrassing and painful
 How do I know the chair you just invited me to sit down in will hold me up?

For the sake of illustration - suppose I am a non-believer - I do not believe that chair will hold me up
 What can I do to gain evidence to believe in the chair?

1. I can OBSERVE the chair - I tilt it up - Look it over - Sure enough, it has all the right parts
 And the parts seem to be properly connected
2. I can TEST the chair objectively, without incurring any personal risk
 I lean over - Grab the chair with my hands - Push down on it - Push side to side
 The chair seems solid
3. I can seek a WITNESS - I can ask if you have ever sat in the chair - It is your house
 Have you ever sat in this chair? - YES
 Did it hold you up? - YES

Now - Based on the evidence I have gathered - Observation - Testing - And a Witness
 I now have reason to believe that if I sit down in the chair, it should hold me up
 I don't have proof - But I have adequate evidence to "believe"

So now - I have moved from being a non-believer to a believer

Standing there by the chair - I believe - I believe the chair will hold me up

Am I gaining any benefits from the chair yet? - NO - I am still standing

What do I have to do in order to gain any benefits from the chair - from my belief?

I have to SIT DOWN - I have to TRUST the chair - I have to make a COMMITMENT to the chair
 You have probably never thought of it that way before - But sitting in a chair is a commitment
 You have all made a commitment to the chair you are sitting in right now

Now - How far down in the chair do I have to sit in order to receive rest from the chair?

Is there any such thing as half-trust?

Is it good enough to sit half way down - to put half my weight on the chair? - No

Trying to sit part way down in a chair - with my feet braced underneath me - muscles tight for action
 So that should the chair give way I can save myself from falling - is far more painful than standing

Within moments my knees are hurting me - It is an unnatural position to be in

The only way to receive the benefits of a chair - to receive rest - is to make a full commitment

I must sit all the way down - Stretch my legs out in front of me - Lean back - and relax

And now - should the chair give way - I am sunk - There is no way I can save myself
 But I will receive rest and relaxation if the chair holds up

In the same way - to receive the assurance of eternal life - to receive the "rest" of salvation in Jesus

I have to not only BELIEVE that Jesus can save me - But TRUST Him with my life

I need a certain level of intellectual understanding of GRACE

I have done my best to explain grace to you

Jesus lived and died in your place - He has fulfilled all the demands of the law for you

He lives now for you - To apply his perfect life and death to your need for forgiveness and life

He has done it all - He has built the bus that is going to heaven - It will complete the trip

But in order for you to receive the benefits of GRACE - You must GET ON THE BUS - Trust the bus

It is not enough to just believe in the bus - To believe the bus exists - and watch it drive by

You must get on the bus - Trust yourself to the bus - and the bus driver
 and STAY on the bus - all the way to the destination

So how do I trust GRACE? - How do I make that commitment? How do I sit down in the chair of FAITH?

Trusting God involves a THREE-FOLD commitment

- 1. I must trust God with my PAST - (This would be the first half of the diagram - From birth to the cross)
 I have sinned - Sin is lethal - Sin is killing me - I cannot save myself
 I can never un-sin a sin - All future good living cannot undo any past infraction

- So I must trust Him for FORGIVENESS - Trusting that Jesus means what He says...
- 1 John 1:9 (1168) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

If I plead guilty to being a sinner - Jesus promises to forgive ME of ALL my sins - And wipe the record clean
 Jesus bore all my sins in His body on the cross - He took the full lethal hit of sin for me
 He promises to lift the guilt - Give me peace within - Confirming that I have truly been forgiven

- 2. I must trust God with my ETERNITY - (This would be the right end of the diagram - From death into eternity)
 The future is beyond my reach - I can do nothing about my eternity - I have to leave that up to God
- Jesus says He will be my SAVIOR - He has already given me Eternal Life

- 1 John 5:11-13 (1171) *¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.
¹²He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Jesus says that by trusting in His perfect life, I “will be saved” - I will make it!

- Romans 5:10 (1088) *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

Jesus already lived that perfect life required for me to live forever - It is in the bank
 And when I “have Jesus” - His perfect life stands in the place of my imperfect life - I am saved!

- 3. But I must also trust God with my PRESENT - In the day by day living of life
 Trusting God with my PAST and ETERNITY is more theoretical
 My past is gone - My future is out of reach - I can't do anything about either one
 It does not necessarily change my daily activities - What I have for breakfast - The route I drive to work
 It does give me peace within as I live my life - And joy
 But trusting God with my PRESENT is very practical - Impacting my life moment by moment - day by day
 It is where the rubber of FAITH meets the road of life

- This is where Jesus becomes my LORD

What is a LORD? - It is not just a religious word - It also has a secular application
 The LORD lived in the castle - And everyone else did whatever he said
 A LORD is a boss - a master - the one in charge - the one with the right to call the shots
 When Jesus becomes Lord - He becomes the ruler in my life
 In charge of everything in my life - every moment - of every day
 No part of my life is exempt - In trusting Jesus as Lord, I give Him full control all the time

Now - We really like the idea of having all our sins forgiven - and having our eternity guaranteed
 Getting out of hell and into heaven is an attractive proposition
 But giving someone else control of our daily life - we do not always find that as appealing
 Don't I get to be in charge of anything?
 What is this new LORD decides differently than my cherished plans and desires?

But if I am going to receive the benefits of GRACE - I have to make a full TRUST commitment
 I cannot give God two thirds of my life - my PAST and ETERNITY - and keep the PRESENT for myself
 I either give him ALL my life - or I give him NONE of it
 I cannot sit two-thirds of the way down in the chair of faith and hope to find rest for my soul
 Any more than sitting two-thirds of the way down in a chair will give rest for my body
 I must sit all the way down to receive the benefits of salvation
 I must commit ALL my life to Jesus if I am to receive the reality of salvation - and the assurance
 I must give God my PAST - my ETERNITY - and my PRESENT - It is ALL or NOTHING

Let me illustrate Lordship with the chair

This is the chair of FAITH - When I am sitting in the chair I am trusting
 When I am trusting I am covered with Grace - Jesus life and death form a canopy over the chair
 This canopy is not an umbrella I can carry around in my hand
 The only way to be under the canopy of grace is to be sitting in the chair
 Let's put wheels on the chair - This is a wheel chair - Life move on - day by day
 Let's put Jesus behind the chair - as LORD of the chair - And therefore Lord of me when I am in the chair

One day the Lord says to me - Let's go this way - (Pointing slightly to the right)

I say - "OK - I'm trusting - I'm covered with Grace - You are in charge - Let's go!"

The next day - the Lord indicates that we are heading slightly to the left

My response is the same - "OK - I'm trusting - I'm covered with Grace - You are in charge - Let's go!"
 Another day - the Lord says, "Let's wait here a while"
 I look around - I don't like my surroundings - This is not where I want to be
 BUT - I want to stay covered - So I choose to stay put in the chair - and wait

Then - one day the Lord says - "Let's make a hard turn to the right - and go over there"

I look hard to the right and don't like what I see - It is certainly not where I had been planning on going
 I say - "Lord, that is not where I want to go with my life - That is not my idea of a good time"

What are my options? - If I stay in the chair - where am I going? - The Lord's way - to the right!
 What is my only other option? - To get out of the chair - Then I can go any direction I want

My other option is not to go the "other way" - I can go no other way until I get out of the chair
 The real question is - Will I stay in the chair and keep trusting - Or will I get out and trust in myself?
 If I get out of the chair I can go wherever I want - I can go left, right, forward or reverse
 I can even try to go God's way - But I am going on my own - No longer covered with Grace
 And I will never make it - I cannot ever make it -
 That is called "salvation by works" - and it doesn't work

So here is the point of this illustration

- What is the focus of my life now that I have made a commitment to Christ - and received salvation?
 Is it to try hard from now on to be good and not be bad? - to go to the right and not to the left?
 Or is to try hard from now on to trust? - To try hard to stay in the chair and keep trusting?
- The focus of the Christian life is on TRUSTING - not on BEHAVIOR
 If I stay in the chair and keep trusting - where will I go? - What will happen to my behavior?
 I will be going Jesus way - And my life and behavior will reflect his Lordship and Laws
 I cannot help but go His way if I remain in the chair of Faith
 I cannot trust Jesus with my life - and not experience a transformed life
 The result of trust is INTRINSIC - Just as the results of sin are INTRINSIC
 So the focus of the Christian life - is to work on TRUST - not BEHAVIOR
 To try hard to trust and keep trusting - Not to try hard to be good and stop sinning
 But the inevitable result of trust - will be behavior change and cessation of sinning

So how do I try hard to trust? - How do I work on trust?

It is one thing to make a list of behaviors that need to change - and start trying to check it off
 But TRUST is more nebulous - less concrete - Harder to get a handle on
 Do you pick up hitchhikers? - Most people quickly indicate NO - They do not pick up hitchhikers
 Why not? - Don't you have any compassion on someone needing a ride? - What is the problem?

Back in 1977 - During the late hippie era - I visited my sister in Montana - I was 21 years old

I wanted to go into Yellowstone National Park to a place called Mammoth Hot Springs
 A hot river flows into a cold river - and it forms a natural Jacuzzi - Even has some natural steam caves
 Not having a car - I decided to be a hippie for a day - I took my backpack and ukelele - And hitchhiked
 I had no trouble getting from Bozeman to Livingston - Then turned south towards Yellowstone
 Along Highway 89 is a beautiful stretch of country - Through the valley of the Yellowstone River
 It is about 55 miles south to the Park entrance - And another 5 miles to Mammoth Hot Springs
 Someone gave me a ride part way - And dropped me off in the middle of nowhere
 There I sat - Playing my ukelele and enjoying the surroundings
 Traffic was sparse - But no one was stopping - Everyone just whizzed on by

Finally - after a long time - A blue chevy station wagon with a mom and several kids drove by

They all turned and looked as me as they passed

A few minutes later - they drove by the other way - A little slower - And they all looked again

Shortly they came back a third time - And this time they stopped

Mom reached over and rolled down the passenger side window - and called out to me

"No one is ever going to pick you up here"

Then she did a risky thing - She said, "Hop in. I shouldn't, but I'll give you a ride" - I did

Of course - I immediately asked her why one on picked up hitchhikers on that stretch of road

She pointed to the right - where a little dirt road went down by the river - and told me a story

A couple of years before - A community college teacher from Livingston was driving this road

He stopped to pick up a hitchhiker - a hippie - near the same area she picked me up

The hippie made the teacher drive down by the river - right at the spot she pointed to

There the hippie killed the teacher - and ate him

They found the man's fingers in the hippie's pocket

I have no problem understanding why people are reluctant to pick up hitchhikers - We don't TRUST them
There have been too many horror stories

Now let me ask you this question - If I were out hitchhiking - and you saw ME - recognized me - Pastor Gary

Would you be more likely to stop and pick me up? - Why? - Because you KNOW me

If you didn't know me - I would be any old bearded guy by the road

But we have gotten acquainted - Spent some time together - Developed a relationship

Here is a universal truth - YOU CANNOT TRUST SOMEONE YOU DO NOT KNOW

Trusting someone who you do not know - is simply taking a chance - presumption - It is not really trust

If you get to know someone - who is trust worthy - The more you know them, the more you'll trust them

If you get to know someone - who is not trustworthy - The more you know them - the less you'll trust them

You cannot really work directly on TRUST - You can only work on that which will result in TRUST

And how do you do that? - By working on getting to KNOW them

Look at this verse

John 17:3 (1045) *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Notice - Here ETERNAL LIFE is defined simply as KNOWING Jesus

To know Jesus is to have Eternal Life

It says nothing about confession, repentance, forgiveness, grace, faith, or anything else

Just KNOW Jesus - and you are IN

How does that work? - Well, if you KNOW Jesus - Will you trust Him?

I have personally found Jesus to be fully trustworthy - And I have known Jesus for many years
So I believe if you get to know him - the outcome will be the same with you

Get to know Jesus - and you can't help but trust Him

And if you trust Jesus - are you covered with Grace? - You can't help it

And if you are covered with Grace - are you Saved? - You can't help it

So to know Jesus - is to trust Jesus - is to have Eternal Life

So how do you work on getting to know someone? - It takes two ingredients...

1. TIME - You have to spend some time with them

2. COMMUNICATION - You have to talk - get to know each other

If you spend time in communication with someone - You cannot help but get to know them

If they are trustworthy - You cannot help but come to trust them

If they are not trustworthy - You cannot help but mistrust them

It is impossible to mistrust a trustworthy person whom you know

It is also impossible to trust an untrustworthy person you have come to know

If you want to get to know Jesus - How do you do that? - The ingredients are the same

1. Time is time - You have to invest some time with Jesus if you are to get to know Him
2. Communication - How do you communicate with Jesus - with God?

BIBLE - God speaks to us through the Bible - It is His inspired word

PRAYER - We talk to God through Prayer - He promises to hear our prayers

Put the two together - Bible and Prayer - And you have a two-way conversation

We read and listen and meditate - and God speaks to our hearts through the Holy Spirit

We talk back in prayer - But prayer is more than rehearsing a list of needs to God

Prayer is simply conversation - About anything and everything - In common language

And the purpose of this time and communication - is to GET TO KNOW JESUS

There are TWO KINDS of Bible study

1. You can read your Bible to learn facts - and proofs - and prophecies - and never get to know Jesus
This kind of Bible study is important - but has no real value without the second kind

2. You can read your Bible for a personal encounter with Jesus - to experience Jesus

And you will discover a personal relationship with Him

Without a personal relationship with Jesus - Bible facts and figures are of no eternal value

But within that personal relationship - the whole Bible comes alive

So if you spend time in the Bible and Prayer - for the purpose of knowing Jesus

Will you get to know Him? - You can't help it

If you know Him are you covered with Grace? - You can't help it

If you are covered with Grace, are you Saved? - You can't help it

So the practical definition of Faith is...

The choice to take time on a regular basis to get to know Jesus - through Bible and Prayer meditation

When you are on the Bus of Grace - You discover that the Bus Builder is also the Bus Driver

And sometimes the bus makes a turn that you don't understand - seems completely off route

Sometimes it looks like the Bus Driver is about to take you over Niagara Falls!

What are you going to do? - Jump out the window and swim for it? - Or stay with the bus?

You have to know and trust the Bus Driver if you are going to stay with the bus - All the way to the destination

You and the Driver must become good friends - By spending lots of time together

Now - Let me set this concept with a Bible story - Turn to John 6 (1031)

One day Jesus fed over 5000 people with a sack lunch - At a deserted place west of the town of Bethsaida

Bethsaida is a little town that lies at the very northern tip of the Sea of Galilee

Jesus and His disciples had headed out in a boat - Sailing several miles west along the shore of Galilee

They hoped to find a little time and place alone - away from the crowds

But the people saw them leave - and followed - walking along the shore

When Jesus came ashore - There was a huge crowd waiting for him

So He taught them - and healed their sick - And spent the day with them

Near the close of the day - Jesus performed the miracle of feeding them - Then He sent them home

First Jesus sent His disciples away in the boat - the only boat - Then He dismissed the people to go home

And as the people watched - Jesus walked up into the hills to pray

Some of the people evidently spent the night on the beach

And the next morning they looked all over to find Jesus - But he was nowhere to be found

Some other boats came sailing by - So they hitched a ride eastward across the north end of the lake

They arrived in Capernaum - A town several miles west of Bethsaida

And there they found Jesus! - How could that be? - How did He do that?

The previous evening - The disciples had sailed west - Jesus had hiked east

It was impossible for Jesus to have made it all the way to Capernaum on foot in the dark

They did not know it - But that was the night Jesus had walked on water - And calmed the sea

John 5:25 *And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”*

What were they really asking? - Were they wondering what time Jesus got there? - NO

They were asking - “How did you do that? - It is impossible for you to be here - now - without a boat!”
But instead of telling the people how He got there, Jesus told them why they were looking for Him.

John 5:26 *Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.*

The word “SIGNS” is used in the Gospel of John to refer to the miracles Jesus did to provide evidence that He was more than just a man – that He was their Messiah and Savior
So Jesus is saying - You are not looking for me in order to put your trust in me as your Savior
You just want another meal - You are a bunch of freeloaders - moochers
I fed you yesterday - and you are back for more

John 7:27 *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you...*

What is another word for “labor”? - Work - Jesus gives them some instruction about what to work on
“Do not just work on physical food which you eat, and a few hours later you are hungry again
Do not send all your energy just on physical survival
 You need to spend some time WORKING ON ETERNAL FOOD - which I will give you.”
They were totally fixated on where they would get their next meal
Jesus was trying to get them to look up higher - To pay attention to eternal spiritual realities
We are made to do more than survive - God made us to live forever
Jesus came to give Eternal Life - Not just keep us alive here until we die naturally

It is interesting to note that Jesus told the people to work on something he would GIVE them
Work for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will GIVE you
I thought if you worked for something - it was a wage, not a gift
If I handed you a sandwich right now - Would that be a gift? - YES
But do you have to work on that gift? - YES - You have to EAT it
You don't work FOR the gift - But you must work ON the gift
Jesus promises to GIVE us the spiritual food that will result in our eternal life - As a totally free gift
But we have to eat it!

Jesus told the people to WORK on something
These people were part of a religious system which focused lots of works
On trying to gain God's approval by doing all the right things
So the people ask a very good question

John 7:28 *Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”*

If you are going to WORK on something - you want to work on the right thing
So this is a great question - What is it that God really wants us to work on? - We'll add it to our list!

John 7:29 *Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”*

What does God tell them to work on? - Belief - Faith - Trust
Just like we learned from the chair illustration
The focus of the Christian life is not about behavior - trying hard to be good and not be bad
Rather - it is on trying hard to trust and keep trusting

Notice the flow of verses 27-29 - Work on eternal food. Work on what? Work on trusting Jesus.
Jesus uses “food” as an illustration to help us understand what it means to work on “trust.”

Now jump down to v.48

John 7:48 "*I am the bread of life.*"

Jesus tells the people that HE is the eternal food they need to work on

John 7:49 "*Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.*"

Jesus now brings up the Manna - The food God gave the people to eat for 40 years in the wilderness
 This was food dropped directly from heaven - Angels food - Supernatural food from God
 Yet this food only kept the people physically alive - while they grew old and finally died

John 7:50-51 ⁵⁰*"This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.*

⁵¹*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

Jesus tells the people that HE is better food than any manna - or loaves and fishes

If they will eat HIM - His flesh - they will live forever
 And not only them - but the whole world

John 7:52 *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"*

The people said, "This is weird - We don't eat pork, much less people - How are we going to eat Him?"

You might think Jesus would decide His illustration wasn't working

Maybe He should try a different approach
 But instead, Jesus digs in even deeper

John 7:53-58 ⁵³*Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.*

⁵⁴*Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

⁵⁵*For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*

⁵⁶*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*

⁵⁷*As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.*

⁵⁸*This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."*

Jesus tells the people, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood"

The Old Testament specifically forbids eating blood

Yet Jesus says emphatically tells the people to eat His flesh - and drink His blood

If they don't - they will have no life

If they do - look at the list of benefits

v.50 - You will NOT DIE

v.51 - You will LIVE FOREVER

v.54 - You will have ETERNAL LIFE

v.54 - You will be RAISED in the RESURRECTION

v.56 - You will ABIDE in Jesus

Don't skip over this one too quickly - What does it mean to ABIDE? - To remain - stay - stick

Do you want to remain in Jesus? - Not backslide? - Not fall away? - Not lose your way?

Eat Jesus - That will cure your wanderings - And keep you with Him all the way

v.57 - You will LIVE because of Jesus

v.58 - You will LIVE FOREVER

So the focus of the life of FAITH is to work on eating Jesus - An illustration of how to work on trust

Jesus draws a parallel between physical and spiritual food

As physical food is to physical life - so spiritual food is to spiritual life

So let's ask a few questions about physical food.

1. How often do you need to eat? - Every day. We need daily food.
2. If you miss a day, are you dead? - NO. But you are hungry
3. If you miss too many days, will you die? - Of course
If you stop eating you will eventually starve to death
4. And if you only eat once a week, will you be able to survive? - NO

You will expend more calories living for a whole week than you can possibly ingest in one meal
Eating just once a week - You will slowly die - You will just prolong the agony

Now, let's ask the same questions about spiritual food.

1. How often do you need to eat spiritual food? - Every day
2. If you miss a day are you dead? - NO - But you are hungry
You do not earn eternal life or God's favor by clocking an hour with Jesus every day
It is about a relationship - About knowing Him - Not about accomplishing some ritual
3. If you miss too many days will you die? - YES
We all know that relationships can die - Marriages can unravel
If they are not nourished with time and communication
Busyness - even at good things - can kill a relationship - just for lack of time
4. And if you only eat spiritual food once a week, can you survive - spiritually? - NO
Going to church is not enough
Going to church is like eating out - You have to learn to also feed yourself daily at home
Going to church no more makes you a Christian, than sleeping in a garage makes you a car

So we see that the focus of the Christian life is about taking time for a daily spiritual meal

Getting to know Jesus through time in a Bible-Prayer conversation with Him - Day by day

One preacher put it this way:

If each day we would take the time with Jesus that it takes to cook and eat a simple meal

We could not miss heaven!

We're not talking about a drive-through burrito at Taco bell - Eaten on the run

Not a hurried prayer with your hand on the doorknob

But some thoughtful time for real conversation - Undistracted - Unhurried

The real question of FAITH is - Do you have time to feed yourself spiritually? - Will you take the time?

The menu is Jesus - And you need to eat Him daily

If you do - you will live - If you don't - you will die - It is just that simple

And yet that simple act of eating daily spiritual food - will become one of the toughest battles of your life

Satan will let all hell break loose against you - to try to keep you from eating regularly

He knows if you eat Jesus regularly - He is defeated - He is finished - He has lost you

And he won't give up on you easily

You will find that trying to take daily significant time with Jesus - will be a huge challenge

Much bigger than simply trying to overcome sin - Because Satan will fight you harder than ever

Yet this is a battle you can win

Some days you when you eat your spiritual breakfast - The food will taste great

Jesus will seem near - The Bible will be clear and interesting - You will feel great

Other days - it will taste like God ground up the box and fed it to you

Jesus will seem distant - The Bible will make no sense - be boring - And you will fight sleep

But either way - If you stop and eat - Even if you don't really like the menu - You will be fed

And your spiritual life will grow - thrive - mature

Eat and you will live - Don't eat and you will die

After teaching on grace, a number of you indicated your desire to receive eternal life - or the assurance of eternal life
 Tonight I have shared with you the simple truth of how to keep yourself alive in Jesus

You have to eat - And eat the right menu

You have to nurture the relationship - with time and communication

Your job is to seek to know Jesus - Through time in the Bible and Prayer

Jesus makes Himself available to you - But you must choose to take the time to come - and feed on Him

Now - Let me wrap this up with three Bible verses that pull it all together - I call them the Assurance Texts

- John 1:12 (1025) *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.*

Let me ask you some questions:

Did you receive Him? YES

Did you believe on His name? YES

Then are you now a child of God?

How secure is a child in a family - the way a family is supposed to be? - Totally secure.

Even when a child is naughty? - Are naughty children still part of the family? - YES

Your parents may have to pick you up - dust you off - bind your wounds - dry your tears

Even discipline you when you needs it - But the whole time you are still part of the family.

Here is an important point - relating to the chair illustration

The chair illustration is designed to teach ONE main point

That the focus of the Christian life is on trying hard to trust - not on trying hard to behave

But don't take the chair illustration too far - or it can logically look like...

Every time you commit a sin - you must have gotten out of the chair - And lost grace and salvation

To understand the "assurance" of eternal life - We need to change illustrations

To the family metaphor - as found in this verse

You are now part of a family - And naughty children are still part of the family

You don't lose your place in the family just because you mess up - or even throw a fit

How secure are you in God's family? Look at...

- John 6:37 (1032) *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

Did you come to Jesus? - YES - Then this verse is for you

This is the strongest negative in the Greek language

It means never, absolutely not, no way, not under any circumstances

will God ever throw you out of the family

So, will God ever throw you out of the family? - NO

Is it possible to sin long enough and bad enough for GOD to throw you out of the family? NO.

But there are two ways out of the family.

1. The door is not locked - God does not chain you in the closet - You are always free to choose to leave
 Love is the only thing holds you in the family - And love is the strongest power in the universe
 You can walk out any time
 But I don't know of anyone who has ever walked out on a good family
 Where they had developed good and strong relationships

2. But there is a second way out of the family

If you get so busy up in your room that you fail to come down for dinner

you will eventually starve to death in your room - and they will have to take you out and bury you

But if you simply dine daily with Dad - Take time for regular meals with the Father and the family
 You will stay alive - You will grow
 Your relationship with your heavenly Father will thrive - Your trust in Him will grow daily
 You will be held secure in the family - By relationships that no power can break

Revelation 3:20 (1177) *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

Every day Jesus comes by with breakfast
 He knocks on your door and says - "If you've got the time, I've got the food."
 If you are too busy to let Him in - you will miss a meal
 And remember - if you miss too many meals you will die

So you need to actually plan your life around your spiritual meals
 Just like you plan your physical life around your physical meals - Don't you
 Plan your evening - so you can get to bed in time - to get up with time for a spiritual breakfast
 Jesus will drop by with the food - Will you have time to eat?

If you eat you will live - If you starve you will die
 You need meals along with Jesus - Private personal devotions
 You need meals with your friends - along with Jesus - Church - fellowship - with other believers
 Eat - and you will live
 Eat Jesus - and you will live forever

So let me ask you some final questions - Based on what we discuss last night and tonight

Have you now come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that you have eternal life?
 What can you now say? - YES

And now, if God were now to ask you, "Why should I let you into my kingdom?" - What will your answer be?
 Jesus lived and died for me. I have received Jesus and he has given me eternal life.

And what are you supposed to work on - for the rest of your Christian life? - Behavior? or Trust? - TRUST

If you want to stay alive - on the bus - in relationship with Jesus - for the rest of your life - What must you do?
 Eat and drink Jesus - Daily - Focus on relationship - On knowing Him - Through Bible, Prayer and fellowship
 It will keep you growing - Hold you in assurance - And transform you into becoming daily more like Jesus
 With the outcome guaranteed - You will spend eternity with Jesus
 This relationship will last forever

In our next study - We will look at Daniel 8 - and see how God plans to restore what has been wrong for so long
 The medieval apostasy of the church left things in terrible shape
 Distorting the truth of the Gospel and the character of God
 Making it hard for people to even want to have a relationship with God

But God has a plan to restore the true teaching of the Gospel in the end time - Before Jesus comes again
 To prepare people for the end of this world - and eternal life beyond
 And prophecy has set a time when this is all going to happen