



February 2003

Faith is the ASSURANCE of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

I have been thinking a lot about **ASSURANCE** lately. People are hungry for assurance...assurance that we are loved and accepted, and have value. I have heard the term "assurance of salvation" for a long time, and it is usually used in reference to a person being assured he or she is going to heaven sometime in the future. However, I am growing to see that assurance of living in heaven later only comes through the assurance of truly living on earth now, and not vice versa. So, how can we truly have assurance for abundant life now?

The apostle Paul testifies in 2 Corinthians 6 that true **ASSURANCE** is from God Himself. Verse 2 says, "Behold, **NOW** is the day of salvation." I used to understand this to mean that we need to be saved today so we can go to heaven later. But Paul never mentions heaven here. Paul focuses on the "grace of God" in our daily walk (verse 1). He refers to us being "servants in endurance, in afflictions, in labors...in the Holy Spirit, and in the power of God" (verses 4-6). Paul notes "We are the temple of the living God, just as God said 'I will dwell in them and walk among them'" (verse 16). So, Paul keeps pointing us to the life of Christ indwelling us now for assurance.

The disciple John also yearned for people to know true **ASSURANCE** from God Himself. "These THINGS that I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know (have assurance) that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). What THINGS? The verses leading up to 1 John 5:13 define these THINGS as the testimony of God Himself by the life of His Son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in us! 1 John 5:10 says, "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony IN himself."

Sometimes life is so overwhelming to me. Sometimes I pull my truck over and just close my eyes to seek peace and assurance. I hope no one reads these newsletters and think that I have it all together! Indeed, I have it all together now and forever through the gift of Jesus as my life, but my actual experience of this already "done deal" is a growing, often painful and awkward process...but a most wonderfully joyous pilgrimage.

For my assurance of salvation, I used to depend on the fact that I believed in Jesus as my Savior. However, the object of that assurance was often on **WHAT** I believed (no matter how sound that belief may have been), and not always on **WHOM** I have believed and am believing...Jesus Himself who lives in me now! Do you see the difference? It's only when I get still that God personally assures me of His eternal embrace of me...*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16).*

I am discipling people one-on-one each week, one day in Hendersonville and one evening in Simpsonville. Without exception, each one of us is seeking assurance for **TODAY**. My goal in discipling is not to teach people truths, but to encourage people to hear personally from **TRUTH HIMSELF** (see John 14:6)...Jesus Christ who indwells them...He is the teacher, the Wonderful Counselor. It's amazing to witness the Bible come alive when we hear first-hand from God. Lives are transformed when assurance is received personally from Jesus.

Boys Home Ministry Opportunity

A boys home recently requested I develop a ministry that would help **ASSURE** the boys of their unconditional acceptance by God through Jesus. The boys home is home for up to 46 boys, ages 6 to 21, who have endured everything from neglect, severe abuse, and abandonment. This home is looking for a team of 6 or more men AND women (including those around 20 years old or so) to build relationships with the boys...so that the boys will be grounded in grace before they leave the home. The initial need is for a team to train the boys home staff in discipling the boys and to start a Bible study for some of the older boys in small groups. The Bible study would be one evening a week for 12 weeks starting in April or May. Then, there would be on-going follow-up to nurture the boys as they "grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). The teaching sessions need to be short and simple, and creative, as the boys have a wide range of reading capabilities.

I am excited to seek if I have been called to this ministry. If you are interested in learning more about this ministry with me, please, please contact me as soon as possible. It would be a privilege for me to share more with you. Christ Life Ministries can provide training for those who are called to participate in this ministry...that is the heart of Christ Life Ministries...training people to make disciples to the glory of God.

GRACE NOTE

Joy recently received two excellent reports from her doctors. Her back incision has stopped draining and continues to more fully close. The IV antibiotics will likely be completed by the end of March. The doctors say she will likely be on oral antibiotics for the rest of her life. Joy is experiencing a good bit of discomfort because she has been immobilized for so long. In the wee hours of a lonely, uncomfortable night recently, she softly sang a song originating from her heart, and she got up to write it down. I believe God **ASSURED** Joy of His love for her even when pain was clouding that assurance. Joy said she had never written anything before in her life, and she said that "it just came out." It's my joy to share my Joy's song "Jesus Loves Me" with you on the back.



Jesus Loves Me

by Joy Gibbons

(originally sung to the tune of "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible told me so")

Father, hold me tight today,
make this aching go away.
Only You can give me peace,
that'll cause my doubts and pain to cease.

Jesus, hear my broken cry,
I know I'm why You had to die.
Not for death, but life brand new,
You in me and me in You.

Jesus fight for me today,
my strength and will have gone away.
It's dark, I'm scared, I feel alone.
Draw me closer to Your throne.

You've kindled a fire within my soul,
because of You it'll ne'er go cold.
The fire comes from Your life, Your love,
this eternal fire is from above.

Holy Spirit take control
of my heart, my mind, my soul.
Make Your life flow out through me,
and when they look at me, it's You they see.

Father, Savior, Spirit – All,
before You on my face I fall.
In gratitude for all You've done,
oh Father, Savior, Spirit – One.

A home in heaven'll be mine one day,
'cause Jesus took my sin away.
He rose to give me life so great,
for His abundant life there is no wait.

Jesus loves me, this I know,
His life in me tells me it's so.
Heaven will be my home one day,
now His victorious life is the way.