

No 8 - Gods future judgment and our assurance of eternal life

Open in prayer

In our final session of looking at our foundational Christian beliefs - we're going to focus on the very serious and sobering subject of Gods judgement - but then finish on a positive note, by briefly looking at the basis upon which we can be assured of eternal life.

When it comes to the subject of Gods judgement and hell - you may be surprised to know that many of the world's main religions have their own concepts of hell and eternal punishment.

On the other hand - to people who aren't religious - hell is seen as nothing more than an outdated invention of the Church, - designed to scare people into conversion, - or to keep them in the fold.

---> For others - hell is simply what we suffer on this earth - or nothing more than a swear word or slang expression.

Throughout Church history - there have also been a variety of views and attitudes towards hell.

For example - in the middle ages - grotesquely exaggerated images became popular - including the notion of demons with horns and tails running around in red suits, torturing people with pitchforks.

In contrast - in modern times - there is a trend where many churches tend to steer clear of the subject altogether, because it's perceived as being too negative, - and could put people off.

---> An increasing number of people who claim to be Bible believing Christians - are also denying its existence - or the concept of eternal punishment, - (and as I'll outline - they try to find biblical support for a belief called Universalism - which is the idea that everybody will eventually be saved and reconciled to God - and Annihilationism - which teaches that Gods judgment simply means that unbelievers together with Satan and his demons will cease to exist).

O/H - Now to start off with - a common objection that people often raise - is how can a God of love condemn anyone to hell and eternal punishment? - I want you to pause and discuss how you would begin to respond to this objection?

When it comes to this question, we need to show great sensitivity - as the concept of hell and eternal punishment is indeed a very serious, sobering and difficult concept for anyone to truly grasp and come to grips with.

When it came to struggling with the concept of hell and eternal punishment - this was the issue that turned a man called Charles Taze Russell off Christianity for a while, - until he met a 7th Day Adventist called Nelson Barbour, that convinced him that neither hell or eternal punishment were taught in the Bible.

After working together for a while - Russell deviated even further from the Bible and after disagreeing on a number of other doctrinal points - he went on to form the International Bible students - that later became the Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny most of the foundational teachings of the Bible.

One of the most famous evangelical theologians that has denied a belief hell and eternal punishment - was John Stott, who said while wrestling with this issue, - "Well, emotionally, I find the concept intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain."

While I can certainly appreciate how Stott felt - and hell is a topic that should deeply disturb us - what we believe must be based objectively on the final authority of the Bible - and human reasoning and our feelings shouldn't to shape and colour the way in which we interpret Scripture.

O/H - Furthermore - we need to be careful to keep all the different aspects of Gods character in mind - and a good illustration is to consider what would happen if you got 5 blind people together that had never seen and elephant - and asked them to describe the animals simply by feeling one part of it.

The result would be a totally inaccurate picture - as one blind person might describe it as being like a snake if it felt its trunk - a spear if it felt its tusk - a fan if it felt its ear flapping - a piece of rope if it felt its tail - a wall if it felt its side - or a tree trunk if it felt its foot.

While I mean no disrespect to God in making a comparison - just as each of these blind people would have an unbalanced picture of an elephant - the same problem arises if we don't take into account all the different aspects of God's character according to Scripture.

For example - Yes, God is a God of love..... but He is also a God of justice.
God is a God of mercy..... but He is also a God of holiness.
God is a God of grace..... but He is also a God of righteousness.
God is a God who saves..... But He is also a God of wrath and judgement.

So in response to the objection - How could a God of love send anyone to hell - one could quite rightly also respond - How could a God of holiness and justice allow anyone into heaven? - and the answer is only because Jesus as the innocent son of God took the punishment for sin in our place.

O/H - To illustrate this further - when Adolf Hitler committed suicide - it's reported that he gave a man in charge of his armaments Albert Speer, orders that he be cremated.

* It's also claimed that his mistress, Eva Braun - wanted to depart this life with him - and that he would shoot his dog called Blondi beforehand.

---> Then he finished by allegedly saying - "Believe me Speer, it's easy for me to end my life.... a brief moment and I'm free of everything, liberated from this painful existence."

Now if this story was true - and God judgement simply meant Hitler ceased to exist - would it not call into question God's fairness and justice - especially when we consider how Hitler and his regime caused the death of millions - together with so much human suffering?

Whenever we struggle with the concept of hell - and find it hard to wrap our minds around it - we must balance our perspective, by recognising the utterly despicable nature of sin.

---> Furthermore, let's remember - that it was our sin that caused God's One and Only Begotten Son to go to the cross to save us from hell - (even for a sinner such as Adolf Hitler - who could have had all his sins forgiven - if he had only repented and accepted Christ before he died).

When it comes to what happens to us after death - I'd like us to start by looking at what Jesus taught in the story of the rich man and Lazarus - if you turn with me to Luke 16:19-31.

Let me read it to you - after which I want you to then spend a few minutes coming up with some of the main teachings and principles that you saw in this passage of Scripture.

Luke 16:19-24

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

"The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

“No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

So what are some of the main points and principles that stood out to you in this story?

The background against which Jesus gave this teaching - was that many Jews were under the misconception that financial and material prosperity, as well as being healthy, - was an automatic sign that they were right with God and enjoying his blessing.

This however wasn't necessarily the case - and one of the reasons why Jesus told the story about the rich man and Lazarus - was to correct this faulty theology.

---> As he did - there would be a rude awakening for those who held on to these views.

As Jesus begins by introducing the two main characters - the first was a rich man - who is described as having been dressed in purple and fine linen.

---> **This was symbolic of great wealth and standing - which was usually reserved for royalty.**

The second character was a common beggar - named Lazarus - who in contrast was covered in ulcers, - and he was in such poverty that he longed to even eat the scraps from the household garbage, - as he lay at the entrance to the rich man's home.

Now because Christ didn't normally give any names to the characters in his other parables - there are some who believe that he was actually describing real events.

Others see this as a parable - where Jesus gave the name Lazarus to one of the characters - because the Greek form of the Hebrew name means, - “The one whom God helps.”

---> **Furthermore - this may have been deliberately done - to remind people of this story when Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, actually did rise from the dead.**

Either way - as a total contrast is made between the rich man and Lazarus - Jesus said that even the dogs showed pity to Lazarus by licking his sores, - (which appears to be a pointed way of highlighting the sinfulness of the rich man - who had absolutely no compassion for Lazarus).

Now self-righteous Jews such as the Pharisees - would have automatically seen the rich man as the one who was right with God, - while Lazarus would have been viewed as a despised sinner.

---> But they were about to receive a massive shock - with what Jesus went on to say.

In an outcome - that would have been the reverse of what most Jews would have expected - Jesus said that Lazarus had an angelic escort to Abraham's side or paradise, which is what Old Testament believers saw as heaven - whereas the rich man was assigned to hell.

O/H - Now when it comes to the word hell - the Hebrew term in the Old Testament was Sheol - which depending on the context - (could either refer to the literal grave where we're buried) - (it could also be a general term for the abode of the dead) - (or in other settings, - it referred to the final eternal destination of the unrighteous who don't belong to God).

O/H - In the New Testament - there are three words that are often translated as hell - the first being Hades which was the Greek equivalent of Sheol.

*** This generally referred to the intermediate place - where the unrighteous go between death and the final judgement.**

---> **This is also the word Christ used - as he described where the rich man ended up - and the Bible says in Revelation 20:14 - that Hades will eventually be cast into the lake of fire.**

O/H - Another word for hell is the Greek word - Gehenna - which refers to the final abode of the wicked, when they are cast into the lake of fire - (which is called the second death).

* This Greek word came from a place in the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem - where the Israelites sinned by making human sacrifices to the pagan god Molech.

---> During the reign of king Josiah - this detestable practice was stopped - and it was turned into a public rubbish dump for offal, dead animals and the corpses of criminals.

O/H - The third word translated as hell - is the word Tartarus - which only occurs in 2 Peter 2:4, and refers to a gloomy dungeon where certain fallen angels are already being held until the final judgement - and this also seems to be alluded to in Jude verse 6.

As we go back to our passage - we're told that Lazarus went to Abraham's side - and in this account, - the rich man was able to see Abraham in the distance with Lazarus by his side - and a conversation was also possible.

Now the fact that Lazarus ended up at Abraham's side - wasn't because God took pity on him since he was poor and sick during his life - (nor was it because of any good deeds he did) - but rather, like Abraham, - he was righteous because of his faith in God.

In the same way - the reason the rich man went to Hades - wasn't because he was rich - (but because he didn't have a true saving faith) - which was manifested in his abject failure to show any compassion to the likes of Lazarus.

As Lazarus had the privilege of being at the side of Abraham, the father of faith - this would have incensed the self-righteous Pharisees.

When we then read that the rich man experienced agony in Hades - we have the ultimate irony - where he was now begging Lazarus to show pity to him, by bringing some water to cool his tongue - even though he hadn't shown any concern for Lazarus.

From this account - it's clear that hell - (in this case hades) - is a real place of conscious existence, torment and separation from God and His people.

---> If this wasn't the case - then Christ's story would be totally deceptive and misleading.

O/H - As we think of the separation and torment involved in hell - I want you to pause and come up with some other ways that the Bible describes the eternal fate of the lost.

One example is the parable of the sheep and goats - where we're told in Matthew 25:46 - "Then some will go away to eternal punishment, - but the righteous to eternal life."

The Greek word for eternal - aionios - literally means forever and ever without end.

* And if eternal life is a state of being - that is consciously experienced forever - then eternal punishment must also be a conscious state of being and existence.

---> If the wicked are annihilated or cease to exist - it would render this and many other verses in Scripture totally meaningless.

For example - in Luke 12:4-5 - Jesus said - "I tell you my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him who after killing the body, has the power to throw you into hell. Yes I tell you, fear him."

While in some contexts the word for hell can refer to the grave - these words clearly point to a real place, where conscious torment and eternal separation will be experienced.

---> If this was not the case - then why would Jesus warn us to fear it.

With this in mind - Jesus also said in Mark 9:45-48 - "And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where - their worm does not die and the fire is never quenched."

In like manner - listen to the words of Jesus in some of his other parables

- In the Parable of the weeds - he said in Matthew 13:41-42 - "The Son of man will send out his angels and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will be thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- In parable of the fishing net - he concluded by saying in Matthew 13:49-50 - "This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- In the parable of the wedding banquet - there was a guest who entered the banquet without wedding clothes and in Matthew 22:13, the King told the wedding attendants - "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The common theme - is that death for those who don't belong to God leads to..... separation from God..... being shut out..... and the weeping and gnashing of teeth - which is an expression that communicates a state of deep sorrow and regret.

---> This happens because those who have persisted in rejecting God - come to the realization that their eternal fate is sealed with no chance of a reprieve, - as God has simply granted them their wish to have nothing more to do with Him.

While no earthly language could ever capture the true horrors of hell - Jesus and writers of the Bible used a variety of powerful images - (including fire, - a furnace, - a worm that does not die, - outer darkness, - blackest darkness, - and weeping and gnashing of teeth).

---> And it won't, as some think - be a place to party with your mates - because all the good things that come from God - *including camaraderie and friendship* - will be totally absent as all hope is gone.

O/H - Despite this clear Scriptural teaching - there are two views that deny eternal punishment - with one being Universalism.

---> This is a false teaching - that claims that all will eventually be given a second chance to be saved and reconciled to God - because there is a "wideness" in Gods mercy.

This of course is not a new view - and dates back to early church leaders like Origen - who even suggested the possibility that Satan and his demons may one day be reconciled to God.

Those that hold to Universalism try to prove their position - by referring to a number of Scriptures.

For example - Colossians 1:19-20 - which says - "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to *reconcile to himself all things* - whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

---> Another passage is - 1 Timothy 4:9-10 - "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance, and for this we labour and strive, that we have put our faith in the living God, *who is the Saviour of all men*, and especially of those who believe."

Acts 3:19-21 - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to *restore everything*, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Romans 5:18 - "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to *justification and life for all people*".

Romans 11:32 - "For God has consigned all to disobedience, *that he may have mercy on all*" "For as in Adam all die, *so also in Christ shall all be made alive*".

1 Corinthians 15:22 - For as in Adam all die, *so in Christ all will be made alive*.

Philippians 2:10-11 - "So that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

So how would you respond to someone that believes in Universalism - is there anything in the passage we just read you could use?

When we read all these verses in context - and in conjunction with other passages - Paul wasn't saying that everyone will eventually be reconciled and saved.

* Nor was he suggesting a false teaching - which claims that that everyone is already covered by Christ's atonement - but it's just that they aren't aware of it.

---> Rather - his point was that Christ's work on the cross has the potential to save anyone - but the Bible is clear that a personal response by faith is necessary for it to apply to us.

In Matthew 25:41 - we also read that the Lake of fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels and Revelation chapter 20 clearly tells us that they will be eventually cast there and not reconciled.

As well as this - the teaching that there will be a second chance to believe after death is disproven in the story of the rich man and Lazarus - as the gulf was fixed between those who belong to God - and those that don't - so they can't cross over after death.

With this in mind - it's the reason why the rich man begged Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers - (and its interesting that the response was that if they didn't believe the Scriptures - then they wouldn't believe even if someone rose from the dead - which was so true when the real Lazarus rose from the dead - and of course Jesus as well).

Hebrews 9:27-28 - also clearly tells us - "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once, to take away the sins of many people, - and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him".

O/H - As well as Universalism - the other response to deny hell and eternal punishment - is called Annihilationism or conditional immortality - which is the view that Gods judgement on unbelievers will be that they will be destroyed and simply cease to exist anymore.

This view is held by various religious groups - such as the 7th Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians - that deny the immortality of the soul.

---> It's also the view of liberal theologians - and a growing number of evangelicals, with one notable example being the respected late Anglican theologian, John Stott, Clark Pinnock and John Wenham.

It's also a feature of many of the leaders of the so-called emerging church movement - such as Rob Bell who has now virtually denied every aspect of the Christian faith.

But what do we do with passages that speak of the destruction of the unrighteous?

For example - Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 - "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

While some equate the word destruction in this and other passages with annihilation - rather than speaking about going into a state of non-existence - the Greek word *apoleia* - actually speaks of a state of utter ruin, loss and bankruptcy - and was used to describe the situation that the prodigal son eventually ended up in.

With this in mind - lets read 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 - where Paul wrote to persecuted Christians - "God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you, and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."

If destruction meant that the wicked simply cease to exist - it would be once and for all - but Paul described it here as being something that is everlasting.

The reality is - that if those who don't know God and obey the gospel are annihilated - then Paul's words wouldn't make sense, - (because you can't cease to exist - and then still experience being shut out from God's presence and the majesty of his power).

Another passage that shows the lake of fire doesn't mean annihilation - is found if you turn with me to Revelation chapter 19.

In Revelation 19: 20 - we read - But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

But to prove the lake of fire isn't speaking about annihilation - we read that later after the millennium - the beast and false prophet are still in existence when Satan and his demons and are cast into the lake of fire.

In Revelation 20:10 - we're told - And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

When it comes to proof texts for annihilation - one of the verses that cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses often bring up is Ecclesiastes 9:5 - which says - "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.

* While at first glance this may sound like the dead cease to exist - reading this verse in its context soon reveals that Solomon wasn't teaching a concept of soul sleep or annihilation.

---> For a start he was talking about all dead people - and so this line of reasoning would mean that the righteous would also cease to exist after death.

Secondly - when you examine the context of what Solomon was writing about - it soon becomes clear that he was speaking about everything from a human perspective of this life under the sun.

* **And this is backed up as we go on to read in verse 6 - "Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished, never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun."**

---> **But from another perspective of the spirit realm - the Bible is clear that the spirits of the dead live on - either in God's presence - or in hades awaiting the final judgement.**

One other point to consider - is that there is an indication in Scripture - of different degrees of eternal punishment - just as there are different rewards in heaven.

This is implied in Matthew 11:20-24 - where Jesus denounced the cities where people wouldn't respond to his miracles - (and relatively speaking - said that it would be more bearable at the final judgement for the people of Tyre and Sidon - and even Sodom, if the miracles he had performed in Capernaum had been done there - though he wasn't suggesting they would be saved).

Also, as Peter and Jude spoke of the fate of false teachers - they both said that blackest darkness was especially reserved for them.

Gods judgement and Christians

What happens to Christian at death?

So what happens to a Christian believer when they die - where do they go?

Death is not soul sleep - as sleep is a euphemism for death in various places in the Bible such as 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and a description of what happens to someone from an earthly perspective. At death a person neither goes to hades straight into the Lords presence.

Christians also won't go to a place called purgatory - which according to Roman Catholic teaching is an intermediate place where the souls of believers go to be cleansed of their sin before they are fit enough to go into heaven.

It's also believed that the time a soul spends in purgatory can be reduced by believers on earth through their prayers not only to Christ but Mary and other key figures as well as offering up prayers and a mass for the dead together with a gift to the church.

These are called indulgences. This teaching gradually developed over time and is based on tradition as well distorting and as taking out of context the following verses in the Bible such as 2 Timothy 1:18, Matthew 12:32, Luke 16:19-26, Luke 23:43, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 and Hebrews 12:29.

It's also heavily based on the Apocrypha, in places such as Maccabees 12:41-46, which is not officially recognised as part of the canon of Scripture by Protestants, just as it wasn't by the Jews. This totally unscriptural teaching is an insult to the work of finished Christ as it essentially teaches that his suffering and death on the cross is not sufficient to save us and that human works and suffering are still needed.

Hebrews 7:25 - Therefore he is able to *save completely* those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Read - 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 - which clearly shows what happens to us - For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

For we live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So, we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

In the light of verse 10 - in what ways will Christians face Gods judgement?

It will not be in regard to salvation - as Jesus clearly told is in John 5:24 - Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

The judgement in question will be before the Bema seat - where athletes in the ancient games received their reward. In the same way we will have our life examined and receive our eternal rewards for faithful living and service, to receive the rewards that are due to us.

This is outlined in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 - By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved - even though only as one escaping through the flames - (worst case scenario for a believer).

Assurance and eternal security in salvation

The teaching - Once saved always saved is definitely taught in the Bible - but it's actually a very dangerous doctrine that's so open to abuse, because it only applies to those who have genuinely been saved in the first place and sealed with the Holy Spirit - which is ultimately only something that God alone knows.

Highlighting that thought - Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:19 - Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

So how can we be sure of our salvation? - How would you explain to a new Christian the basis upon which they can have assurance eternal life and salvation?

The objective basis for our assurance

The final authority of God's Word and His promises - 1 John 5:13 - write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Philippians 1:3-6 - I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:28-30 - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 - He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The baptism and sealing of the Holy Spirit guarantees our salvation as we read in Ephesians 1:13-14 - And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory.

The reason Peter remained safe and secure in God's salvation - was because Jesus had already interceded for him.

---> Luke 22:31 - "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

In John 17:6 - Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father - "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

* John 17:12 says - While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

---> And we're also told in John 17:20 - "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.

The subjective basis for the assurance of our salvation

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 - Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

Love of fellow Christians - 1 John 3:14-15 - We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

Out attitude towards sin - 1 John 2:3-6 - We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Our Spiritual growth - 2 Peter 1:10-11 - Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our concern for the lost - is another evidence we know God.

O/H - 2 books I would recommend -

Hell under fire - Christopher Morgan and Robert A Peterson

Whatever happened to hell - John Blanchard

Songs