

A tall, white, cylindrical lighthouse stands on a grassy cliff overlooking the ocean at dusk. The lighthouse is illuminated from within, casting a warm glow. To its right is a small, white, single-story building with a red roof and a blue door. The cliff edge is visible, and the ocean stretches to the horizon under a deep blue sky with scattered clouds.

ASSURANCE OF *Salvation*

Introduction

Each year, Palm Sunday marks the beginning of what we know as Passion Week. From the triumphal entry into Jerusalem to His brutal treatment and tortuous death by Roman crucifixion, Jesus willingly offered His own life as a sacrifice for our sins, having the wrath of His Father imputed to Him in order that His righteousness might be imputed to us. Then, after being buried in a garden tomb, Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, and offers the free gift of eternal life to those who will receive Him by faith. Paul argued that if Christ was not raised, our faith is worthless, and we are still in our sins. However, since He is the resurrected Lord, those who truly know Him may be **assured of being with Him throughout all eternity.**



Introduction

Notwithstanding all the study and research that has been done to demonstrate the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a considerable number of people throughout the ages, like Thomas, have doubted. They have asked the questions that Dr. Peter Kreeft has asked, “How can I **know** God loves me? I believe it, or I want to believe it. But how can I **know it for sure**? How can I get **assurance** of the most important thing in the world?”

Is what we call **assurance of salvation** possible? Can we be certain that when we die we will go to heaven and be with the Lord forever? What kind of guarantee or pledge have we been given that this would, indeed, be the case? These are the questions we will explore today.

What Is Assurance of Salvation?



“When we speak of the assurance of faith,” writes theologian John Murray (1898-1975), “we mean the assurance entertained by a believer that he is in a state of grace and salvation, the knowledge that he has been saved, has passed from death unto life, has become a possessor of eternal life and is an heir of glory.”

The Nature of Faith

“Almost everyone seems ready to concede or consent that religious assertion is peculiarly a matter of faith. But what relationship if any does such religious faith bear to knowledge? Is faith essentially emotive, volitional, moral or intellectual? Do religious assertions rest on authority, intuition, experience, speculation, or personal preference and prejudice?”



Carl F.H. Henry
ThD; PhD, Boston University
1913-2003

God's Divine Revelation

“There is a way of knowing that is objective and universal. By this route I can indeed know that God loves me in the same way that you and anyone else can: God said so. There are objective facts. There is data. Christianity is a religion of facts, not just values. It appeals to a public, objective divine revelation, not subjective and private mystical experiences and subtle insights.”



Dr. Peter Kreeft

1937 -

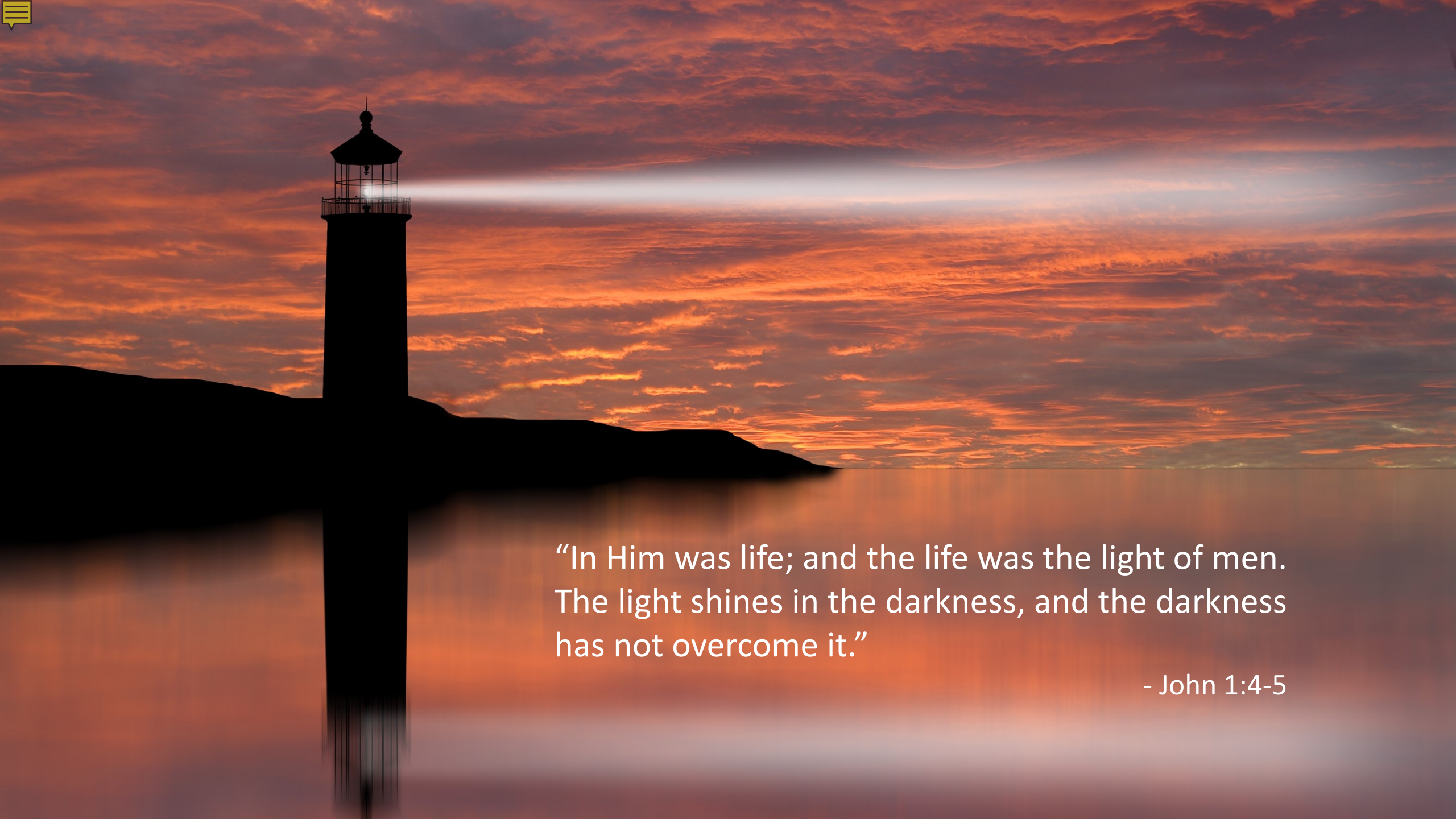
Professor of Philosophy, Boston College

Dr. Kreeft has written 95 books



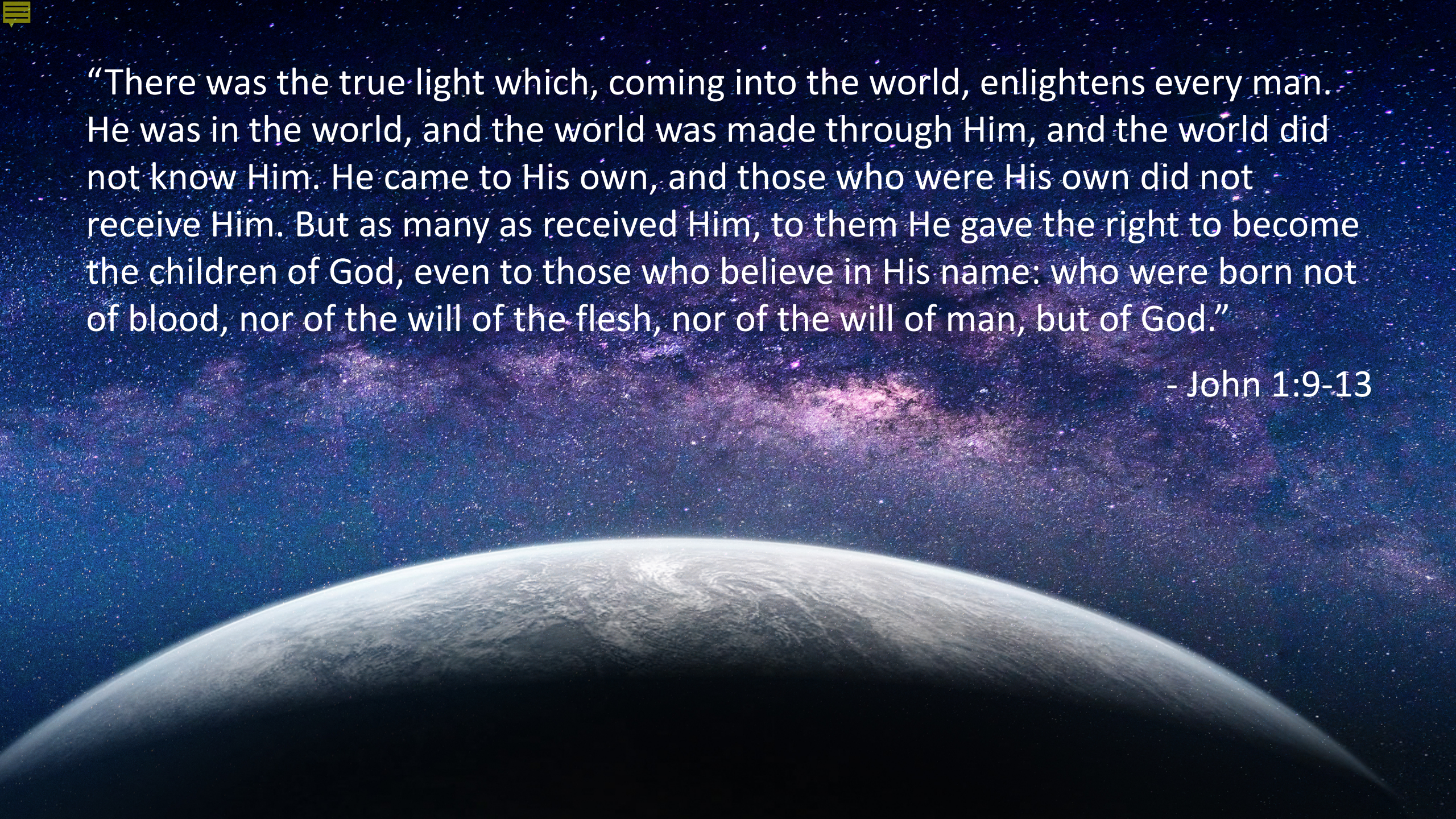
The Foundation of True Faith

“True faith depends not upon mysterious signs, celestial fireworks, or grandiose dispensations from a God who is seen as a rich, benevolent uncle; true faith, as Job understood, rests on the assurance that *God is who He is*. Indeed, on that we must be willing to stake our very lives.”



“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it.”

- John 1:4-5



“There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- John 1:9-13



Four Possible Positions

	Saved	Unsaved
Know	People who are saved and know they are saved	People who are unsaved and know they are unsaved
Don't Know	People who are saved and do not know they are saved	People who are unsaved and do not know they are unsaved

Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation (WCF)

Chapter XVIII

Section I: Although hypocrites, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and estate of salvation; which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; which hope shall never make them ashamed.

Self-Deception & False Presumptions

- The belief that all people are saved (universalism)
- The belief that there are many ways to God (pluralism)
- The belief that living a good life is all that is required for salvation
- The belief that holding to sound doctrine will lead to eternal life
- The belief that keeping the law will justify a person before God
- The belief that faith is merely intellectual assent that leads to salvation
- The belief that attending or joining a church will result in eternal life

“The gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction,
and many are those who enter by it” (Mt. 7:13).



Reasons for Absence of Full Assurance

The lack of full assurance “is due to inexcusable misconception and misapplication of the truths of the gospel and the nature of salvation, or to a weakness of faith springing from negligence in its cultivation and the fruits of the Spirit, disobedience to the commandments of God, backsliding, unwatchfulness, prayerlessness, excessive care for the things of this life, and worldliness. There are many sins which believers are prone to indulge and which, when indulged, weaken, cripple, bewilder, and cause to stumble, with the result that their Father’s displeasure is manifest in the withdrawing of the light of his countenance, so that they are bereft of the joy of their salvation. Those who at one time enjoyed this assurance may lose it” (John Murray).

Westminster Confession of Faith

Section II: This certainly is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidences of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

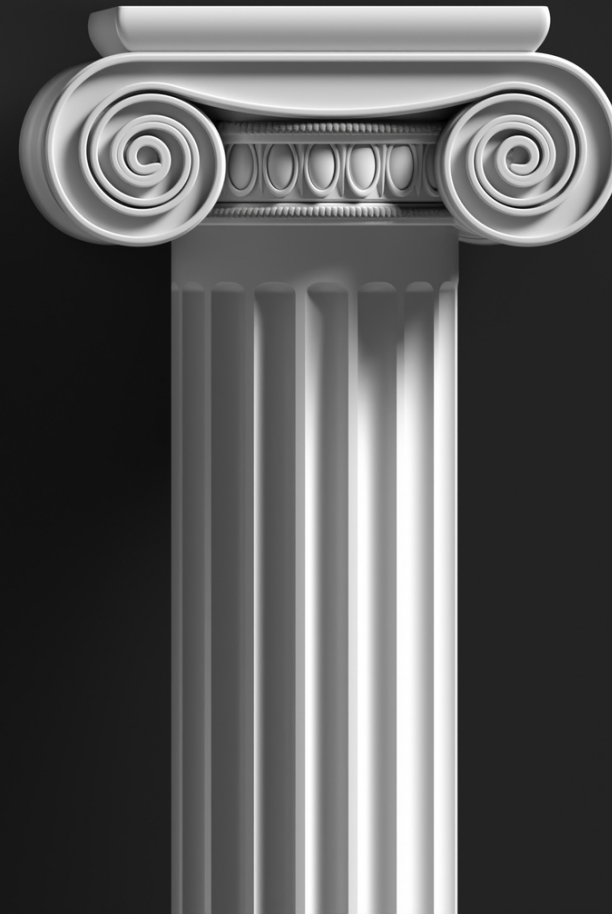
The Grounds of Assurance

The Promises of God
in the Gospel

The Inward Graces
and Calling of God

The Inward Witness
of the Holy Spirit

A Changed Life, or
the Fruit of Our Faith



The First Foundation of Assurance

- **The First Foundation: *The Promises of God***
- “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 Greek word translated by our English word *know* in this passage means “to have realized, perceived” = to know. It is used 320 times in the New Testament.
- This kind of knowledge is not abstract. Jesus expresses His knowledge of the Father using this word: “I **know** Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me” (Jn. 7:29). “And you have **not come to know Him**, but I **know Him**; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I **do know Him**, and keep His word” (Jn. 8:55).

The First Foundation of Assurance

- “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14-16).
- “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (Jn. 3:36).
- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12).

The First Foundation of Assurance

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (Jn. 5:24).
- “For this is the will of My Father, that every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day” (Jn. 6:40).
- “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies; and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” (Jn. 11:25-26).
- “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life” (Jn. 6:47).



The Most Certain Kind of Knowledge

“I know that God loves me by faith. Faith is more than opinion and more than belief. It is not even in the same league. It is not even playing the same game. Opinion is the weakest kind of knowledge, knowledge with the least certainty attached to it. But faith, in the Christian sense of **accepting God’s Word and his promise**, is the *most* certain kind of knowledge, for it is guaranteed by the One who can neither deceive nor be deceived.”

Dr. Peter Kreeft

D. James Kennedy's Chair Illustration

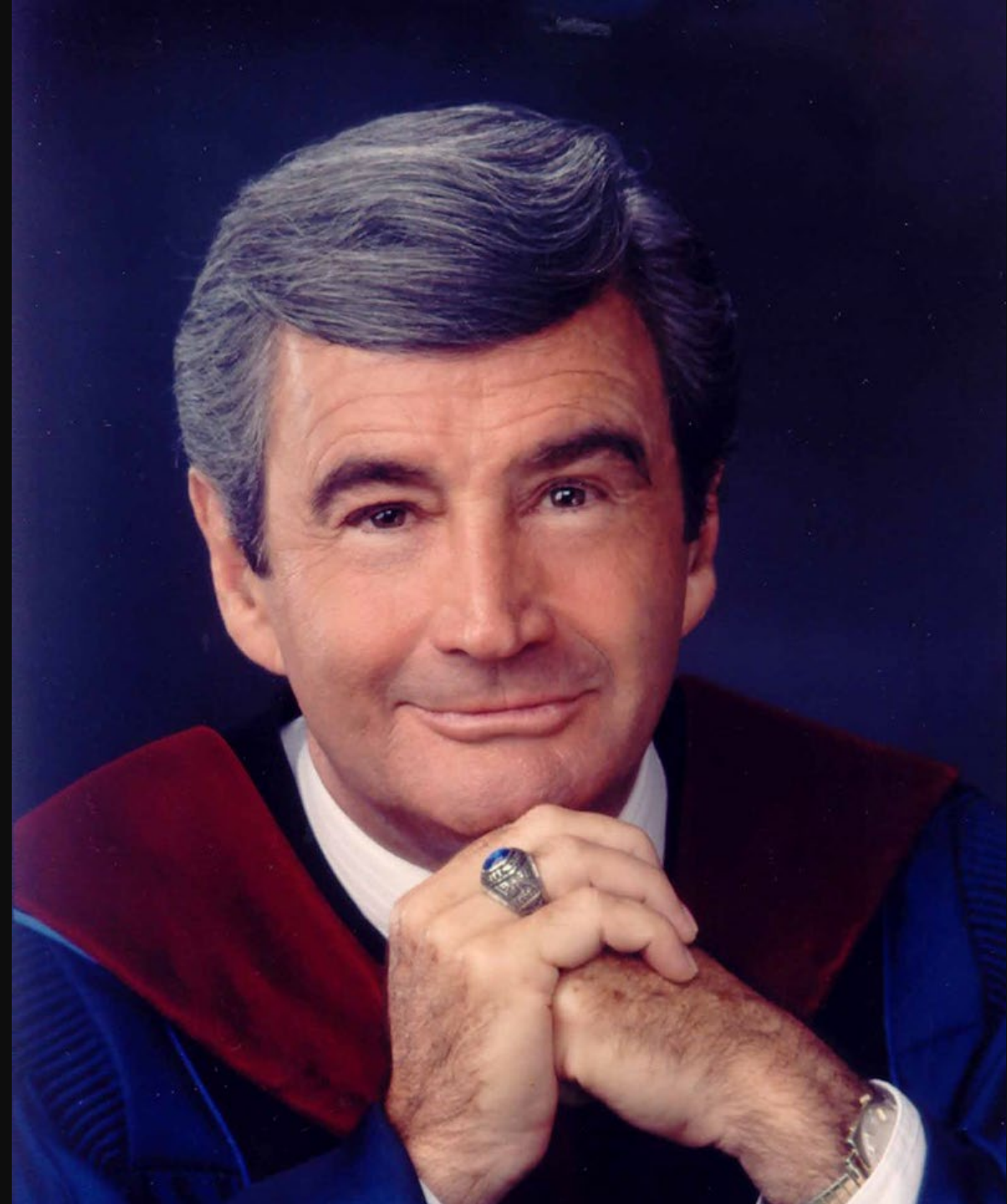


- You see this chair? Yes.
- You believe that chair exists? Yes.
- Do you believe that it would hold you up? Yes.
- But, you see, it's not holding you up for a very simple reason: you're not sitting on it. This is the way it was with Christ. I believed Jesus existed. I believed he was divine. I trusted him for finances and for health, as you have done too. But, you see, saving faith is trusting in Christ alone for my salvation.

D. James Kennedy

1930-2007

“Saving faith is trusting Jesus Christ *alone* for our salvation. It means resting upon Christ alone and what he has done rather than upon what I have done to get me into heaven.”



The Second Foundation of Assurance

- **The Second Foundation: *The Inward Graces Unto Which These Promises Are Made***
- “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (II Pet. 1:4).
- “For our proud confidence is this, the **testimony of our conscience** that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you” (II Cor. 1:12).



The Third Foundation of Assurance

- **The Third Foundation: *The Inward Testimony of the Holy Spirit***
- “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:15-16).
- “It is to us the witness is given and it is ‘to our spirit,’ but there are many respects in which this witness is borne. Particularly is it made manifest in sealing to the hearts of believers the promises which are theirs as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ and the generating in them of the assurance of the great love the Father has bestowed upon them that they should be called children of God” (John Murray).



The Third Foundation of Assurance

- “But you have an anointing from the Holy One and you all **know**” (1 Jn. 2:20). This is not acquired knowledge; it is innate knowledge.
- “And we **know** by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us” (1 Jn. 3:24). “The Holy Spirit not only witnesses to us that we are God’s children, but also witnesses that God abides in us and that we are abiding in him. Once again more than our intellect is involved: the Spirit works to give us assurance at the subjective level of spiritual and emotional perception as well” (Wayne Grudem).

The Fourth Foundation of Assurance

- **The Fourth Foundation: *A Changed Life, or the Fruit of Our Faith***
- “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone one who **practices righteousness** is born of Him” (1 Jn. 2:29).
- “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we **love the brethren**. He who does not love abides in death. Every one who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 Jn. 3:14-15).
- “We know that **no one who is born of God sins**; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him” (1 Jn. 5:18).
- “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end” (Heb. 3:14).

The Fourth Foundation of Assurance



“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and **the sheep follow him; because they know his voice**” (Jn. 10:2-4).

Westminster Confession of Faith

Section III: This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance: so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

Two Calls to Personal Examination

By Peter: “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (II Peter 1:10).

By Paul: “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?” (II Cor. 13:5).



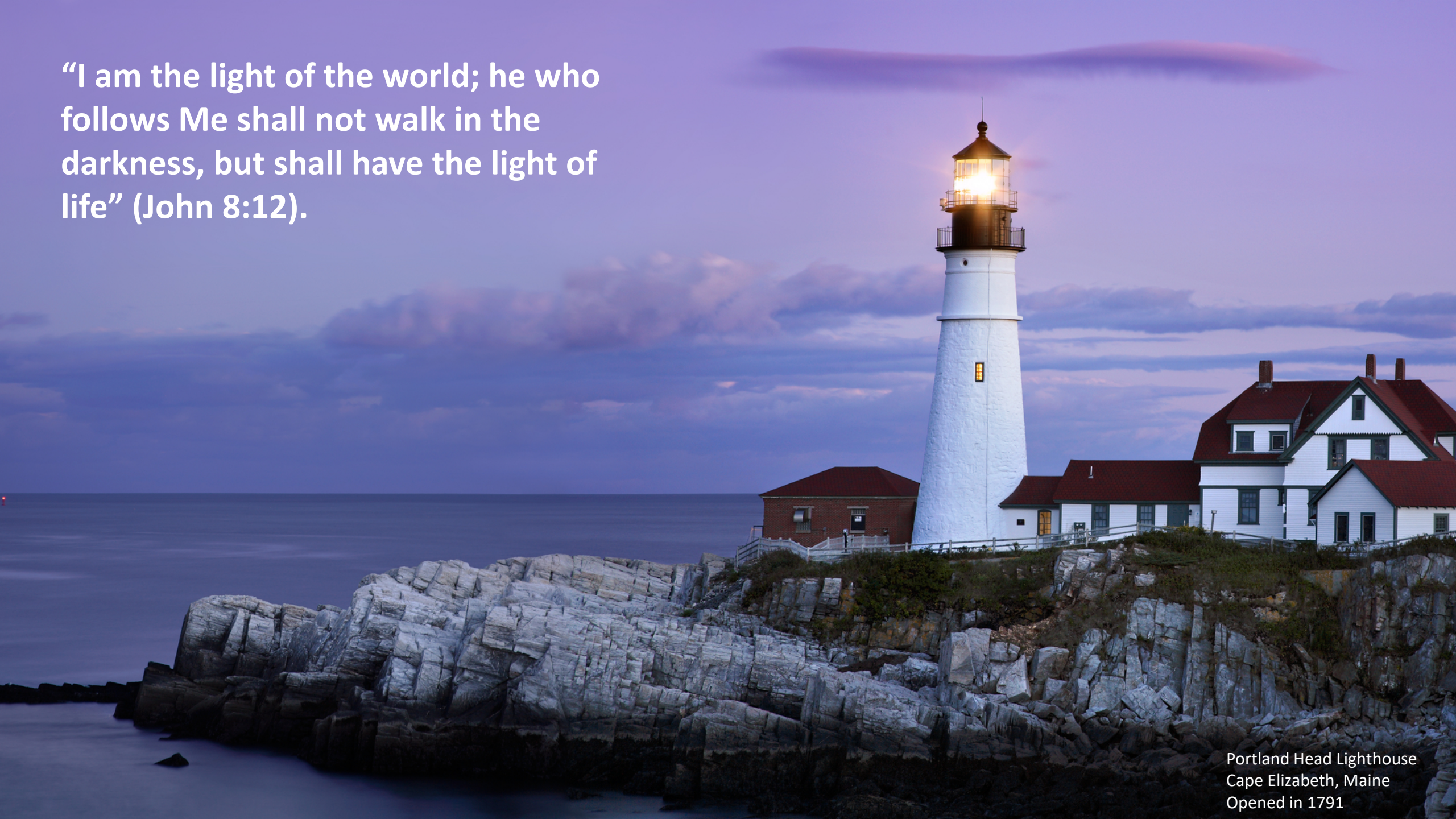
Westminster Confession of Faith

Section IV: True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers (different) ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it; by falling into some special sin, which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness, and to have no light; yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

Some Questions for Personal Reflection

- Have you been justified by faith and adopted into God's family?
- Are you able to cry out, "Abba, Father"? (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).
- Are you conscious of your intimacy with God?
- Do you seek to obey and please God?
- Do you truly love God and His Word?
- Do you long to grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?
- As you progressively being conformed to God's Son?
- Do you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?

“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).



Portland Head Lighthouse
Cape Elizabeth, Maine
Opened in 1791