

“The Root, Fruit, and Echo of Assurance” (2 Peter 1:8–11)
GCC, Morning Worship, 2/23/20

Introduction: *How do we foster and cultivate assurance of salvation?*

- I. The Root of Assurance is Faith in the Promises of God (Past, Present, and Future, 2 Peter 1:1–4)
 - A. Faith in the Promises of Jesus Christ (1:1–4)
 - B. In some sense, assurance **is** of the essence of faith (Heb 11:1; 10:19–22; 2LBC 18.2)
 - C. A genuinely weak faith saves, a genuinely strong faith saves, but a faith that is not genuine does not save (see 2LBC 14.3).
 - D. However, faith cannot be the only thing that we consider when evaluating our assurance for two reasons:
 1. If a profession of faith were all that were necessary to establish salvation, then the church could never practice church discipline (1 Cor 5; Matt 7:21–23; Jas 2:17–18; Titus 1:16; 2 Cor 13:5)
 2. Just as faith can wax and wane, so our assurance can, and will, wax and wane (Luke 17:5; Mark 9:24; Matt 8:10; Cf. Luke 7:9)

- II. The Fruit of Assurance is Our Works (1:5–11)
 - A. Our Works as the Inward Work of Grace
“There is a great difference between hearing that honey is sweet, and tasting it” –Joel Beeke
 - B. Works and our heart attitude *confirm* our assurance. They do not *ground* our assurance (1:10)
 - C. Three Marks of this confirmation
 1. (1:5–8) Your faith is fruitful and useful
 2. (1:9) You see the connection between forgiveness of sins and a life given over to holiness (Cf. Rom 12:1)
 3. (1:11) The life of virtue describes the life that will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven
 - D. Three Critically Important Qualifications
 1. Walking in hard-hearted, unrepentant sin can damage our assurance
 2. Assurance is *not such* an essential part of faith that it is without struggle (2LBC 18.3 & 4)
 3. Learn how to hold onto one thing without letting go of another (Eccl 7:18)

- III. The Echo of Assurance is the Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15–16; 2LBC 18.2; Canons of Dort, 5.10–11)
 - A. What does this mean?
 - B. Danger in not taking seriously the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit
 - C. Danger in prioritizing or overemphasizing the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit
 - D. A simple test: Does an assessment of these three marks produce humility and gratitude or pride and self-righteousness?

Conclusion: What is the Center of Gravity in your assurance?

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1677/89)
Chapter 18 – Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Temporary believers and other unregenerate people may deceive themselves in vain with false hopes and fleshly presumptions that they have God's favor and salvation, but their hope will perish.¹ Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him sincerely, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may be certainly assured in this life that they are in a state of grace. They may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,² and this hope will never make them ashamed.³

¹Job 8:13, 14; Matthew 7:22, 23. ²1 John 2:3; 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; 5:13. ³Romans 5:2, 5.

2. This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith⁴ founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel.⁵ It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made.⁶ It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.⁷ As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.⁸

⁴Hebrews 6:11, 19. ⁵Hebrews 6:17, 18. ⁶2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11. ⁷Romans 8:15, 16. ⁸1 John 3:1–3.

3. This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith *that it is always fully experienced alongside faith*, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it.⁹ Yet with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.¹⁰ Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure. In this way their hearts 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. These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance.¹¹ Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.¹²

⁹Isaiah 50:10; Psalms 88; 77:1–12. ¹⁰1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11, 12. ¹¹Romans 5:1, 2, 5; 14:17; Psalms 119:32. ¹²Romans 6:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12, 14.

4. True believers may in various ways have the assurance of their salvation shaken, decreased, or temporarily lost. This may happen because they neglect to preserve it¹³ or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit.¹⁴ It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation¹⁵ or when God withdraws the light of his face and allows even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.¹⁶ Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God,¹⁷ the life of faith,¹⁸ love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived.¹⁹ In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.²⁰

¹³Song of Solomon 5:2, 3, 6. ¹⁴Psalms 51:8, 12, 14. ¹⁵Psalms 116:11; 77:7, 8; 31:22; ¹⁶Psalms 30:7. ¹⁷1 John 3:9. ¹⁸Luke 22:32. ¹⁹Psalms 42:5, 11. ²⁰Lamentations 3:26–31.

CANONS OF DORT (1619), FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE,
“OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS,” ARTICLES 10 & 11

Article 10

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God; but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 11

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that they may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.