

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 18 – “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation”,
Session # 4 – “Assurance & Hearing the Word”, presented by Pastor
Paul Rendall on July 1st, 2018, in the Adult Sunday School.**

Paragraph 1 – “Although temporary believers, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and state of salvation, (a) 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 (b) 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 c) ashamed.”

(a) Job 8:13-14; Matthew 7: 22-23; (b) 1st John 2: 3; 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24; 5: 13; (c) Romans 5: 2 and 5

Paragraph 2 – “This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon(d) a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ(e) revealed in the Gospel; and also upon the inward(f) evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and on the testimony of the(g) Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and, as a fruit thereof, keeping the heart both(h) humble and holy.”

(d) Hebrews 6: 11, 19; (e) Hebrews 6: 17-18; (f) 2nd Peter 1: 4-5, 10-11; (g) Romans 8: 15-16; (h) 1st John 3: 1-3

A Shorter Definition of Assurance:

Assurance of salvation is the right conclusion that you come to, based on the truth of the Scriptures, concerning your state before God, that your faith in Christ is genuine, and that you have eternal life.

2nd Possibility of Deception – Merely being a Hearer of the Word of God

Turn with me over to Mark chapter 4, verses 1-20.

“And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'SEEING THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND HEARING THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND; LEST THEY SHOULD TURN, AND THEIR SINS BE FORGIVEN THEM.' " And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with

gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Why is it that people may come to have a false assurance of salvation for a time, and be deceived as to their true state before God? This false assurance can come about by their thinking that their hearing the word of God preached, by itself, is enough to save them. They hear the word of God preached and some may even believe for a time, and yet their heart is not the good soil that it must be to have a certain assurance of their salvation.

In all 4 of the cases of people, which are presented to us here, there has been a hearing of the word of God. But in only one of these categories, the last one, is there genuine faith, and thus only one group of people can come to have true assurance of salvation; and that is the last group. Going to church and hearing the word of God is a very good and needful thing, both with regard to being saved, and in order that we as Christians might learn the truth of the Bible and thus grow up into maturity in relation to our Christian faith. It is a part of doing the will of God.

But we must also see that a person may wrongly conclude that they are a Christian simply because they are doing a right thing. A person can be doing a right thing outwardly and still not have grace, or saving faith, inwardly. They have not been born again by the Spirit of God, but, they regularly go to church and hear the word of God preached. Maybe they are there every Sunday. Maybe they continue on like this, for years in this good practice of going to church, and listening to the word. Often, people do not understand that there is a great spiritual battle that goes on, in church, during the preaching of the word. We see that this battle takes place both in the outward sense of Satan being nearby, and the inward sense, in their heart and mind; their having conflicts over what they should have to receive and to go through in order to prove to themselves and others the fact that they really know the Lord.

In the 1st category of the hearers of the word, we find that Satan is nearby. It says he comes and snatches away the word which has been sown. He places so many distractions and so many objections to the truth of the word of God by the suggestions of worldly considerations and worldly wisdom, that the person doesn't desire to look into the word of God more seriously or more carefully; and thus, even though the person has heard, yet they reason away the force of truth from themselves. They begin to think of many reasons why they should not further hear and receive the word of truth. Each of us should understand that a person is not saved by their hearing the word, and then they somehow automatically come to the truth. It is not enough simply to hear; one must also receive the word from a good heart. Satan has many ways of diverting the hearts and minds of the hearers from the truth, that if believed, will save the soul. The Devil will make the way of righteousness to seem to be too hard. He may make it appear to be too joyless. He may try to make it appear to be too self-denying; it is no fun, and too much serious consideration is needed, to be a Christian. But all of this is pure deception. The joys of true faith in Christ are real and God will make them over to the serious Christian who loves the truth.

One of the ways that a person can be deceived into thinking that they are a Christian, when they are not, however, is for them to believe a lie about the gospel itself. When you go to a funeral or

a church service and the word is preached, but the truth of the gospel is twisted. When the “minister” is a person who themselves believes that all people will be saved if they will go through a ceremony like baptism, or urges everyone to take the Lord’s Supper, even if those people do not see themselves as sinners, or even needing a Savior. They give them the false assurance that no one is really lost, and everyone is really a child of God. This is actually a snatching of the true word of God, as it is preached by true ministers of God.

The 2nd group of people in the parable represent those who hear the word of the gospel and they immediately receive it with joy, and because of this, they appear to be a true Christian for a time. Many people like the idea that salvation is not by works and that they can receive the gospel and be saved immediately, but they do not think through the implications of what they have done, in saying that they have believed in Christ. There are actually still things in their hearts which will prove that they never really wanted the way of truth. They are the stony ground hearers. Their hearts are still hard to the truth in certain fatal ways; they never realized that there would be tribulation or persecution to face in the Christian life and so when these come, they fall away. Their hearts have no depth of soil and they lack moisture, (as it says in Matthew 13: 21, Mark 4: 17, and Luke 8: 6) And because of this, they do not have any root of true and saving faith; the root of regeneration and the seed of righteousness planted in their heart, and in the time of temptation fall away. (Luke 8: 13) They endure only for a while.

In the 3rd group, the seed of the word of God fell among thorns. The thorns, Jesus says, are the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in which choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. There is something more important to the person than knowing God and walking with God; there is something of the world which the person wants to hold on to, which really prevents the seed from growing up to produce fruit in the life of this professed Christian, which will in time prove that they really have not come to know the Lord; they really do not have saving faith, and thus they cannot have true assurance of salvation.

However, in the 4th group of people mentioned, we find a decided difference and the real basis and foundation for true assurance. And that is that they are seeds which are sown on good ground. Notice the wording. They are ones sown on good ground; the people themselves. They have been given a good heart to receive the word, and that New Birth, that regenerate heart which spiritually hears the word of God, and the person “accepts” the truth of the gospel, it says in the New King James in Mark 4: 20; “receives it, it says in the King James. That is, receives the truth of the gospel of Christ’s finished work, and receives Christ Himself. And then they have assurance of faith. The assurance of hope comes over time as they show forth the fact of the reality of grace at work in their heart, by bringing forth fruit; some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty.

The Lesson – Luke 8: 18 – “Take heed how you hear.” “For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” If you have saving grace and have been born again, if you have spiritual wisdom and understanding, more grace and knowledge on the doctrines of saving grace will be given to you, and you will grow up into Christ and into spiritual maturity. If you do not have saving grace, and have not been born again, if you do not have spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear, then even the understanding of spiritual truth and the common grace by which you thought that you were saved, you will lose; it will be taken from you.

