

The Foundation of Assurance

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ
2. aim – to cause us understand that the foundation of our assurance is Christ himself
3. passage – Hebrews 10:19-23

b. outline

1. The Nature of Assurance
2. The Contrast of Assurance
3. The Foundation of Assurance

c. opening

1. an **introduction** to this mini-series
 - a. a two-part series from Truth4Youth camp 2018 on Chapter 18 of the **1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith: Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation**
 1. originally published in 1677, based on the Westminster Confession; republished in 1688/9 as the response of a conference of Particular Baptists to the Toleration Act
 2. each chapter of the Confession deals with a particular doctrinal issue (the camp has been working through them for the past 14 years)
 - b. a **common issue** amongst Christians – a question that I have heard over and over again in the course of my pastoral ministry: how can I truly know that I am saved – will I go to heaven when I die?
 - a. **question**: why does this question keep getting raised by people *in the church*?
 - b. **naturally**: our nature as human beings portends to this question – we know ourselves!
 - c. **reality**: **because the answer given (typically) does not actually address the question**
 1. the goal is often to *deflect* from the question itself – “just don’t worry about it (trust me)!”
2. **my goal today**: to give you a **biblical** answer to that **actual** question

I. The Nature of Assurance

Content

a. the reality of the doctrine of assurance

1. **i.e.** summarizing the statement of **18:1b** of the 1689 Confession
2. the assumption of chapter 18 on assurance *follows on* from the previous one on **perseverance**
 - a. it is the *will* of God that all of his elect should *persevere* in faith throughout life into eternity
 - b. it is the *work* of God to *preserve* all of his elect in that faith through life into eternity
3. **assurance** (then) is the natural next-step in the discussion:
 - a. if God purposes to *preserve* his people, and this includes their *perseverance* in faith, then it naturally follows that those who *persevere* will also possess a sense of *assurance* in doing so
 - b. **meaning**: a true sense of *confidence* (or *knowing*) that one is saved unto eternal life (**18:1b**)
 “... yet such as who 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 a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them *ashamed*.”
 - c. **literally**: **those who are elect of the Father, atoned for by the Son, and raised by the Spirit can and should possess an assurance by the Spirit that they are truly saved**

b. the opposite of the doctrine of assurance

1. **question #1**: what is the *opposite* of assurance?
 - a. the primary question is sometimes reframed this way: “what if I’m not actually saved?” or “what if I haven’t done enough to be saved” or “how can I be saved even as I struggle with sin?”
 - b. **answer**: the opposite of assurance is **doubt** – a lingering sense of uncertainty about that which has not yet been achieved, especially in the face of *experiences* which seem to suggest that we cannot be certain
 1. **lit.** looking at our lives, seeing our continuing sin, and questioning if we are (still) saved
 2. we will talk more about the matter of doubt in **18:4a** (Thursday’s seminar)
 3. here, I offer this definition of doubt only as a segue into the second question:
2. **question #2**: what is the *ground* (or foundation) of our assurance?
 - a. or, how can we know *for certain* that our salvation is (in fact) secure

- b. **or, what is it specifically that overshadows our own experiences and weaknesses and self-awareness and doubts to give us a sense of true assurance?**

1. in spite of our *obvious* flaws and inabilities, what is it that says “I will be saved!”?

II. The Contrast of Assurance

Content

a. the contrast of the doctrine of assurance

“This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope ...” (18:2a)

1. first, an examination of what assurance *is not* **(the error of much of evangelicalism)**
2. not bare conjectural = a conclusion based on incomplete information; a hypothetical or theoretical conclusion in which some of the data is missing; a guess
3. not probable persuasion = a conviction based on a probability or likelihood that something is true; being persuaded of something simply because it seems *likely* to be true; a hope-so or a probability
 - a. **IOW:** to believe that you are saved simply because it is *most likely* to be true based on whatever evidences *in your own life* you “think” point to it being so
 - b. **e.g.** I believe I am saved because I ... prayed the prayer, walked the aisle, act like a Christian, go to church, am told by my parents/pastor/friends/church that I am saved
 - c. **i.e.** assurance (in this sense) is an attempt to “be convinced” of salvation by looking for evidences in life that it is so – looking inwardly and hoping that there is enough evidence
4. **problem:** an honest examination of these “evidences” will leave you with doubt because there is always room in them to fall short of perfection (**e.g.** I prayed the prayer, but was I *sincere* enough?)
5. **principle: genuine assurance of salvation is never a matter of weighing evidence in oneself (subjectively), but wholly found in an external, objective, and infallible reality outside of oneself, specifically in the person and work of Jesus Christ**
 - a. **IOW:** our assurance is never found in us, but to look away from us to something *infallible*

III. The Foundation of Assurance

Content

a. the foundation of the doctrine of assurance (Hebrews 10:19-23)

“This certainty is ... an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel ...” (18:2a)

1. it is an *“infallible assurance of faith”* – a **radical trust** in the *unchangeable* promises of God as they are manifested in the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and *intercession* of Christ
 - a. **radical** = a faith that **infects** and **affects** every aspect of your life; a trust in God that causes a clear change of thinking and action throughout all of life; **i.e.** I trust, therefore I act (**e.g.** in a car)
 - b. faith always has an object – faith is always *in* something, a radical trust *in* that something
2. it is a faith *“founded on”* (or put *in* **[three things]**):
 - a. the *“blood”* of Christ (**read Hebrews 10:19**) – a faith in the results of the *bodily death* of Jesus
 1. blood appears in at least 20 verses of Hebrews – it is used to mean:
 - a. the *physical life* of a human being (**e.g. 2:14**) – the Son of God taking on flesh and blood
 - b. the *substance* of atonement (**e.g. 9:13-14**) – the substance that pays for sin before God
 - c. the *basis* of relationship (**e.g. 9:18-19**) – the visible element of a covenant with God
 2. the blood of Jesus, the life-sustaining substance of his human flesh, was accepted by God in *“the holy places”* as a perfect price for sin, in order to establish us **confidently** in his presence
 3. **our assurance is in knowing that Christ paid perfectly for our sin, thus we can confidently stand before God with absolute assurance of our state of grace**
 - a. or, when I sin, and knowing my own sinfulness, I can look to the blood of Christ and be assured that my sin has been fully paid for and no additional reckoning is needed from me
 - b. the *“righteousness”* of Christ (**read Hebrews 10:20f**) – a faith in the *righteous life* of Jesus
 1. **IMO:** the term “righteousness” here = the inherent righteousness of Jesus’ earthly life
 - a. the “alien righteousness” that he created by living sinlessly under his own law
 - b. the “alien righteousness” that is imputed to us as those without any inherent righteousness
 2. the *earthly* life of Jesus, the perfection he lived out in human flesh, becomes a *“new and living way”* by which we can step *“through the curtain”* (**i.e.** into the presence of God), and ...
 3. the *continuing* life of Jesus, the position he now holds upon his resurrection and ascension, makes him for us a *“great [high] priest”* continually interceding for us before the Father
 4. **our assurance is in knowing that Christ has imputed to us a perfect righteousness, thus we can confidently come before the Father even though we are still imperfect outwardly**

- c. what is “*revealed in the gospel*” (read Hebrews 10:22f)
1. our “*full assurance*” is faith in something concrete *outside* of ourselves – we can “*draw near*”
 - a. our hearts are “*sprinkled clean*” from an “*evil conscience*” = we trust that we are no longer sinful and separated from God, still needing to “*accomplish*” something
 - b. our bodies are “*washed with pure water*” = we trust that Christ has made us clean before God, and we pursue a life of (attempted) holiness in response
 2. it is “*good news*” (gospel) to us – we have heard the message, and we believe it

b. the hope of the doctrine of assurance

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness / I dare not trust the sweetest frame [other good things], but wholly lean on Jesus’ name / On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand ...”

1. **assurance is a *theological* matter, not a *practical* one – we will never find assurance looking *inward* – we will only find assurance as we look *outward* to the work of Christ**
2. the world says: just be confident in what you have done – the Bible says: just be confident in what Christ has done – there’s no assurance in the former, there’s only assurance in the latter