

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 18 – “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation”,
Session # 12 – “Assurance & Obedience”, presented by Pastor Paul
Rendall on August 19th, 2018, in the Adult Sunday School.**

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

Paragraph 3 – “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be i) 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 means, k)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 l)fruits of this assurance; so far is it m)from inclining men to looseness.

i) Isaiah 50: 10; Psalm 88; 77: 1-12; k) 1st John 4: 13; Hebrews 6:11-12; l) Romans 5: 1-2, 5; 14:17;

Psalm 119: 32; m)Romans 6: 1-2; Titus 2: 11-12, and 14

A Shorter Definition of Assurance:

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

Hebrews 6: 7-12 – “For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.” “But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.” “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

A Paraphrase –

For the hearts of men which drink in the blessings of God’s common grace and spiritual influences of the Holy Spirit striving with them over and over again in the preaching of the word, if their hearts bring forth the sprouts of living fruits to God in their actions, they will show the fact that they have really received Christ, and have been born again by the Spirit of God, and they will receive continual and ongoing blessing from God. But if having received common grace and the influences of the Spirit striving with them in relation to the word of God, they bring forth thorns and briars of selfish, angry, complaining, contentious, and unloving fruits, they will prove themselves to have been unbelievers, and they will be rejected as regards further blessing which would confirm and establish them in Christ’s grace. Their life lived in this way comes near to being cursed in this life, and they will most surely be thrown into the lake of fire when Christ returns.

But beloved, Paul and his fellow-workers say – We are confident of better things concerning you, and things which accompany a saving work of grace in your hearts, even though we have spoken in this fearful way. For God will remember your work and labor of love which you have done in his name, and the fact that you have ministered to the saints out of love to them, and that you continue to do so. And it is my desire, Paul says, that you will continue to show that same diligence in your efforts so that you will come to experience the full assurance of hope, the full assurance that you truly know the Lord because of these evidences of life in you. When you put forth these efforts to serve Christ; and I pray that you will not be

sluggish, but diligent in this regard, and imitate others who have gone before you, who through faith and patience in this fruit-bearing process, have come to inherit the promises that God has made to all such who will be faithful to Him. (This is the assurance of hope; the evidence of graces which can be seen in our heart and life's actions)

This assurance of hope is ultimately confirmed and believers are given great consolation by what is written in verses 13-20 of Hebrews 6, where the truth is set forth that there have been promises made by God unto the evidences of those graces in the Christian's life which bring forth fruit unto God in obedience to His word.

Hebrews 6: 13-20 – “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘SURELY BLESSING I WILL BLESS YOU, AND MULTIPLYING I WILL MULTIPLY YOU.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.” “For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.” “Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

What are the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, that give us strong consolation? They are His counsel (that is, His decrees, which do not change) and His oath whereby He has sworn that His counsel in election shall stand. He confirms this with an oath which made to Abraham, the father of all who would have faith in the promise of grace in Christ. Hope is desire and expectation. We as believers have the desire to do God's will and to please Him in every respect, but this comes to fruition by Christ's grace alone, and not anything in us. We fly for refuge to Christ in order to lay hold of the hope of eternal life, which is set before us. It is what Christ has done for us in His perfect obedience to God's law, and His sufferings on our behalf which will allow us to enter the Presence behind the veil, where Jesus is, our Great High Priest. It is God's decree set forth in the promise of salvation which is sure. And God confirms this with an oath in order that we might have strong consolation and strong assurance that we will inherit eternal life.

Let's look at Abraham's great assurance of faith and hope which he had, which enabled him to show forth the reality of his faith in his offering up to God what was most precious to him. Where do we find Abraham receiving the promise which was confirmed by an oath? We find it in –

Genesis 22: 9-18 – “So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." “Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.” “So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.’” “Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.’” “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Here Abraham was receiving, by his actions, the confirmation of God which gave him the assurance of hope. I want you to see how Abraham had works, he had evidences of great grace which were at work in him in the offering up of his son Isaac, at the command of God. Notice Abraham's willingness to do whatever God commanded him to do. And yet notice, too, that he had faith that God would provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. But yet he went on to the mountain, to build the altar, and lay his son, his only son, Isaac upon it. And he took up the knife, and he stretched out his hand intending to really and actually slay him, but God interposed and told him not to do it. We are told in Hebrews 11: 17-19 that – "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called, concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him back in a figurative sense, or as a type.'"

So we find here that Abraham was living by faith in the promises of God. He had believed that God had given him his only son Isaac. He believed the promise that in his seed, that is through Isaac, that all the nations would be blessed in one of his descendants who would be the Christ. He had believed this and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. He was justified. He had assurance of faith because he believed this first promise given to him. But that promise was confirmed to him by the evidence that he was willing to give up what was most precious to him, to God; that is, his son Isaac, since God had asked him to do so. His being willing to do this, even though he was not actually allowed by God to actually do it, proved to God that Abraham was worthy of all that God had done, and was doing, for him. His actions proved that his heart belonged to God and that grace had transformed him to the place where he could obey God in the particulars of what God commanded him, and this became a means of great assurance to him, and the confirmation to him, that God would perform all that He had promised.

The Issue of Obedience in Relation to Assurance of Hope

Romans 6: 12-22 – "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." "What then?" "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" "Certainly not!" "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." "For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness." "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness." "What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?" "For the end of those things is death." "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."

The obedience which leads to assurance of hope is the evidence of a changed life. Because you have been buried with Christ in baptism into His death, You will no longer let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. You will not present the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin any longer, but you will present yourself to God as being alive from the dead. If you are a true Christian, sin shall no longer have dominion over you, for you are no longer under law but under grace. You are no longer under a covenant of works with God; you are under the covenant of grace, which means, since you have been set free by the power and virtue of Christ's death and resurrection from the reigning and ruling power of sin, you can now present the members of your body to God, as a slave of righteousness for holiness. You will have your fruit unto holiness and the end, everlasting life.