

The Definition of Assurance: What is it?

1. Introduction

2. Definition of Assurance

WCF 18.1 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 a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God—which hope shall never make them ashamed.

3. Declarations of Assurance

4. Different Assurances (Tightrope illustration)

a. Truth Assurance: The assurance of understanding (Col.2:2)

b. Trust Assurance: The assurance of application/appropriation

Thus the direct act of faith undoubtedly involves an element of assurance. This assurance may be implicit rather than explicit in the first act of faith, may not at once reach the level of clear consciousness, and may for a long time be a matter of instinctive feeling rather than of positive knowledge; yet it is destined to grow, and its growth will be [normally] commensurate with the measure of faith...He who really believes with a true and living faith will also know that he believes, and will be ready to affirm that he believes, even though he should at times be prompted to add the prayer "help thou mine unbelief." This does not mean that he will always be clearly aware of the security, the safety, and the joy that is involved in this assurance (L Berkhof, Assurance, 44).

- c. Triumph Assurance: The assurance of hope/sense (Heb.6:11)

Matthew 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

1 John 3:18-19 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

WCF 14.3 This (saving) faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

5. Delays in Assurance

A believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved. A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten. I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him, — really to be a child of God, — really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt and fear....I will affirm, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not affirm it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will affirm it shall land him safely in harbor; but I will not affirm that he shall enter that harbor in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory (J C Ryle).

John 10:28-29 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself.

6. Degrees of Assurance

2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Romans 5:1-3 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ² By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

7. Dangerous Assurance

a. Ten dangers

- i. External assurance
- ii. Charismatic assurance
- iii. Emotional assurance
- iv. Logical/Syllogistic Assurance
- v. Automatic assurance
- vi. Step by step assurance
- vii. Legalistic assurance
- viii. Presumptuous assurance
- ix. Unexamined assurance
- x. Temperamental assurance

b. Four tests

- i.
- ii.
- iii.
- iv.