

## ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Eternal security teaches that **every true Christian** is saved and can never be lost. Eternal security means that God *has secured the continuous and final salvation of all true believers in Christ, keeping them for time and eternity.*

Every Christian is eternally secure whether he believes it or not, but there is a difference between the fact of a person's salvation and the assurance of salvation. Assurance is basically a divine work but involves many human factors that are the means to attaining assurance of salvation.

### THE DIVINE ASPECT OF ASSURANCE

Assurance of salvation in Christ is basically a work of the Holy Spirit. *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."* (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit who lives inside of every true Christian bears a witness or gives a confidence to a Christian's human spirit that he is a child of God. This assurance is inward and experiential and must be produced by the Holy Spirit.

There are many Christians who believe that once a person is saved he can be lost if he breaks his covenant with God. Theologically they hold this view that I believe is incorrect, but practically I have never met one of these persons who held this view and gives evidence of true salvation, who ever felt they could lose their salvation. They just doubt everybody else's salvation.

The final giver of assurance is God, and it is foolishness for Christians to speak of assurance if the Holy Spirit has not produced it. So often in Christian circles we try to give people assurance before the Holy Spirit does. Therefore, we become guilty of giving many professing Christians a false security if they have never been born of the Spirit. Some Christians receive the assurance of salvation almost immediately and others must struggle before receiving it.

*Westminster Confession* – Chapter 18:3-4 (Contemporary Edition, Presby Press)

**"This genuine assurance is not a part of the essential nature of a faith relationship with God. An authentic believer may wait for a long time, struggling with many difficulties before experiencing such assurance. However, the Holy Spirit enables believers to experience and to understand what God provides without additional revelation. Simply the correct use of the ordinary means of spiritual growth will develop assurance. Consequently, the duty of everyone includes diligence in confirming our calling and election in our own minds. This pursuit of confirmation enlarges our sense of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; generates love and thankfulness toward God; and produces strength and cheerfulness as we obediently do our duties. Assurance of salvation encourages spiritual life rather than the looseness of living as some claim."**

**"Authentic believers may have assurance of salvation variously shaken, diminished or intermittently present and absent. This situation evolves from neglecting to preserve assurance; being caught in an entrapping sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Holy Spirit; a sudden rush of overwhelming temptation; God withdrawing the light of His face turned towards us; or tolerating a situation where we who claim Christ, live as if we do not know him. However, believers never completely lose their sense of being God's son or daughter. There is a life of faith, a love for Christ and fellow believers, a sincerity of heart and an awareness of duty which by the work of the Holy Spirit in due time may revive our assurance. While assurance falters, these base elements protect us from utter despair."**

## THE REASONS FOR DOUBTING SALVATION

Christians Doubt the Method of Salvation. Believers sometimes get faith confused with works, such as baptism, church membership, good works, etc. Quite often a person is told to believe and surrender everything to Christ. The new believer becomes frustrated because he does not see as many good works show up as he thought he might have when he first trusted in Christ.

Works are the result of having believed. Works are never the condition for salvation. The only condition for salvation is belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Salvation is by grace through faith alone. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (Eph. 2:8-9). A person is saved when he or she has been touched by the grace of God and genuinely believes in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Christians Doubt the Genuineness of Their Salvation. It is quite common for Christians to look back at their supposed time of salvation and because they did not have some dynamic emotional experience wonder whether they were genuinely saved.

Often I will hear people say if you do not know the day, hour or time you were saved you are not saved, or if you did not weep and cry when you trusted Christ you really did not believe from the heart. How really wrong these dear people are, for the Bible says salvation takes place by a simple act of faith directed towards the person of Jesus Christ. *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”* (Acts 16:31). If a person has genuinely trusted Christ, he has met the condition for salvation and is saved. The issue is not when you believed, but that you are believing in Christ right now.

Furthermore, one’s experience may be great or small at the moment of salvation, depending upon one’s emotional nature. Some people cry easily at weddings and funerals. Others are touched by an emotional play or movie. Experience is never the ultimate test to judge whether one is saved or not. The issue is not what one experiences but what the Bible teaches. Salvation is not based on experience but on God’s grace through man’s faith. Grace is the cause of salvation; faith is the means of appropriating salvation.

Christians Look Inwardly after Salvation. After Christians are saved for a while, they begin to realize that sin is still very much alive in them. Therefore, they begin to look inwardly at their own sin and unfaithfulness and begin to question their salvation. How a Christian feels never affects God’s faithfulness. Often we see our own faithlessness and think God is the same. But God is not a man. He is God. He must be faithful to His promise of grace and safe-keeping. *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”* (John 6:37). God is unchanging and cannot take back the gift of eternal life which He has given to all who believe in Jesus Christ. Assurance comes as one looks outwardly at the character of God who gives salvation, not as one looks inwardly at the various shortcomings, failures and sins.

We must all do much examination of our lives but we must realize that no matter how much we do for the Lord we will never feel as though we have done enough. There is always a feeling of inadequacy, for if there was no feeling of inadequacy, we would never push on in the things of the Lord. As Christians we walk by faith and not by sight (experience). *“We live by faith, not by sight.”* (2 Cor. 5:7). As Christians we must operate on the formula of FACT, FAITH and then FEELING. **Fact** (the objective truths of the Bible). **Faith** (application of the Bible to the life). **Feeling** (a proper Christian experience based on the Word and faith).

Christians do not Understand Progressive Sanctification. After salvation, a believer does experience problems, tragedies, dejection, discouragement and even depression. He wonders if he has been saved. A Christian must understand the doctrine of progressive sanctification. That is, God is saving a person in and through the experiences of life.

A Christian must also understand the doctrine of carnality (fleshly living), for it is possible for a Christian to become rebellious to God.

*“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly (fleshy)—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly (fleshy). For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly (fleshy)? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-3).*

A Christian in sin is very miserable and under great conviction from God. When the Christian sins he breaks temporal fellowship with God and will be disciplined by the Heavenly Father. A Christian in sin often loses assurance of salvation.

A believer must understand that there is a constant struggle with the forces of sin even after one is saved.

*“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” (Gal. 5: 16-17).*

The Holy Spirit and the sin nature within the Christian are literally at war, for the Spirit is working in the Christian to conform him more and more to Christ and the sin nature continues to fight to do evil. This conflict is one of the greatest evidences that a person is genuinely saved. So conflict is normal, not abnormal. A believer must learn not to depend upon self, but upon God. Every Christian must grasp the lesson that there is victory through faith **in the midst** of conflict and struggle.

A Christian must comprehend that he starts out his Christian life as a babe in Christ and must grow to spiritual maturity. It takes time and knowledge of the Bible to become a mature Christian. *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 3:18).*

Christians Neglect the Means of Assurance. If a believer is not studying the Bible, partaking of the Lord’s Table and praying, he will become indifferent to spiritual things and become unstable on assurance. Furthermore, the Christian must persevere in the faith and this will give him proof that God is at work in his life. *“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall,” (2 Pet. 1:10)*

## THE WAY TO RECEIVE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Objective: Believe the Word. *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Rom. 10:13). “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (John 6:37).* The Bible is true and God cannot lie.

Subjective: Begin to Produce Positive Works in Your Life. *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13).* The whole argument of First John sets forth those works that characterize a true child of God. When a Christian begins to see these characteristics manifested in his life to some degree, he knows he has eternal life. These characteristics are living proof that God is at work in the Christian. These characteristics start out like a tiny seed but grow as the Christian matures in his Christian life. The Apostle John gives three tests to determine whether a person has eternal life.

Theological Test (Faith). A person must have a deep conviction that Jesus Christ is true deity. *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. . . Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.” (1 John 5:1, 10).* He must also believe that Christ is true humanity. *“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1 John 4:2).*

Moral Test (Holiness). A true Christian desires to please God in his daily experience. *“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because*

*he has been born of God.*” (1 John 3:9). A true Christian may sin but he does not sin as a habit pattern of life and he now has new desires for holiness. The word “sin” is in the present tense and could be translated “is not habitually, continually, and repeatedly committing acts of sin.”

Social Test (Love). Those who are truly born of God are going to have a genuine love for all brothers and sisters in Christ no matter what their economic, educational or racial status may be. *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”* (1 John 4:7-8).

## **HOW DOES ONE KNOW HE IS SAVED?**

The Bible says all who trust in Christ will receive the forgiveness of sins and be saved. Therefore, a Christian must trust the Word of God.

How can the Christian be sure the Word is true? Because the Holy Spirit gives an inner conviction that it is true and that the Christian is truly saved.

How can the Christian know the Spirit is bearing witness that he is a true child of God? Because as a Christian, he desires to persevere or push on for Christ, giving evidence of true spiritual life.

How can a Christian be sure he will persevere? Because when he sins as a Christian, he will have great conviction from the Spirit that this sin is wrong and if persisted in, God will most certainly bring severe discipline.

## **WARNING ABOUT GIVING HASTY ASSURANCE**

It is the Holy Spirit alone who gives one the assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:16). There are many who deny the teaching of eternal security but they have assurance of their salvation because the Spirit of God gives it in spite of wrong theology.

There are also many Christians who raise a hand, walk an isle, sign a card, pray a rote prayer after someone who have never been touched by the sovereign God for salvation. Yet, if they **say** they are believers in Christ as Savior, other sincere Christians immediately give verses to them on the security of the believer and the assurance of salvation. They are humanly convinced they are saved when their hearts have never been changed by the sovereign Spirit. Consequently they go on living like they always did as unsaved people with a false assurance that they are going to heaven no matter how they live.

By forcing a false assurance on new, professing believers in Christ, the evangelical church, in all sincerity, may be filling up its churches with unregenerate-believers. They believe everything about Christ but their hearts have never been changed (regenerated). At so called conversion, they gave mental and/or emotional assent to Christ and were humanly persuaded and convinced that they were saved because they had said “yes” to Jesus.

The task of the follow-up Christian to a new, professing Christian is to teach the basics of Christianity, and the Holy Spirit over a period of time will mostly likely sovereignly bring assurance to the new follower of Christ. The follow-up worker should not force assurance on the new believer, or humanly convince the new believer when he does not sense it is true. He must teach the new believer the basic truths of Christianity (which includes verses on assurance) but let the Holy Spirit bring that assurance in His timing.