

The Doctrine of Salvation: Assurance

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: DOC-13

LESSON

I. TWO QUESTIONS ON ASSURANCE

Can we be assured of our salvation? To answer that we need to answer two other questions: Is our salvation secure? and Can we experience that security? We can't answer the second without answering the first.

A. Is Salvation Secure?

The answer is yes. But we need to support that answer biblically. I believe Scripture makes it abundantly clear that our salvation is secure.

1. The sovereign decree of the Father

a) John 5:24--Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." That may be the most monumental statement ever made in the Bible relative to the security of salvation. The believer has received everlasting life and will not come under judgment.

b) John 3:16, 18--"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.... He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already." On the positive side: we have everlasting life; on the negative side: we will never come into judgment.

c) John 6:37-40--Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (v. 37). All whom God sovereignly chooses will come to Christ. However, that should not restrain any one from coming to Christ because He said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (v. 37).

In verses 38-39 Jesus says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will who sent hath me, that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." All those chosen for salvation--all those who came to Jesus Christ--will be raised up on the last day. Not one will be lost.

In verse 40 Jesus sums up His teaching: "This is the will of him that sent me, that everyone who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Whoever believes in Christ will be raised up to the fullness of eternal life. That is the promise of God's Word.

2. The high-priestly work of Jesus Christ

a) John 17:11, 15--Jesus prayed for His disciples in anticipation of His departure from the world, saying, "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.... I pray not that thou shouldest take

them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]." Since our Savior always prays in perfect harmony with the will of the Father, we can be assured that this is the will of God.

c) John 10:27-29--Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (v. 27). The true sheep are committed to the true shepherd. In verse 28-29 Jesus says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." On the positive side we have everlasting life; on the negative side no one will ever be removed out of his eternal relationship with the Father.

We are secured by the sovereign purpose of God and the continual, faithful intercession of our great High Priest--the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude 24 says, "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." We know from the high-priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is able to keep us from falling.

3. The affirmation of Scripture

a) 1 Peter 1:3-5--"[God] hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Our inheritance is permanent. Whom God saves He glorifies (cf. Rom. 8:30).

b) 1 John 2:1-2--Does God's promise still hold true when we sin? The apostle John said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins." If any man sins we have a lawyer for the defense, Jesus Christ, who goes to the Father and tells Him not to hold any sin against a believer because He paid sin's penalty in full.

B. Can We Experience that Security?

Can we know that we are secure? Yes. How do we know? Many claim they remember the day they signed a card, walked the aisle, raised their hand, or were baptized. But none of those things are valid proofs for affirming your salvation, including regular church attendance.

Why Do So Many Doubt Their Salvation?

Many people do not enjoy the assurance of their salvation. Assurance is a more accurate word to use in this section than security because security refers to the facts, whereas assurance refers to the feeling of knowing you are secure. Assurance, just like any other blessing of God, can be forfeited through disobedience. Whenever a person is not sure if he is saved, there are several possibilities. First, he may not be saved. Second, he may be disobeying God. And third, he may be being buffeted by Satan, the liar of all liars, who wants us to doubt what in fact is true. Against Satan's attack the believer must affirm what Paul says in Romans 8:31-39--that no one can lay any charge to God's elect because God has justified them.

The New Testament teaches us two ways we can experience assurance.

1. Pure doctrine

One of the internal evidences--one of the things that gives us a sense of knowing we're saved--is when our doctrine is right.

a) 2 John 9--"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." True assurance is available only to those who abide in the true biblical doctrine of Christ. If you have a wrong view of Jesus Christ, you will not experience security in your salvation. People who follow the teachings of cults or unbiblical religions, and do not affirm the Christ of the Bible will never experience a genuine sense of assurance. That's why they work so frantically to earn salvation. They try to be affirmed by their works because they never experience assurance.

b) Colossians 1:22-23--"In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Internal assurance comes when there is no deviation in doctrine--when we affirm the Christ of the gospel and the gospel of Christ.

2. Pure living

Pure living is the key to experiencing assurance in your salvation.

a) Righteousness

If you look at your life and see nothing but compromise and corruption, don't be surprised if you don't have any sense of security.

(1) Bearing fruit

In Matthew 7:18 Jesus gives the following truism: "A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." If you see corrupt fruit in your life, it's logical to assume you're a corrupt tree. It is vital that you see a pattern of holy living in your life if you are ever to know assurance. If you don't see that pattern, there is no way you can logically conclude that you're saved.

(2) Denying ungodliness

In Titus 2:11-14 Paul says, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people of his own, zealous of good works." Salvation teaches you to deny ungodliness. Therefore, if you are not denying ungodliness in your life, you will have a difficult time believing you are really saved. James says that faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

b) Remembrance

In 2 Peter 1:12 Peter says, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the present truth." "These things" refer to what Peter said in the first eleven verses. He wanted the believers to remember and be established in the things they already knew about their salvation.

(1) The reality of our salvation (2 Pet. 1:1-2)

Second Peter begins: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ: grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord" (vv. 1-2).

(a) The equality of faith

Peter said we have "obtained" salvation. It is a gift, not something we purchased. The phrase "like precious faith" refers to saving faith or the act of believing. That faith is considered precious--it is highly valuable. Also, it is "like" the faith of other believers. Everyone comes to Christ on the same terms: faith. Our Savior saves us all equally. There is no distinction (Matt. 19:30[en]20:16).

(b) The establishment of faith

Salvation is a result of "the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ." God has granted us His righteousness and holiness, which is the essence of His nature.

(c) The enlightenment of faith

God granted us His righteousness and holiness "through the knowledge [Gk. epignosis, "deep, profound knowledge"] of God, and Jesus, our Lord." When a person acquires deep knowledge of God, he receives the righteousness of God and Christ.

(2) The riches of our salvation (2 Pet. 1:3-4)

(a) The gifts

Verse 3 says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The phrase "divine power" means that God, with His infinite energy, dispensed His eternal resources to us.

(b) The glory

Those resources came to us "through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" (v. 3). God called us to glory (the essence of the life of God in the soul of man), and to virtue (the manifestation of the life of God in the soul of man). We have been given everything we need and have been called to manifest the life of God within us.

(c) The grant

In verse 4 Peter says, "By which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious [priceless] promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." The apostle Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). He also said, "Christ in you [is] the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). As a result of receiving precious promises and becoming partakers of the divine nature, we have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).

(3) The responsibility inherent in our salvation (2 Pet. 1:5-7)

Verse 5 says, "Beside this, giving all diligence." There's a responsibility inherent in our salvation. Those who advocate the doctrine of total surrender--of merely letting go and letting God--have trouble reconciling this verse. Peter continues: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith." Now he was not saying we're to do that apart from the Holy Spirit. We're to add to our faith the following:

(a) Virtue

The Greek word translated "virtue" (aret[ma]e) refers to the excellence of a thing. What is the excellence of any man or woman? "The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

(b) Knowledge

To our excellence we are to add "knowledge" (Gk. gn[ma]osis), which refers to practical wisdom.

(c) Self-control

To our knowledge we are to add "self-control." That means we need to discipline ourselves not to fall into old habits of sin.

(d) Patience

To self-control we're to add "patience" (Gk., hupomon[ma]e). That means we're to persevere in what is right no matter the cost.

(e) Godliness

To patience we're to add "godliness" (Gk., eusebeia), which is reverence and awe of God.

(f) Brotherly kindness

To godliness we're to add "brotherly kindness" (Gk., philadelphia).

(g) Love

To brotherly kindness we're to add love, which is unselfish service rendered on behalf of others.

(4) The result of our salvation (2 Pet. 1:8)

In verse 8 Peter says, "If these things [virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love] be in you and abound." That means those things should be increasing in a believer's life. We will not attain perfection until we see Christ, but that should be the direction you're moving in.

If those things Peter mentioned in verses 5-7 characterize your life, "they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8). I can't think of anything worse than a barren and unfruitful Christian. Verse 8 implies that you can possess the divine nature and the exceeding precious promises of God, have escaped the corruption of the world, know God through Jesus Christ, have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, and have all things pertaining to life and godliness, yet experience times of barrenness and unfruitfulness in your life. Why? Simply by not adding the things of verses 5-7 to the substance of your faith in the power of the Spirit.

The point of this verse 8 is clear: When those characteristics are not increasing in your life, you become indistinguishable from an apostate. Therefore, you will have no sense of assurance because you won't be able to see any difference between yourself and an unbeliever.

(5) The rest of our salvation (2 Pet. 1:9-11)

(a) The loss of eternal perspective

i) Blindness

In verse 9 Peter says, "He that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off." The Greek word translated "afar off" is the basis for the English word myopic, which means, "to be nearsighted." A person with myopia has lost his ability to see into the distance. Peter's point is that the believer has lost his eternal perspective. All he sees is what is immediately before him. Spiritual myopia focuses on the passing things of the earth. Paul refers to man's blindness in a different context in 2 Corinthians 4:4: "The god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not." Unbelievers are totally blind, and a believer appears no different when his focus is on the world. If you can't see the things of verses 5-7 in your life, you have lost your eternal perspective. If you aren't being fruitful, you have become trapped in the world's environment.

ii) Forgetfulness

The believer with spiritual myopia "hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (v. 9). The Greek word translated "purged" (katharismos) refers to a cleansing from the sins of the past. So Peter is saying that a person who has spiritual myopia will have forgotten that he was saved. Assurance in a believer's life is directly related to an increase in the spiritual graces outlined in verses 5-7.

(b) The life of eternal reward

In verse 10 Peter says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Believers don't want to live without the assurance of their salvation, so it's imperative for them to make sure of their calling and election. Then they won't fall from their sense of security.

The Greek text of verse 11 is best translated: "For so richly will be supplied to you entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." If you add the things of verses 5-7 to your life, you will make your calling and election sure, you will not fall from your confidence, and you will receive all that is coming to you (when you meet Jesus Christ).

II. TWELVE TESTS ON ASSURANCE

A. Do You Enjoy Fellowship with Christ and His Redeemed People?

If you regularly participate in such fellowship, that's a sign you are a Christian (cf. Heb. 10:24-26). First John 1:3 says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." We have fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and everyone who has fellowship with the Father and the Son. When you were saved you entered into fellowship with Jesus Christ and His redeemed people. If you have shared in the prayers, praises, and testimonies of God's people, that's an indication you belong to Him.

B. Are You Sensitive to Your Sin?

First John 1:8, 10 says "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." If you have a continual sensitivity to the sin in your life and are in awe of holy God, that's an indication you are a Christian.

C. Do You Tend to Hate the World and its Evil?

First John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If you love the system of the world and all that it stands for, that indicates you are not a Christian. However, if you have a basic hatred of the evil in this world, even though you may fall into its trap now and then, that's an indication you are a Christian.

D. Are You Obedient to God's Word?

First John 2:3-5 says, "By this we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; by this know we that we are in him."

E. Do You Await the Coming of Jesus Christ?

First John 3:2-3 says, "Beloved ... it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." If you love Christ and eagerly await His coming, that indicates you are a Christian.

F. Do You See a Decreasing Pattern of Sin in Your Life?

First John 3:5-6 says, "Ye know that he was manifest to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." A

true Christian will experience a decreasing frequency of sin in his life.

G. Do You Make Sacrifices for Other Christians?

First John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Then in verses 16-17 John says, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whosoever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassions from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

H. Do You Experience Answered Prayer?

First John 3:22 says, "Whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Answered prayer is the result of keeping God's commandments and doing what is pleasing in His sight. So if you're seeing answers to your prayers, that indicates you are a Christian.

I. Do You Experience the Internal Work of the Holy Spirit?

First John 3:24 says, "By this we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit whom he hath given us." John also says, "By this know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). The Spirit in us cries, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Although you may be experiencing doubt at the present time, if you can look back and see the Spirit's leading in the past, that's an affirmation that you belong to God.

J. Are You Able to Discern Between Spiritual Truth and Error?

First John 4:1-6 says, "Believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. By this know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." A true Christian does not fall prey to false teaching about Jesus Christ, the doctrine of salvation, and other basics of the faith.

K. Do You Believe What the Bible Teaches?

First John 5:1 says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Why should you believe that? Because the Bible, which proves itself to be the Word of God, says so.

L. Have You Ever Suffered on Account of Your Faith?

The devil doesn't attack the tares; he attacks the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Philippians 1:28 says, "In nothing [be] terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but

to you of salvation." When you are attacked by the enemy, remember that he is judged, but you are saved.

Focusing on the Facts

1. How does the Bible affirm the security of our salvation?
2. What does Jesus say about everlasting life (John 3:16, 18; 5:24)?
3. According to John 6:37-40, what happens to those who have been chosen for salvation?
4. What does Jesus Christ do when we sin? Why is He able to do that?
5. What are three reasons some people don't have an assurance of their salvation?
6. What are the two basic ways that the New Testament teaches us how to experience the assurance of our salvation?
7. Why do those who do not affirm the Christ of the Bible never experience a genuine sense of assurance?
8. Why is it important for a believer to see a pattern of holy living in his life?
9. What does "like precious faith" mean (2 Pet. 1:1)?
10. What are the riches of our salvation?
11. What have Christians been called to (2 Pet. 1:3)?
12. What are we to add to our saving faith? Explain each.
13. What should be the direction of your life?
14. How can you possess the realities and the riches of salvation yet still experience times of barrenness and unfruitfulness?
15. What happens when you don't add to your faith the things mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5-7?
16. What happens when you add to your faith the characteristics mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5-7?
17. Why is fellowship with Christ and His people an indication of salvation (1 John 1:3)?

18. Why is sensitivity to sin an indication of salvation (1 John 1:8, 10)?
19. Why is answered prayer a proof of salvation (1 John 3:22)?
20. Why doesn't a true Christian fall prey to false teaching (1 John 4:1- 6)?
21. Why is an attack on our faith an indication of our salvation (Phil 1:28)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Read Romans 8:28-39. In a short paragraph, explain the security you have as a Christian. What verses indicate the sovereign decree of God in your salvation? What verses indicate the high-priestly work of Christ? Find other Scriptures that affirm Romans 8:28-39. Which ones stand out to you? Memorize one of them.
2. List the twelve tests of assurance (see pp. 9-11). On a scale of 1-10, rate yourself in regard to how each test affirms your security. Why do you have a low rating in some areas and a high rating in others? Read 1 John 3:19-21. Does your heart condemn you in some of those areas? Read Romans 8:1. Who is greater than your heart? If Jesus Christ is your Savior and Lord you are no longer condemned. Is He your Savior and Lord? Prayerfully consider 2 Corinthians 13:5.

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