

Chapter 18 – Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Temporary believers and other unregenerate people may deceive themselves in vain with false hopes and fleshly presumptions that they have God’s favor and salvation, but their hope will perish.¹ Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him sincerely, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may be certainly assured in this life that they are in a state of grace. They may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,² and this hope will never make them ashamed.³

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¹ Job 8:13-14

13 “So are the paths of all who forget God;
And the hope of the godless will perish,
14 Whose confidence is fragile,
And whose trust a spider’s web.

¹ Matthew 7:22-23

22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him sincerely, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may be certainly assured in this life that they are in a state of grace. They may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,²

² 1 John 2:3

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

² 1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

² 1 John 3:18-24

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

² 1 John 5:13

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

and this hope will never make them ashamed.³

³ **Romans 5:2-5**

2 through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

2. This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith⁴ founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel.⁵ It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made.⁶ It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.⁷ As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.⁸

2. This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith⁴

⁴ **Hebrews 6:11**

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

⁴ **Hebrews 6:19**

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel.⁵

⁵ **Hebrews 6:17-18**

17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made.⁶

⁶ **2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11**

(Note: continuous passage provided for context) 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, 7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his*

purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.⁷

⁷ **Romans 8:15-16**

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” **16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.⁸

⁸ **1 John 3:1–3**

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. **2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. **3** And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

3. This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith *that it is always fully experienced alongside faith*, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it.⁹ Yet with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.¹⁰ Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure. In this way their hearts 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. These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance.¹¹ Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.¹²

⁹ Isaiah 50:10; Psalm 88; 77:1–12. ¹⁰ 1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11, 12. ¹¹ Romans 5:1, 2, 5; 14:17; Psalms 119:32. ¹² Romans 6:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12, 14.

3. This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith *that it is always fully experienced alongside faith*, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it.⁹

⁹ **Isaiah 50:10**

Who is among you that fears the LORD,
That obeys the voice of His servant,
That walks in darkness and has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

⁹ **Psalm 88**

1 O LORD, the God of my salvation,
I have cried out by day and in the night before You.
2 Let my prayer come before You;
Incline Your ear to my cry!
3 For my soul has had enough troubles,
And my life has drawn near to Sheol.
4 I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit;
I have become like a man without strength,
5 Forsaken among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom You remember no more,
And they are cut off from Your hand.
6 You have put me in the lowest pit,
In dark places, in the depths.
7 Your wrath has rested upon me,
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves.
Selah.
8 You have removed my acquaintances far from me;
You have made me an object of loathing to them;
I am shut up and cannot go out.
9 My eye has wasted away because of affliction;
I have called upon You every day, O LORD;
I have spread out my hands to You.
10 Will You perform wonders for the dead?
Will the departed spirits rise *and* praise You?
Selah.
11 Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave,
Your faithfulness in Abaddon?
12 Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness?
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.
14 O LORD, why do You reject my soul?
Why do You hide Your face from me?
15 I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on;
I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.
16 Your burning anger has passed over me;
Your terrors have destroyed me.
17 They have surrounded me like water all day long;
They have encompassed me altogether.
18 You have removed lover and friend far from me;
My acquaintances are *in* darkness.

⁹ **Psalm 77:1-12**

1 My voice *rises* to God, and I will cry aloud;
My voice *rises* to God, and He will hear me.
2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness;
My soul refused to be comforted.
3 *When* I remember God, then I am disturbed;
When I sigh, then my spirit grows faint.
Selah.
4 You have held my eyelids *open*;

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of old,
 The years of long ago.
6 I will remember my song in the night;
 I will meditate with my heart,
 And my spirit ponders:
7 Will the Lord reject forever?
 And will He never be favorable again?
8 Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?
 Has *His* promise come to an end forever?
9 Has God forgotten to be gracious,
 Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?
 Selah.
10 Then I said, "It is my grief,
 That the right hand of the Most High has changed."
11 I shall remember the deeds of the LORD;
 Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
12 I will meditate on all Your work
 And muse on Your deeds.

Yet with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.¹⁰

¹⁰ **1 John 4:13**

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

¹⁰ **Hebrews 6:11-12**

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure. In this way their hearts 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. These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance.¹¹

¹¹ **Romans 5:1-2**

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God

¹¹ **Romans 5:5**

and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

¹¹ **Romans 14:17**

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ **Psalms 119:32**

I shall run the way of Your commandments,
 For You will enlarge my heart.

Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.¹²

¹² **Romans 6:1-2**

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ²May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

¹² **Titus 2:11-14**

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13** looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, **14** who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

4. True believers may in various ways have the assurance of their salvation shaken, decreased, or temporarily lost. This may happen because they neglect to preserve it¹³ or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit.¹⁴ It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation¹⁵ or when God withdraws the light of his face and allows even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.¹⁶ Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God,¹⁷ the life of faith,¹⁸ love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived.¹⁹ In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.²⁰

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¹³ **Song of Solomon 5:2, 3, 6**

(Note: continuous passage provided for context)

2 "I was asleep but my heart was awake.

A voice! My beloved was knocking:

'Open to me, my sister, my darling,

My dove, my perfect one!

For my head is drenched with dew,

My locks with the damp of the night.'

³"I have taken off my dress,

How can I put it on *again*?

I have washed my feet,

How can I dirty them *again*?

⁴"My beloved extended his hand through the opening,

And my ^afeelings were aroused for him.

⁵"I arose to open to my beloved;

And my hands dripped with myrrh,

And my fingers with liquid myrrh,

On the handles of the bolt.

⁶"I opened to my beloved,

But my beloved had turned away *and* had gone!

My heart went out *to him* as he spoke.

I searched for him but I did not find him;
I called him but he did not answer me.

or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit.¹⁴

¹⁴ **Psalm 51:8, 12, 14**

(Note: continuous passage provided for context)

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

9 Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

13 *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation¹⁵

¹⁵ **Psalm 116:11**

I said in my alarm,
“All men are liars.”

¹⁵ **Psalm 77:7**

Will the Lord reject forever?
And will He never be favorable again?

¹⁵ **Psalm 77:8**

Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?
Has *His* promise come to an end forever?

¹⁵ **Psalm 31:22**

As for me, I said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.

or when God withdraws the light of his face and allows even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.¹⁶

¹⁶ **Psalm 30:7**

O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;
You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God,¹⁷

¹⁷ **1 John 3:9**

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

the life of faith,¹⁸

¹⁸ **Luke 22:32**

but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived.¹⁹

¹⁹ **Psalm 42:5**

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And *why* have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him
For the help of His presence.

¹⁹ **Psalm 42:11**

Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.²⁰

²⁰ **Lamentations 3:26–31**

26 *It is good that he waits silently*
27 *It is good for a man that he should bear*
The yoke in his youth.
28 Let him sit alone and be silent
Since He has laid *it* on him.
29 Let him put his mouth in the dust,
Perhaps there is hope.
30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter,
Let him be filled with reproach.
31 For the Lord will not reject forever,
For the salvation of the LORD.