

Blueprints for Belief

Laying the Theological Foundations for Constructing Your Faith

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

- “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord’... and then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ – Matthew 7:22-23
- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” – Romans 15:13

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

- “And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end... So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose... it is impossible for God to lie.” – Hebrews 6:11, 17-18
- “You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” – Romans 8:15-16
- “When you believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance...” – Ephesians 1:13-14

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 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 ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone 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 Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

- “I write these things to you who believe... that you may know that you have eternal life.” – 1 John 5:13
- “We have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” – 1 Corinthians 2:12
- “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure...” – 2 Peter 1:10-11

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

- “Restore to me the joy of your salvation...” – Psalm 51:12
- “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him...” – 1 John 3:9
- “For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you...” – Isaiah 54:7-10

Objections

“Is assurance only reserved for the super-spiritual?”

- No! It is available to all Christians, because it rests on Christ—not self.

“If people think they are already saved, they will stop striving for holiness.”

- False assurance leads to carelessness. True assurance leads to godliness.

“If I don't have assurance, I must not have faith.”

- Faith can be present (and often is) when assurance is weak or absent.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How can we help distinguish between true assurance and false assurance?
- 2) How would you counsel someone who lacks assurance?
- 3) As a church, how can we foster assurance that is rooted in grace, not pride?