

Assurance of Salvation

Westminster Confession 18, 1-2: ...those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus... 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... This certainty is not merely a conjectural... but an infallible assurance of faith, founded on the divine truth of the promises of salvation, on the evidence in our hearts that the promised graces are present, and on the fact that the Spirit of adoption witnesses with our spirits that we are God's children. The Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed for the day of redemption, is the pledge of our inheritance.

Is Assurance of Salvation Even Possible?

The Bible tells us that we can know if we belong to God and are going to heaven.

1 John 5:13
2 Corinthians 13:5

2 Peter 1:10
Hebrews 10:22

Assurance = the conviction that salvation is mine!

How Can I Know?

1. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, then God promises you eternal life.

John 3:14-16,18,36
John 5:24
John 20:31
Acts 16:31
Romans 5:9-11

Romans 10:9
Galatians 3:6-9
1 John 2:23-25
1 John 4:15,16
1 John 5:1a,11-12

2. If you have the Holy Spirit, then this guarantees your eternal inheritance.

Romans 8:9
2 Corinthians 1:21-22
Ephesians 1:13-14

1 John 4:13
1 John 5:10-12

3. If something in your heart cries out “Abba” (Father), then you are God’s child and you are a co-heir with Christ.

Romans 8:15-16
Galatians 4:6

4. If who you are (character) and what you do (lifestyle) is changing to become more like Jesus, then you have eternal life. In other words, has your relationship with Christ made a difference in your life?

Luke 6:43-45
2 Peter 1:5-11
1 John 2:3-6,17,29

1 John 3:4-6
1 John 4:7,12
1 John 5:18

False Assurances

If I choose to step out upon a lake cover by thin ice, it matters not how much faith and assurance I have in the ice. If it is thin ice, I will fall in and possibly drown. In the same way, assurance of salvation is useless if it is based upon a false foundation. The Bible mentions five false assurances:

1. "I made a verbal profession of faith. I answered an altar call." – So did Judas. A verbal profession means nothing, unless there is also a change of heart. It's the mouth AND the heart that connects us to Jesus (see 1 Samuel 16:7; Romans 10:9).
2. "I joined a church. I fellowship with Christians." – Salvation is in Jesus, not the church (Jeremiah 7:1-15). Joining a church does not make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car. Salvation is not contagious (1 Cor 10:1-12; Matt 24:9-13).
3. "I live a good life." – No one will be saved by his or her good life, because it's not good enough (Romans 3:23; Galatians 2:16).
4. "I'm involved in Christian service. I have performed miracles. I have an effective ministry." – Jesus is unimpressed by our Christian service (Matthew 7:21-23).
5. "I feel things are okay between God and I. God and I have an understanding." – Truth is not based on feelings, but facts. Who can really trust their own feelings? The prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Examples of people who felt they were okay with God: Ezekiel 13:10-12; Matthew 24:37-41.

Can I Have Doubts?

"For true believers assurance of salvation may be shaken, diminished or temporarily lost in various ways: by negligence in preserving it; by falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience or grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation; by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance and allowing even those who reverence Him to walk in darkness and have no light. Yet, true believers are never completely deprived of the new life God gave them, nor of the ability to live by faith in Christ, nor of love to Christ and to fellow believers, nor of sincerity of heart and consciousness of duty, and by these the Holy Spirit may revive this assurance in them in due time. Meanwhile they are kept by these things from utter despair." Westminster Confession 18.4.

Assurance is a wonderful blessing, but our security does not rest upon the stability of our assurance. Our security resides in the faithfulness of the Savior.

What do I do if I have doubts?

1. Go back to the gospel. Do you understand the gospel? Do you realize that you are saved by Another who died for your sins on behalf of you (1 Corinthians 15:3)? Do you understand faith? Are you taking God at His word?
2. Make every effort to "make your calling and election sure" by working out your salvation with evidences of virtue and love (2 Peter 1:3-11; Galatians 5:6; James 2:18).