

**PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION**  
**A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

Purpose: To consider the topic of Christian assurance of their salvation since this is an important topic that matter for eternity.

TENATIVE PLANNED SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION)

Session 1: Why Study Assurance?

Foundation for assurance

Session 2: Perseverance of the Saints

Session 3: True Believers endure in doctrine and life

Session 4: Objections to Perseverance of the Saints

Assurance: Testing our Salvation

Do you know the Gospel?

Session 5: Do you understand the atonement?

Session 6: Do you understand what is repentance?

Session 7: Survey of various passages from 1 John Part 1 of 2

Session 8: Survey of various passages from 1 John Part 2 of 2

Session 9: Test questions to ask oneself

Session 10: John 15 and Abiding in Him

I. Why study on the topic of Christian assurance?

Note: The following are eight reasons Christian ought to study the doctrine of assurance and take this subject seriously.

a. Truth in of itself is important

i. Point: If God's Word reveals anything about this subject, it ought to be seen as a gift of God's truth for us to understand.

ii. Proof

1. *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."* (**Deuteronomy 29:29**)

a. Verse reveals two kinds of knowledge: Revealed vs. Hidden.

b. What is revealed "*belong to us*" (second generation Hebrews out of Egypt) but also "*to our sons forever,*"

c. Purpose: "*that we may observe all the words of this law.*"

2. *"Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding."* (**Proverbs 23:23**)

a. Truth is precious enough that Scripture tells us to buy it and not sell it.

b. It's not just any truth but truth that is wise, instructive and understanding.

iii. Practice

1. We ought to study this doctrine not just intellectually but to obey God's Word (Cf. **Deuteronomy 29:29b**)!
2. If truths are even worth buying, how much do we appreciate a study on God's Truth which in this case is about assurance when it's free

b. God tells us to test ourselves if we are saved

i. Point: If God's Word tells us to test to see if we are saved, then we best understand what that test means in order to give us assurance

ii. Proof

1. *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you <sup>fail</sup> the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)*
  - a. Command stated twice: "Test yourselves" "examine yourselves"
  - b. Reflexive pronoun referring to ourselves in introspection, an activity down to us.

iii. Practice

1. Approach this study not just with head knowledge but to ask: Am I really saved?
2. This ought to be sobering

c. Too great a consequence to be mistaken about

i. Point: Note earlier in **2 Corinthians 13:5** that *"Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you <sup>fail</sup> the test?"*

ii. Proof

1. *"<sup>21</sup> 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup> 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 <sup>miracles</sup>?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 5:21-23)*
  - a. Jesus clearly state in **verse 21** that some could be mistaken.
  - b. Note what these people say about their relationship to God in **verse 22**
    - i. "prophesy in Your name"
    - ii. "cast out demons"
    - iii. "perform many <sup>miracles</sup>"
  - c. Consequences of their error: *"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (v.23)"*

iii. Practice

1. Ask yourself: Does this concern you?
  2. Are there any practices of lawlessness that you need to repent of?
- d. The danger of self-deception is real (**James 1:22-24**)
- i. Point: People can delude themselves and we ought to know with grounded assurance of our relationship with God and status for eternity.
  - ii. Proof
    1. *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his <sup>Ⓜ</sup>natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for once he has looked at himself and gone away, <sup>Ⓜ</sup>he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.”* (**James 1:22-24**)
      - a. Note **verse 22** the reality that when it comes to spirituality some may “delude themselves”
      - b. How one may delude oneself: “merely hearers”(v. **22a**)
      - c. How one may not delude oneself: “*But prove yourselves doers of the word,*” (v. **22a**)
      - d. An ironic illustration (v. **23-24**)
  - iii. Practice
    1. Take the next few weeks to be very honest with oneself especially with the areas of one’s life others don’t see.
    2. Search yourself to see if you do the Word or not.
- e. To be saved
- i. Point: If at the course of one’s test it turns out that one is not saved then the one thing to do is to make sure you get saved!
  - ii. Proof: *“<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were <sup>Ⓜ</sup>pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Brethren, <sup>Ⓜ</sup>what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (**Acts 2:37-38**)
    1. Contextually this took place on day of Pentecost when Peter was preaching to a multitude of Jews at the Temple.
    2. Note **verse 37**, the people realize they were in the wrong.
    3. Note the hope in **verse 38**.
  - iii. Practice
    1. We need to do the same if it turns out we are not saved!
    2. There is hope in receiving Jesus Christ!
- f. Comfort the Christian
- i. Point: There is comfort and hope in a Christian assurance of their salvation!
  - ii. Proof:

1. *“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence <sup>to</sup>so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,” (Hebrews 6:11)*
    - a. Note *“the full assurance of hope”* is something *“that each one of you show the same diligence <sup>to</sup>so as to realize”*
    - b. This *“full assurance”* is *“of hope”*
  2. Full assurance allow us to approach God: *“let us draw near with a <sup>to</sup>sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:22)*
- iii. Practice
1. Do you want to have hope and comfort as a Christian? Study this topic to get it!
  2. The more regularly you do this the more better your relationship with God is and the more you are comforted and have hope!
- g. Bear fruit
- i. Point: Christian assurance is the motivation for bearing fruit and being productive for the Lord!
  - ii. Picture: “Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same, both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs forever; let the conveyance be publicly registered and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise. Suppose then that one of them shall set to work to clear his land and bring it into cultivation and labor at it day after day without intermission or cessation. Suppose in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own, whether there is not some mistake, whether after all there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him. The one shall never doubt his title — but just work diligently on. The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title — and spend half his time in going to Sydney or Melbourne or Auckland with needless inquiries about it. Which now of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous? Anyone of common sense can answer that question. I need not supply an answer. There can be only one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> JC Ryle, “Assurance” in Holiness: <http://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/holiness8.htm>

- iii. Practice: Seek assurance so you can be productive as a believer!
- h. To worship God with praise, marvel and thanksgiving

- II. Perseverance of the Saints
  - a. Introduction
    - i. Our study of Christian assurance of salvation begins with an exposition of the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints which is foundational and shapes how Christian ought to understand assurance of salvation.
    - ii. Outline
      - 1. Definition of Perseverance of the Saints and Eternal Security
      - 2. Why is Perseverance of the Saints important for Christian assurance
      - 3. Foundation: The Sovereignty of God
      - 4. Passages demonstrating God's elect will never be lost
      - 5. Passages demonstrating God's elect will persevere in their faith and works
  - b. Definition of Perseverance of the Saints and Eternal Security
    - i. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints “teaches very specifically that they who have once been regenerated and effectually called by God to a state of grace, can never completely fall from that state and thus fail to attain to eternal salvation, though they may sometimes be overcome by evil and fall in sin. It is maintained that the life of regeneration and the habits that develop out of it in the way of sanctification can never entirely disappear.”<sup>2</sup>
    - ii. “Eternal Security is the teaching that God shall with no uncertainty bring into their eternal inheritance those who are actually justified—delivered from the curse of the law and have the righteousness of Christ reckoned to their account—and who have been begotten by the Spirit of God. And further it is the teaching that God shall do this in a way glorifying to Himself, in harmony with His nature and consistent with the teaching of Scripture concerning the nature of those who are called saints.”<sup>3</sup>
    - iii. “The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”<sup>4</sup>
  - c. Why is doctrine of Perseverance of the Saints important for Christian assurance
    - i. Assurance must be based on a biblical view of eternal Security.
    - ii. “Eternal Security is a doctrine that complements and completes other truths. It is the truth which establishes a Christian in

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 546.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur W. Pink, “Preface” in *Eternal Security*. <Accessed at [http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec\\_foreword.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec_foreword.htm)>

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Houses, 1994), 788.

assurance of salvation. The doctrine of election in itself cannot do this. Justification cannot do this. The doctrine of sanctification cannot do this. Not even the doctrine of glorification does so. Yet each of these is incomplete without Eternal Security. Election, Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification are all hypothetical—mere possibilities—until Eternal Security complements and completes them by showing how they are applied to specific individuals. And it is also practical because it brings believers to assurance of salvation, which according to many Scripture passages they are to have.”<sup>5</sup>

- d. Foundation: Beginning with the Sovereignty of God
  - i. Note: The fact that those born again will have eternal security of their salvation rests on the basis of God’s Sovereignty.
  - ii. *“But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.” (Psalm 115:3)*
    - This verse indicates God has the capacity to fulfill what He pleases.
  - iii. *“Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” (Psalm 135:6)*
    - 1. Note again, this verse indicates God has the capacity to fulfill what He pleases.
    - 2. Note the second half of the verse emphasis of this truth everywhere: “heaven,” “earth,” “seas” “and in all deeps.”
  - iv. *“Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;” (Isaiah 46:10)*
    - 1. One other way God expresses His Sovereignty is through omniscience (Isaiah 46:10a)
    - 2. Note the second half of the verse stating His purpose will be accomplished.
  - v. **Isaiah 14:27**—God’s purpose cannot be overthrown.
- e. Passages demonstrating God’s elect will never be lost
  - i. **John 3:16**—Eternal life be eternal life if it’s not eternal life!
  - ii. Eternal security because of Jesus’ promise: *“and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:28)*
    - 1. Those who are given eternal life will not perish.
    - 2. Nor will anyone snatch them away.
  - iii. Eternal security because of Jesus’ prayer: *“Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)*
    - 1. Note that the subject is Jesus.

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur W. Pink, “Preface” in *Eternal Security*. <Accessed at [http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec\\_foreword.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec_foreword.htm)>

2. Jesus *“is able also to save <sup>to</sup> forever”*
  3. **Whom can He save forever?** *“those who draw near to God through Him,”*
  4. **How?** *“since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*
- iv. Eternal security because of God’s Power:  
*“to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:4-5)*
1. Note **verse 4**’s language of eternal security:  
*“inheritance,” “imperishable,” “will not fade away,” “reserved in heaven for you”*
  2. Note the basis of this is in **verse 5a**: *“protected by the power of God”*
  3. How do we access it? *“through faith for a salvation” (verse 5b)*



- f. Passages demonstrating God's elect will persevere in their faith and works
- i. **Dilemma:** *We have seen that a Christian will be saved forever but does that mean a Christian can do whatever and still be saved?*
    1. No, God maintains a Christian's salvation by means of having them endure in their faith and walk.
    2. Arthur Pink's sober warning: "Many an ignorant evangelist has given his hearers the impression that once they "accept Christ as their personal Savior" they need have no concern about the future, and thousands have been lulled into a fatal sleep by the soothing lullaby "once saved, always saved". To imagine that if I commit my soul and its eternal interests into the hands of the Lord henceforth relieves me of all obligation, is to accept sugar-coated poison from the father of lies."<sup>6</sup>
  - ii. The need for Christians to endure to the end: *"but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."*(**Hebrews 3:6**)
    1. We are "part" of Christ's house *"if we hold fast"*
    2. Believers also have *"hope firm until the end."*
  - iii. Relationship of endurance and being saved: *"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."* (**Matthew 24:13**)
    1. Context: Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' disciples asked three questions (**v.3**) and Jesus proceed to warn His disciples.
    - 2. Note that the one being saved endures.**
    3. He or she endures to the end.
    4. This of course is the work of God, since "will be saved" is a theological passive showing it's the work of God.
  - iv. Those the Father give to Jesus will keep His Word: *"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."* (**John 17:6**)
    1. Context: Jesus' prayer to the Father the night before His death.
    2. Speaking to the Father, Jesus acknowledges that those *"whom You gave Me out of the world" "they have kept Your word."*
    3. The verse in the Greek ends with *"kept"* even though it should end with the object (*"Your Word"*), and hence there is a nuance in the emphasis they believer will keep God's Word.
    4. Also, *"kept"* is a future functioning perfect indicating the action is so certain it's as if they have been completed already.

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur W. Pink, "Eternal Security: It's Nature" in *Eternal Security*. <Accessed at [http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec\\_03.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Security/sec_03.htm)>

- v. What does endurance mean?
1. Endurance means you are a disciple: “*So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;”*”(John 8:31)
    - a. Jesus is here speaking.
    - b. Here Jesus clarifies that keeping God’s Word means being a disciple of Jesus.
  2. Endurance means you will overcome the world: “*For whatever is <sup>is</sup>born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*”(1 John 5:4)
    - a. The Apostle John is writing here.
    - b. Note this verse identifies saved believers as “*born of God*”
    - c. Note one “*born of God overcomes the world*”
    - d. The Greek verb for overcome is νικα, where we get our English word Nike.
    - e. Is this by our own merit? No, it’s by faith: “*and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*”
  3. Endurance means you will fear God: “*I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.*” (Jeremiah 32:40)
    - a. Context: Jeremiah the Prophet has just pronounced the judgment of God but transitions to the Good News that God will change the people’s hearts one day.
    - b. Note this verse teaches God will never forsake those who partake of the eternal covenant: “*an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good;*”
    - c. **How?** “*and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.*”
    - d. This truth means a true believer in the human side of things will manifest fear of God.
    - e. **Note Jeremiah 32:39** states the same idea.
  4. Endurance means you will produce Good works: “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*” (Ephesians 2:10)
    - a. This verse follows the famous verse of grace as the basis of our salvation in **Ephesians 2:8-9**.
    - b. Note that believers are “*created in Christ Jesus for good works,*”

- c. When did God have this in mind? “*which God prepared beforehand*”
  - d. Consequence: “*so that we would walk in them.*”
5. Endurance means you love Him: **John 14:21 and 1 John 5:3.**