

Assurance of Salvation

Introduction

-A Biblical Definition of Christian Assurance

1689 BCF 18:1: To “...*be certainly assured in this life that [one is] in a state of grace.*” See 1 John 2:3; 3:14, 19, 24; 5:13.

-2) Some Common Historical Perversions of the Doctrine of Christian Assurance

● Roman Catholic Perversion

● Antinomian Protestant Perversion

● Hypercalvinist Perversion

1689 BCF Chapter 18: Assurance of Grace and Salvation

18:1: *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. 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, and this hope will never make them ashamed.*

18:2: *This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel. It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made. It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God. As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.*

18:3: *This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith that it is always fully experienced alongside of faith, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it. 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. 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. Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.*

18:4: *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 it or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit. It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation 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. Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God, the life of faith, love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or the conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived. In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.*

I. The Possibility of Christian Assurance

-A Danger Conceded

¶ 1a: *“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.”* See Jer. 17:9 Matt. 7:22, 23 Gal. 6:3.

-The Possibility of Christian Assurance Asserted

¶ 1b: *“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, and this hope will never make them ashamed.”* See Rom. 5:2; 8:16 2 Pet. 1:10.

II. The Infallibility of Christian Assurance

-Fact of Its Infallibility

- Stated Negatively: ¶ 2a: *“This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope.”*

- Stated Positively: ¶ 2b: *“It is an infallible assurance of faith...”* (1 John 5:13)

-Grounds of Its Infallibility

- The Promises of God: ¶ 2c: *“...founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel.”*(Heb., 6:17, 18)

- The Inward Evidences of Grace: ¶ 2d: *“It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made.”* (Rom. 5:3 2 Pet. 1:5-11)

- The Testimony of the HS: ¶ 2e: *“It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.”* (Rom. 8:15, 16)

-Fruits of Its Infallibility

¶ 2f: *“As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.”* See 1 John 3:1-3.

III. The Attainability of Christian Assurance

-Difficulty of Its Attainability

¶ 3a: *“This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith that it is always fully experienced alongside of faith, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it.”* See Ps. 77:1-10; 88 Is. 50:10 2 Pet. 1:5, 10.

-God’s Provision For Its Attainability

¶ 3b: *“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.”* See Heb. 6:17, 18 1 John 4:13.

-Duty of Its Attainability

¶ 3c: *“Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure.”*
See Heb. 6:11 2 Pet. 1:10.

-Benefits of Its Attainability

¶ 3d: *“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. Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.”* See Heb. 6:11, 12.

IV. The Variability of Christian Assurance.

-Fact of Its Variability

¶ 4a: *“True believers may in various ways have the assurance of their salvation shaken, decreased, or temporarily lost.”*

-Reasons For Its Variability

¶ 4b: *“This may happen because they neglect to preserve it or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit. It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation 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.”*
See Ps. 31:22; 51:8, 12; 77:7, 8; 116:11.

-God’s Sovereign Limitation of Its Variability

¶ 4c: *“Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God, the life of faith, love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or the conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived. In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.”* See Rom. 8:39.

Practical Lessons

- 1) Assurance isn't necessary for the being of a Christian.

- 2) Assurance is necessary for the well-being of a Christian.

- 3) Assurance that isn't properly grounded is little more than fatal presumption (Job 8:13).