

Assurance of Salvation - #2

True and False Assurance

Introduction – While it is true that “the Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim 2:19), it is not always the case that we know that we are the Lord’s. There are some who believe they are saved who are in fact not. There are also those who doubt their own salvation who are in fact secure in the Father’s hand. It is therefore imperative to determine the difference between true and false assurance.

Make Your Election Sure (2 Pet 1:5-11) – It is a privilege to have an assurance of God’s saving love upon you. But this jewel of assurance does not fall in the lap of any lazy soul. Peter exhorts the faithful to give *all* diligence to “these things” in order to experience true assurance. What are these things?

Faith – the gift of God to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and to rest upon Him alone for salvation.

Virtue – the word means courage and valor, by which we grow in our willingness to stand for righteousness.

Knowledge – we must love the Lord our God with all our minds. We must learn what is acceptable worship.

Self-control – the word means ‘holding himself in’ and the idea is the ability to never be controlled by any passions and affections.

Perseverance – we must learn to embrace and carry each trial God brings as perfect medicine for each person.

Godliness – simply, a reverence for God, and a lifestyle of active obedience that befits that reverence.

Brotherly Kindness – as we will see, if we do not love the brethren particularly, we do not love God.

Love – Flowing from particular to general, we are to love all mankind, which is to treat them lawfully from the heart.

He Who Lacks These Things (v9) – The great sin of the Old Testament was forgetfulness. If we do not pursue these graces, we will forget God’s goodness to us, and any assurance in us will turn to short-sighted presumption.

The Signs of Life – Although it is often subtle, it is possible to distinguish between true and false assurance. We can find many examples, because of the fight that John was engaged in, in the book of 1 John.

Darkness or Light (1 John 1:6-7) The faithful walk in the light, love the fellowship of the brothers and the blood of Christ. The presumptuous point to a commitment, but love the darkness anyhow.

Awareness of Sin (1:8,10) One of the strongest assurances of salvation is the growing sense in your life of your sinfulness. The true believer knows that if sin were blue, everything he did, thought or said would be in some way shaded blue.

Obedience (2:3-5) True assurance knows that salvation is by grace through faith, but that it is a faith that produces obedience and a heart of obedience. False assurance says that it is legalistic to worry about obedience – ‘we are under grace!’. Obedience grows in the faithful. Excuses grow in the presumptuous (also 3:7-8,10).

Love of the World (2:15) The faithful do not love the world and the things that come from this corrupt, fallen system. They love the Father. They are concerned that all of their activities in this world flow from a love of their Father. They want to think Christianly about everything.

Come Lord Jesus (3:2-3) Do you ever long for the day when you will never have another sinful thought or action? Take heart – for the unbeliever could care less. And this longing is a longing which purifies.

Do You Love the Brothers (3:14) Do you? Would anybody around you be able to tell?

Enjoy a Good Sermon (4:6) The one in whom the Word abides loves the Word and the teaching ministry of the church. The one who does not have the Word in Him finds it rather boring.

Presence of the Spirit (4:13) We are not talking about feeling warm tingles, but there is an inward testimony (see Rom 8:16) accompanied with outward fruit (Gal 5:22-23). One with false assurance might deny the validity of any ‘experiential Christianity’, or he might deny the necessity of fruit.

True Assurance/ True Repentance (2 Cor 7:8-12) – After these two long lists one is bound to find fault in himself. The interesting thing is, the greater your concern over your lack of holiness, the greater your assurance will be. For the one who finds himself regularly in need of the blood of Christ is the one who is pursuing Christ. If something on these lists is missing in your life *and you are not bothered*, then there is something wrong.

Characteristics of the Falsely Assured – They are either unconcerned or angry when warned about false assurance. They can either be legalistic (resting on the hope of their clean-living) or licentious (thinking they can sin that grace may abound). They are often autonomous in their Christian living, avoiding commitment to the church or fellowship with the brethren. Oftentimes, when confronted with sin, they are very sorry, but they do not have a sorrow that changes anything.

An Exhortation to Assurance – “*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*” (1 John 5:13) But was this Book written for you? Assurance is only for those who have called upon Christ. And for those only, there is glorious fruit. Dave Hatcher, June 11, 2000