

Fundamentals, Study 18: Assurance Of Salvation (1 John 10:14-24)

by BS Poh

o The assurance of salvation is a precious gift of God that believers should seek.

1. A converted person will show changes in his total person: including his mind, affection, and will. He will truly believe in the Lord Jesus, love Him in sincerity, and live in obedience to His word. Such a person may come to know, and feel sure, that he is truly saved, and rejoice in the hope of eternal life.¹ This is not the case with a person who has only a *temporary faith* or a *dead faith*. He may think that he is saved, when he is actually deceiving himself. His false hope will soon die away.² (1. 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 John 2:3; 3:14; 5:13; 2. Matt. 7:22-23.)

2. The assurance of a true believer is not based on mere guesswork, feelings, or self-will. Instead, it is something that is concrete and trustworthy because it is founded on the following: (a) the finished work of Christ in saving sinners;³ (b) the evidence of spiritual graces in the believer in connection with definite promises made in the Scriptures;⁴ and (c) the inner conviction of adoption arising from the witness of the Holy Spirit with the believer's spirit.⁵ From these, it is clear that assurance of salvation is given by the Holy Spirit, working by and with the word of God. From the word of God we know that Christ has done everything that is needed to save sinners. As we engage in self-examination we discover that the fruit of the Spirit (e.g. love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) is in us. As we draw the conclusion that we are true believers, the Holy Spirit assures us inwardly that we are the children of God. (3. Heb. 6:17-18; 4. 2 Pet. 1:4-11; 5. Rom. 8:15-16.)

3. Assurance of salvation is *not of the essence* of faith, nor the *root* of faith, but a *fruit* of faith. In other words, it is not a part of faith, nor the cause of faith, but a result of faith. A person who has saving faith will not automatically and definitely have assurance. He may have to wait long and fight many difficulties before he gets assurance.⁶ It is the duty of the Christian to work towards getting this assurance.⁷ This is to be done, not by praying for extraordinary revelation or whipping up the feelings, but by using the means of grace.⁸ As assurance grows, his heart will be kept humble and holy. He will be given strength and cheerfulness to obey God.⁹ (6. Isa 50:10; 7. 2 Pet 1:10; 8. 1 John 4:12-13; Heb 6:11-12; 9. 1 John 3:1-3; Rom 5:1-2, 3; 6:1-2; Tit 2:11-14)

4. A believer may have his assurance of salvation shaken, diminished, or interrupted by slothfulness, disobedience, lack of prayer, worldliness, or some other sin. God will chasten (i.e. punish with a view to correct) a true believer who persists in his sin so that he loses his peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Spirit. If he does not repent, God may even allow him to lose his assurance of salvation.¹⁰ However, even in the deepest state of backsliding the true believer will have the spark of spiritual life - the consciousness of faith - in him. The Lord will continue to support His wayward child even as He chastens him. This consciousness of faith will preserve him from utter despair, and he will finally turn to God in repentance. In due time, the Holy Spirit will revive his assurance.¹¹ (10. Psalm 32:4; 38:2; 51:8-14; Heb 12:6-8; 11. Psalm 42:5, 11; Luke 22:31-32; 1 John 3:9)

= Have you true faith in Christ? Thanks be to God for the assurance of salvation!

Review Questions

1. What may a converted person expect in himself with regard to his salvation?
2. In contrast, what may happen to the person who has a *temporary faith* or a *dead faith*?
3. Why is the assurance of the true believer concrete and trustworthy?
4. How does the Holy Spirit give assurance of salvation?
5. How is assurance of salvation connected with faith?
6. What may the believer face before he gets assurance of salvation?
7. How may the believer get assurance of salvation?
8. What will happen to the believer as he gets assurance of salvation?
9. What may happen to the assurance of the believer if he sins?
10. Why wouldn't the true believer plunge into utter despair when he backslides?

Assignment/Discussion

There are true believers who face inexplicable periods of spiritual darkness and wonder whether they are saved, one of whom was William Cowper (1731-1800), the hymn writer. Explore this phenomenon and draw some conclusions (cf. Ps. 30:7; 143:5-7).

Memory Passage (John 10:28-29)

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

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