

# Assurance of Salvation: Is it Possible?

**Laying the Foundation for Assurance**

**Main Idea:** The full assurance of faith, the full assurance of understanding and the full assurance of hope rest entirely in the eternal decree of God as revealed in His Word of truth.

# Common Issues Regarding Assurance:

- How can someone know that they are a Christian?
- How can I know my faith is real?
- Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my life?
- Do I have to earn assurance?
- How can someone know that they will continue to be a Christian?
- Where is assurance in the midst of loss, grief, trial, suffering, discouragement, despair, etc.?
- Is the lack of assurance an indication of God rejecting me?
- If I lack assurance is it ok to seek it in other resources outside of sound doctrine?

# The Foundation of “Full Assurance” Rests in a Doctrinally Sound Theology.

Jer 9: 23-24- “Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; <sup>24</sup> but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.”

Is 64:8- “But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

**The Problem: Our Theology has been perverted as a result of the fall and rests in suppressing the truth about God.**

Rm 1:18-21- “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup> For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

Is 29:13-16 “Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words  
And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, and  
their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, 14 Therefore behold, I  
will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the  
wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men  
will be concealed.” 15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the Lord, and  
whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who  
knows us?” 16 You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with  
the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what  
is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding?””

Is 45:9-10- “Woe to *the one* who quarrels with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’? <sup>10</sup> “Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth?’”

Rm 8:6-8- “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

# Worship of Self/Make God in our Image

**When the order of God's eternal decree is reversed, we are suppressing the truth about God through denial, rationalization, intellectualism and so on while we pile on the self-adulations, self loathing's self-righteousness, self-love or what ever our fallen nature needs to maintain its distance from God's truth.**

Our human instinct (depravity) is based on who I think I am and who I think God is as seen in the concept of self-esteem. Ps 50:21

This is the basis of human self-esteem. Self-esteem is how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves. We might also think of this as self-confidence.



# The Core of our Fallen Self-Esteem

Is 14:13-14- “But you said in your heart “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make my self like the Most High.”

# The Solution: Restored Thinking

**For carnal man to have a sound Theology he must have God's divine intervention of regeneration to restore his thinking and understanding to be in line with and under the authority of God's spoken Word.**

Rm 12:3- "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

1 Cor2:14-16- "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. <sup>15</sup> But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. <sup>16</sup> For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

# Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

The Eternal Decree of God- “He first calls me.”

Is 43:10-11-“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.”

2 Tim 1:9 “...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity...”

# **The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.**

## **1. Election**

### **a. Outward call- general call to all people**

**John 6:44-** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 1. Election

b. Effectual call- The Holy Spirit awakens the elect and enlivens them in Christ.

**John 3:1-8-** “Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; <sup>2</sup> this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 2. Conversion- 3 components occurring simultaneously

a. **Regeneration**- is what happens in the effectual call and is inseparable from it. This results in a change in nature, faith in Christ, and genuine repentance.

Gal 2:20- “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 2. Conversion- 3 components occurring simultaneously

b. Saving Faith- a gift submissively received at the time of regeneration, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, whereby we come to trust God for the promises in the gospel: the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and eternal salvation, merely of grace, and only for the sakes of Christ's merits.

Eph 2:8-9- "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your doing; it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no man may boast."

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 2. Conversion- 3 components occurring simultaneously

c. Repentance- a saving grace given by God to sinners at the time of regeneration (along with /inseparable from genuine faith), whereby the Holy Spirit produces in us a desire to turn from sin and walk in obedient love because of God's mercy.

2 Cor 7:10-11- “<sup>10</sup> For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.”



# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 3. Four Phases of Salvation

a. Justification- Our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Occurs at the time of regeneration, through the instrument of faith, as a product of our adoption and union with Christ, whereby His life, death, and resurrection benefit us on account of our union with Him.

Romans 8:1- "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. <sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 3. Four Phases of Salvation

b. **Adoption**- An act of God's grace, whereby we are, on account of our union with His Son, Christ Jesus, received into the family of God and granted the rights and privileges of the Sons of God.

Rom 8:15-17- <sup>1</sup>"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*."

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 3. Four Phases of Salvation

c. Sanctification (progressive sanctification)- Also a gift and work of God's grace, whereby we are increasingly renewed after the image of our Creator in accordance with our union with Christ. It is our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's initial regenerating and ongoing work in us.

Heb 10:14-16- "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. <sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, <sup>16</sup> "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"

# The Odor Salutis: the Biblical logical order/application of salvation.

## 3. Four Phases of Salvation

d. **Glorification**- The work of God's free grace, whereby the elect are resurrected with glorified bodies, entirely sanctified, fully and forever free from all sin and its effects, and in unencumbered fellowship with God in a renewed, restored creation. This is the final stage of our salvation and the inevitable outcome of our union with Christ.

Rm 8:28-30- "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; <sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

## What is assurance?

“Assurance is the soul's apprehension (grasping on to) of its complete emancipation from the power of evil and from consequent judgment, through the atoning grace of Christ. It is the exact opposite of self-confidence, being a joyous appropriation and experience of the fullness of Christ—a glad sense of security, freedom and eternal life in Him. This doctrine is of immeasurable importance to the life of the church and of the individual believer, as a life of spiritual doubt and uncertainty contradicts the ideal of liberty in Christ Jesus which is the natural and necessary fruitage of "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” (2 tim 1:12; Col 2:1-10)

*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia- Assurance; Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia". 1915. Dwight M. Pratt Copyright Statement These files are public domain.*

# How is assurance different from faith?

Faith is getting in the wheel barrow, assurance is enjoying the ride!

Assurance is not of the essence of saving faith. It is the result of faith, and posterior to it in the order of nature, and so frequently also in the order of time. True believers may be destitute of it. Trust itself is something different from the evidence that we do trust... .. This assurance may in various ways be shaken, diminished, and intermitted, but the principle out of which it springs can never be lost.” *Easton's Bible Dictionary*

These dictionary topics are from M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Public Domain, copy freely.

# The Basis for Assurance

The Oath: God did not just save us from our sin and send us casually on our way. He was serious!

Heb 6:13-20- “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, <sup>14</sup> saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” <sup>15</sup> And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. <sup>16</sup> For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. <sup>17</sup> In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup> This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’

# The Basis for Assurance

**The Authority of His Word:** The insurance that backs His assurance.

- For when God made the promise to Abraham
- He swore by Himself since He could swear by no one greater saying, “I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.”
- Desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose
- Interposed with an oath with them- an oath is given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.
- So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie the word of His promise and the oath which confirms that promise
- We who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.



# The Basis for Assurance

## The Oath and Promise Fulfilled:

Heb 10:19-25- "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; <sup>24</sup> and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

# The Basis for Assurance

**The Authority of His Word:** The insurance that backs His assurance.

- since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,
- by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,
- since *we have* a great priest over the house of God
- let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
- Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful

# The Eternal Decree of God

Assurance cannot come from who we are based on what we do for God. Once we know who we are in Christ, the commands of Scripture begin to make sense.

Phil 2:12-13- “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.”

# Conclusions on Assurance:

- Assurance comes from faith in the promises of God and the righteousness of Christ. Heb 6:13-20; 10:19-22
- Assurance comes from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying to our spirits that we are children of God. Romans 8:16
- Assurance comes from “a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works” Hebrews 2:1; 2 Peter 2:5-8 (Canons of Dort 5.10).

*Canons of Dort* © Copyright 2010 Chapel Library: annotations. Published in the USA. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided 1. you do not charge beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication 2. this copyright notice and all the text on this page are included.

# Common Issues Regarding Assurance:

- How can someone know that they are a Christian?
- How can I know my faith is real?
- Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my life?
- Do I have to earn assurance?
- How can someone know that they will continue to be a Christian?
- Where is assurance in the midst of loss, grief, trial, suffering, discouragement, despair, etc.?
- Is the lack of assurance an indication of God rejecting me?
- If I lack assurance is it ok to seek it in other resources outside of sound doctrine?

# Each of these questions have the foundation of their answer in God faithfully keeping His promises!

- **Primary Assurance:** The resurrection of Jesus is the "assurance" or pledge God has given that His revelation is true and worthy of acceptance. The "full assurance of faith" is a fullness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubt. The "full assurance of understanding" is an entire unwavering conviction of the truth of the declarations of Scripture, a joyful steadfastness on the part of any one conviction that he has grasped the very truth. The "full assurance of hope" is a sure and well-grounded expectation of eternal glory. This assurance of hope is the assurance of a man's own particular salvation.

*Easton's Bible Dictionary* These dictionary topics are from M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Public Domain, copy freely.

# Each of these questions have the foundation of their answer in God faithfully keeping His promises!

- Secondary Assurance: This infallible assurance, which believers may attain unto as to their own personal salvation, is founded on the truth of the promises, on the inward evidence of Christian graces, and on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption. That such a certainty may be attained appears from the testimony of Scripture, from the command to seek after it, and from the fact that it has been attained.

*Easton's Bible Dictionary* These dictionary topics are from M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Public Domain, copy freely.

# Two Practical Steps to Anchor Assurance:

- “First, simply fixing our gaze on God rather than self may do much to nurture spiritual health. If we often live in the cellar of the soul, trying to judge our spiritual fruit in the dim light of scrupulous introspection, long and regular looks at God may lift us into Son-lit skies, where for a few wonderful moments we forget ourselves, and then perhaps dare to believe that the light of this God can swallow any darkness, even ours. Hebrews 12:2-3; Colossians 3:1-3; Ps 37:4

*Assurance for the Unassured* Scott Hubbard Desiring God MAY 28, 2023



# Two Practical Steps to Anchor Assurance:

- Second, meditating on God's grace-filled commitment to his name may remove the deep, subconscious suspicion that God's glory and our salvation are somehow at odds. We may begin to feel, and not only say, that this Shepherd would rejoice to carry us home upon His shoulders, that this Father would run to see our silhouette on the horizon.' Josh 1:8; Luke 15:11-32; Col 3:16; Ps 37:4

*Assurance for the Unassured* Scott Hubbard Desiring God MAY 28, 2023

# Finally

...so labor to travel often above the clouds, where you remember that God created this world not only “to the praise of his glory,” but “to the praise of his glorious grace.” (Eph 1:6, 14) And therefore, all of God’s zeal for his glory, all of God’s love for his name, stands behind the sinner who casts his soul on Christ.”

*Assurance for the Unassured* Scott Hubbard Desiring God MAY 28, 2023