

To Glorify and Enjoy God

LESSON 23: DELIGHTING IN ASSURANCE OF GRACE AND SALVATION

Intro: Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) “The greatest of all Protestant heresies is assurance.”

“If final justification is dependent on something we have to complete, it is not possible to enjoy assurance of salvation.” **Sinclair Ferguson**²³⁴

“Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” **John Calvin**²³⁵

“For one thing, an inappropriate contrast is being drawn here. In the *Institutes* Calvin is *defining faith*; in the Confession of Faith the Westminster Divines are *describing assurance*. Two related but quite different things are being discussed and contrasted as though they are the same. . . . The direct act of faith says, “Christ is able to save,” while the reflex act says, “I am someone who has been saved through faith in Christ.” **Sinclair Ferguson**²³⁶

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. **1 John 5**

BIG IDEA: _____ of grace & salvation helps us to glorify & enjoy Christ who saves us.

WSC 36: What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A: The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, **assurance of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit**, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

- There are _____ to justification, adoption and sanctification. They impact us!
- We can be _____ of God’s _____, the love of a Father to us.
- We have peace of _____ because we have peace w/God in justification.
- We should have _____ in the Holy Spirit, particularly as we meditate on these graces.

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity,

²³⁴ Ferguson, Sinclair. *In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life*. Lake Mary, Reformation Trust. 2007, pp. 149.

²³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.2.7.

²³⁶ Ferguson, *The Whole Christ*, pp. 186.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

- Not everyone who _____ they are saved are _____ saved.
- Hypocrites & unregenerate men can point us to _____ & irreligious people.
- The former are those who _____ themselves with their _____ religion.
- The latter are those who _____ themselves with their notions of their _____ or God's _____ mercy.
- The self-deception comes from false _____ & carnal or fleshly presumptions.
- They _____ belief & love for Christ, but did not believe or love the real Jesus.
- Christians are those who _____: "endeavoring to walk in all good conscience..."
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the _____ (Scripture)?
- Do you _____ Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the gospel (Scripture)?
- Do you seek to _____ God as your Father by walking by faith in obedience?

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. **Psalm 23**

²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. **Psalm 73**

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1**

"The main way that people acquire a false sense of assurance of their salvation is by having a false understanding of the way of salvation. ... This false concept of salvation is pervasive in our culture, and it is as pernicious as it is pervasive, because it completely obscures and denies the true gospel." **R.C. Sproul**²³⁷

"A hypocrite feels joy, sorrow, and sweetness in the ordinances, and so does the godly. **Anthony Burgess**²³⁸

"That unregenerate men, beguiled by the natural desire for happiness, flattered by self-love, and betrayed by a spirit of self-righteousness and self-confidence, ..." **A.A. Hodge**²³⁹

"Our heart is by nature a liar; therefore, do not believe it." **Anthony Burgess**²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Sproul, Vol. 2, pp. 220.

²³⁸ Burgess, Anthony. *Faith Seeking Assurance*. Grand Rapids, Reformation Heritage Books. 2015, pp. 12.

²³⁹ Hodge, pp. 239.

²⁴⁰ Burgess, pp. 158.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ **Matthew 7**

- We see the religious _____ here; they call Him “Lord” and do works.
- They are _____ from Jesus despite their appearances as His servants.
- They are actually ‘workers of lawlessness’. He saw the _____ others did not.
- Others were deceived by the _____ and _____ the wickedness of these people.

“When I know that Christ is the one real sacrifice for my sins, that His work on my behalf has been accepted by God, that He is my heavenly Intercessor- then His blood is the antidote to the poison in the voices that echo in my conscience, condemning me for my many failures. Indeed, Christ’s shed blood chokes them into silence!” **Sinclair Ferguson**²⁴¹

WLC 80: Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein unto salvation?

A: Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God’s promises, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation.

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.

- Our assurance is not founded on a _____ hope, or wishful _____.
- It is rooted in _____ in God’s promises of salvation found in the gospel.
- The Spirit enables us to _____ those promises, and discern grace received.
- The Spirit _____ to us that we are God’s children by _____.
- The presence of the Spirit is a _____ on our salvation.
- The Spirit’s testimony is _____; doesn’t mean my perceived assurance is _____.

²⁴¹ Ferguson, *In Christ Alone*, pp. 151.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

“The Christian life is about believing God, not just believing that there is a God.” **R.C. Sproul**²⁴²
“It is hard to be a Christian, with all our weaknesses and failings, and to maintain a high level of confidence. But we are called, even while we are still in the process of being sanctified, to go out with boldness and serve Christ.” **R.C. Sproul**²⁴³
“A savory inward knowledge of divine truth is excellent ballast in the soul. It keeps the heart firm in the truth.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁴⁴

3. This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

- The Spirit’s infallible _____, or assurance, does not belong to the _____ of faith.
- It is not essential to actually being _____. You can struggle with _____ and be saved.
- Assurance of salvation can be a _____ for some Christians.
- Roman Catholicism: some have assurance by “extraordinary revelation”: _____!
- We know by “_____” things given to us: justification, adoption & sanctification.
- Assurance does not come automatically, and often not easily. Be patient!
- We gain assurance by the use of ordinary _____: Scripture, worship, prayer...
- Thru them the _____ works to produce assurance- reminding us of graces received.
- Those who don’t use the ordinary means will _____ with assurance.
- Immature Christians struggle when they _____. Don’t grasp _____.
- Immature Christians treat _____ as _____, not discipline.
- Mature Christians have a longer _____ of putting sin to death and obeying God.

“True doctrine and godly living go together.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁴⁵

“By our unbelief and peevishness we may refuse the good consolations offered by the Spirit, for though this sealing of God’s Spirit is as efficient from Him as conversion is, yet we may in the former and in the latter resist the Spirit of God.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁴⁶

²⁴² Sproul, Vol. 2, pp. 231.

²⁴³ Sproul, Vol. 2, pp. 234.

²⁴⁴ Burgess, pp. 23.

²⁴⁵ Burgess, pp. 21.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Romans 8

- The Spirit works in us, leads us to put _____ to _____ in our lives.
- He works so that we think of ourselves as _____ sons of God.
- The Spirit reminds us of our _____ even as we _____ with Christ.

“The heart, in regeneration, is not altogether delivered from the deceit occasioned by sin; so that it constantly attempts to deceive and mislead the soul.” **Robert Shaw**²⁴⁷

“In his reflex acts of faith, the confidence that a believer has of the truth of grace wrought in him comes more from God’s Spirit removing his slavish fears and disposition and supporting the soul than it does from the excellence and beauty of grace within him.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁴⁸

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **2 Peter 1**

- He earlier mentioned character traits to “add” to their faith → _____.
- They (we) had been granted all things for life & godliness, it is a _____ to use them.
- Because we _____ in the divine nature (imago dei) we become more like Christ.
- Virtue → knowledge → self-control → _____ → godliness →
brotherly affection → _____
- _____ helps us to be unproductive in our knowledge of Christ (vs. 8).
- Regeneration is the _____, and growth in character is the _____.

“Peace with God does not end our conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. However, we can possess peace in the midst of conflict, turmoil, persecution, and pain.” **R.C. Sproul**²⁴⁹

“If we do not build our Christian doctrine upon the facts, and rest our faith in them, our wayward feelings will never be brought into captivity to Christ.” **William Still**²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Burgess, pp. 164.

²⁴⁷ Shaw, pp. 186.

²⁴⁸ Burgess, pp. 56.

²⁴⁹ Sproul, Vol. 2, pp. 240.

²⁵⁰ Still, William. *Towards Spiritual Maturity*. Geanies House, Christian Focus. 2010, pp. 26.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

WLC 81: Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in the estate of grace, and that they shall be saved?

A: Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and, after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

- Assurance is not _____, but _____. It can ebb and _____.
- It's diminished thru _____: not using the means of _____.
- It can be shaken or intermitted by sins that _____ the conscience & _____ the Spirit.
- It can be shaken by _____, unexpected _____.
- Satan often seeks to _____ us of the _____ of our salvation, to hinder us from _____.
- Assurance is also tied to our sense of God's _____ which may be withdrawn.
- He can withdraw _____ to discipline us, or to _____ us (Job).
- While we may feel abandoned, true Christians are not, and are still _____.
- In due time, assurance is usually _____ by the same Holy Spirit.

“As the carnal man fails to see his sins, so the tempted Christian sees only his sins.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁵¹

“We should not be surprised, even although we are appalled, at some of the impure and dishonest thoughts that he causes to pass through our mind. These are not ordinary temptations of the flesh, although they may come through the flesh. They come from the enemy himself. Further, their sudden coming is generally related to some opportunity about to present itself for fruitful witness or service.” **William Still**²⁵²

“Since true faith exists in very various degrees of strength, and since its exercises are sometimes intermitted, it follows that the assurance which accompanies true faith is not always a full assurance.” **A.A. Hodge**²⁵³

²⁵¹ Burgess, pp. 26.

²⁵² Still, pp. 63.

Seeking Assurance:

Faith in Christ: Do you believe in Christ as He is presented to you in the gospel? If no, you should not have assurance. The other questions don't matter if you don't actually believe.

“The great work of a Christian is to rest only upon Christ for atonement and reconciliation with God out of a sense and feeling of his own need and spiritual poverty.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁵⁴

Exercises of Faith: Do you have gospel desires for the means of grace? Do you want to read the Word, pray, worship etc.?

Fruit of Faith: Are you growing in gospel character & conduct? As you look at the fruit of the Spirit are they increasingly evident? As you look at the Ten Commandments are you increasingly obedient?

Additional Signs from 1 John

³ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **1 John 2**

- John wants them to _____ if they know God, or to have assurance of salvation.
- This is in _____ to faith in Christ, not in the _____ of faith of Christ.
- Obedience or _____ His word is a _____ that our love for God is genuine.
- _____ with Christ (we are in Him) produces progressive but _____ obedience.

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **1 John 3**

- Hope in the promise of His return results in _____ in light of glorification.

“It is a great sign of godliness to love another person because he is godly, and the more he is godly, the more we love him.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁵⁵

¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **1 John 3**

²⁵³ Hodge, pp. 244.

²⁵⁴ Burgess, pp. 156.

²⁵⁵ Burgess, pp. 130.

To Glorify and Enjoy God

- We have assurance if we _____ other Christians.

“But the apostle goes on to command us to prove and try ourselves by actual outworkings of grace in our lives, which enable us to persuade ourselves that we are recipients of regeneration, thereby enabling us to conclude that we are believers.” **Anthony Burgess**²⁵⁶

How does this help you to glorify and enjoy God?

Conclusion:

²⁵⁶ Burgess, pp. 6.