

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 18 – “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation”,
Session # 16 – “Assurance and Departing from Sin”, presented by
Pastor Paul Rendall on October 7th, 2018,
in the Adult Sunday School.**

Paragraph 4 – “True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as (*n*) by negligence in preserving of it, by (*o*) falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or (*p*) vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the (*q*) light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light, yet are they never destitute of the (*r*) seed of God and life (*s*) 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 (*t*) revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are (*u*) preserved from utter despair.”

n) Song 5:2-3,6; *o*) Psalm 51: 8,12,14; *p*) Psalm 116: 11; 77:7-8; 31:22; *q*) Psalm 30:7; *r*) 1st John 3:9; *s*) Luke 22:32; *t*) Psalm 42: 5 and 11; *u*) Lamentations 3: 26-31

A Shorter Definition of Assurance:

Assurance of salvation is the right conclusion that you come to, concerning your state before God, based on the truth of the Scriptures, that your faith in Christ is genuine, and that you have eternal life.

The first phrase of this paragraph says that true believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers way shaken. The word “divers” means “in a number of different ways” they could have their faith shaken. It does not say that a true believer could have the assurance of their salvation completely destroyed. But it could be shaken for a time. The length of that shaking could be for a short time or a longer time depending upon the person and their particular and peculiar situation. This possibility of the true believer’s assurance of salvation being shaken, does not happen to all believers, or in all believers alike, whose assurance is shaken. But the possibility should be acknowledged by all believers as we find examples of it in the word of God.

2nd Timothy 2: 19-21 – “Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” “If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

Are you not glad that the Lord knows those who are His? Knowing the Lord has this sure foundation, that He knows all about your soul. You may not have strong assurance, but since God knows all about you, He will be taking steps in your life to bring you to the place where you will be departing from iniquity and thus have stronger assurance. The assurance of faith, I have said to you is based upon the finished work of Christ, and as such, is the ultimate basis for your having strong assurance, because ultimately your salvation does not rest upon your work but His. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. But the assurance of hope can be shaken because you the believer are looking at yourself and for the evidence in your heart and life that you are a true Christian. You want to be able to see that you are manifesting the fruit of the Spirit and keeping the commandments of God and doing good works which will show forth the reality of the grace of Christ in your life. You want to know the Spirit bearing witness with your

spirit that you are a child of God. But you may not have this experience. It is for this reason that we as Christians need to receive the chastening of the Lord as something that will lead us to know that we are sons and daughters of the Living God.

We saw in our last study, from a study of Hebrews chapter 2: 1-3a and Hebrews chapter 3, verses 12-15, that we cannot neglect so great a salvation as what we have been given in Christ, without having our assurance shaken, diminished, or intermitted; that is, feeling like we do not have the witness of the Spirit with our Spirit that we are children of God, as I have said before; in fact, a Christian in that position may not be sensing this at all. Instead that person may know and sense that they are displeasing to God because of some compromising sin or series of sins which they have committed. The apostle is telling us that we must give the more earnest heed to the things which have been spoken to us through the preaching of the word, or we may drift away, it says. And will it be any wonder if we lack assurance during that time of our drifting, or our wandering away? We saw that we need to take heed lest there be in us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. The exercise of faith, having our faith engaged in God and the promises of His word, and our learning to keep the commandments of our Lord by faith in Him; this is the way to cultivate strong assurance.

1. The Important link between Assurance and the Chastening of the Lord.

Today I would like to pose this question: As a Christian, what does God do when He perceives that a Christian has sinned against Him, and they are not taking immediate steps to have dealings with Him, to repent of that sin, or praying to forsake it? We could make the question fit each one of us who are slow learners in becoming doers of the word and not merely hearers. What does God do when He knows that we need to learn how to make better progress in holiness, in some area of our life, and that we need to learn to obey Him more fully and completely than we are presently doing? He would have us to stop being proud and become more humble; He would have us to be more loving and self-denying, and thoughtful in our obedience to Him, and in relation to how we interact with people around us. How does He bring this about? The answer is that He deals with us by chastening us. And so, we must ask: How does this chastening, this discipline, this training of us to righteousness, affect our assurance? Well, let's look at a few verses which I think will help us to understand the answer to those questions.

Hebrews 12: 3-11 – “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR BE DISCOURAGED WHEN YOU ARE REBUKED BY HIM; FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.’” “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” “But if you are without chastening, of which all (all Christians) have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” “Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect.” “Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?” “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of (or that we might share) His holiness.” “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Now, these verses are very important to assurance because you will notice that the reason that the Lord chastens His children is because He loves them. And so, the conclusion that the true Christian can legitimately deduce from being under the discipline of the Lord is that the Lord does consider him His son. God's dealing with you in discipline means that truly you are one of His sons or He would not do so; He would not discipline you if you were not His son. In fact the verse quoted here – “My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him, reads this way in Proverbs 3: 11 – “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” The reason that you discipline your son, father, is because you love him and you delight in him. It is just so with God. You may legitimately conclude that when you are under the Lord's chastening, that He loves you and actually delights in you, and therefore, even though you may feel awful under that discipline; it feels painful and disturbing and makes you wonder whether God loves you; yet you know by this, His word, that He really does, and this ought to strengthen your assurance. It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.