

The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 18 – “Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation”, Session # 1 – “What is True Assurance?”, presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 10th, 2018, in the Adult Sunday School.

Paragraph 1 – “Although temporary believers, and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and state of salvation, (a) which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured (b) 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 c) ashamed.”

(a) Job 8:13-14; Matthew 7: 22-23; (b) 1st John 2: 3; 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24; 5: 13; (c) Romans 5: 2 and 5

Paragraph 2 – “This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon(d) a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ(e) revealed in the Gospel; and also upon the inward(f) evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and on the testimony of the(g) Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and, as a fruit thereof, keeping the heart both(h) humble and holy.”

(d) Hebrews 6: 11, 19; (e) Hebrews 6: 17-18; (f) 2nd Peter 1: 4-5, 10-11; (g) Romans 8: 15-16; (h) 1st John 3: 1-3

I do not want to begin our study with looking into the faith of temporary believers and why they have false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and the state of salvation. We will get to that. But rather, I would like to make some definite statements about what true assurance is, so that we will begin our study knowing how you can come to have an infallible assurance of faith, because you will realize how it is to be attained. These are my own definitions; a longer one, and a shorter one.

A Longer definition of Assurance – Assurance is that certain knowledge that you come to, that you have been saved from your sins on the basis of your having exercised a sincere faith in the gospel; that you know that you have believed in the finished work of Christ, His blood and righteousness. You know that you have received Him to yourself as your only Savior from sin. Having believed in Him, you then received the Spirit of Adoption as Sons and Daughters of God. You come to realize that you were born again by the Spirit of God, and that you have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who leads you in the truth and confirms in your experience, that you belong to Christ. This conclusion is based upon the truth and promises of God which are found in the Bible, which you have believed in, and continue to believe them. Your certain hope is based upon the knowledge of God’s faithfulness; that His good work of grace begun in you, will continue with you and in you, until the Day of Christ; the Day in which you will be glorified, and you will forever be able to worship and serve the Lord in perfection.

This assurance of faith is then further confirmed by the assurance of hope; that is, your being able to see in yourself the evidence of your having been born again by the Spirit of God; by your being able to perceive the grace of God at work in your life of faith and obedience to God’s word. You love the Lord, and your conscience tells you that you are sincerely endeavoring to walk in His ways. You are repenting of your sins and learning to forsake them on a daily basis. And as you walk with Him you understand and remember that God is for you, in your justification, and working in you in your sanctification. You realize that as a believer your greatest desire is to do God’s will, and you now see that you are able to bring forth fruit to God through the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in your words and your good works. And this

speaks the peace of true assurance to your soul, that you really are a true Christian, having every reason to expect that by the power of Christ's grace you will persevere to the end of your life in faith and hope and love, and be with Your Lord forever.

A Shorter Definition of Assurance:

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

An Overview of what the Confession is teaching in these 4 Paragraphs –

Paragraph 1 tells us that it is possible to attain to this infallible assurance; to this certain knowledge that you are saved. Paragraph 2 gives us good reasons why this assurance is not a mere conjecture, but is a certainty. Paragraph 3 shows us that there may be difficulties in attaining to this full assurance, but that if we use the proper means, we shall indeed be able to conclude that we are a true Christian. And Paragraph 4 tells us that there may be some things in the way that we live our Christian life, that may impact our having assurance, and because of this our assurance may be shaken, or diminished, or intermitted for a time.

I will be looking at the first statement of the 1st Paragraph of our confession about temporary faith, but before I do, I want us to look at what true faith in the gospel is; for coming to true assurance of having grace and salvation is always based upon your having true and saving faith in Christ. I want you to see that the gospel will always bring with it some real assurance, because it is a part the truth of the Scriptures which conveys to us what Christ has done for us, in order that we would be saved from our sins and be given the gift of salvation. What Christ has accomplished in redemption is something which was accomplished apart from anything that we might do to be able to merit salvation, or the change which God would produce in us by His Holy Spirit in the New Birth. And so, I want you to see that God would want you to be assured by the truth of the gospel apart from anything that you might see in yourself, that you might attempt to base your assurance upon. Salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, lest any should boast. (Ephesians 2: 8 and 9)

1. What is true and Saving Faith?

Our Confession states in Chapter 14, Paragraphs 1 and 2 –

“The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word; by which also, and by the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, prayer, and other means appointed of God, it is increased and strengthened.”

2. “By this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word for the authority of God himself, and also apprehends an excellency therein above all other writings and all things in the world, as it bears forth the glory of God in his attributes, the excellency of Christ in his nature and offices, and the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit in his workings and operations: and so is enabled to cast his soul upon the truth thus believed; and also acts differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come; but the principal acts of saving faith have immediate relation to Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

Let's look at Romans chapter 10, verses 9-17 – “But what does it (the Scripture) say? **“THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”** (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, **“WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME.”** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For **“WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.”** How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: **“HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!”** But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, **“LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?”** So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Characteristics of True Faith –

- 1.** The Word of faith is near you, in your mouth and your heart. If you have believed in Christ for salvation from your sins, you will speak about Christ, and you will think about all of the wonderful things that He has said in His word, in the promises that He has made, and the wonderful things that He has done, in living a perfect life of obedience to all of God's commandments, and His having laid down His life for sinners like yourself. You will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and you will believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, and by grace you believe that you will be saved, and that you are saved, when you first place your trust in Him. Why? Because the Scriptures declare that it is so. Your heart believes in what the Scriptures say concerning Him, and what He has done for sinners, and you are justified. You have believed in the gospel and your faith is actively resting upon the truth of the what He has done for you. It is now fixed upon the Person of Christ as your Savior and Lord, both now, and for all that will come. And this exercise of faith has resulted from the very beginning of its exercise in Christ, in His righteousness being imputed to you. His righteousness now covers you as a robe, and all of your sins have been forgiven you. You are now willing to confess Him before men; to confess Him before the church.
- 2.** You believe that the promises of God's words pertain to you, as a sinner. You believe on Jesus and in doing so, you are trusting that you will not be put to shame, as it says in verse 11. You believe that whoever (that means you) calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; not they might be saved. And so since you are looking outside of yourself in your calling upon His name, you know that it is not your works that you are bringing, it is not your promises of future obedience that has secured salvation, but it is simply because of all that Jesus has done and accomplished on your behalf.
- 3.** You now see the great value and importance of preaching. (verse 14) You see a great beauty in the gospel being proclaimed; the glad tidings being brought to sinners everywhere. (verse 15)
- 4.** You understand that faith comes by hearing the word of God, and specifically the word concerning Christ. You understand that your exercise of faith was, and it is based upon the promise of what God would do for you to save you, and to work in you, and keep you. And you know that you have believed in Christ because of His perfections and His sufferings and His power to save, and not upon your own power to save yourself. As it says in Hebrews chapter 11, in the NASB, verse 1 – “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen, for by it men of old gained approval; they obtained a good testimony.” The New King James says – “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” There

is substance and assurance of everything that the Christian hopes for in the exercise of saving faith.