

Faith Seeking Assurance

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- I. The Necessity and Advantage of Assurance
 - A. Proof text
 - 1. *[2 Corinthians 13.5]- Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*
 - B. The duty to examine yourselves
 - C. True knowledge of Grace
 - D. The necessity of assurance
 - 1. Our Savior's strong emphasis on the point in His sermons
 - 2. The tendency to make false assumption about our faith
 - 3. The danger of miscarrying in this matter
 - 4. The difficulty of distinguishing between true and counterfeit grace
 - 5. Assurance of faith has many advantages
- II. The Advantages of Assurance
 - A. Practical and experiential benefits
 - 1. Enjoying the sweetness of the ordinances
 - 2. Ceasing from needless and vain disputations and looking more into the heart
 - 3. Attaining the purpose of knowledge, which is action
 - 4. Being settled in the truth leads to endurance under persecution
 - B. Impediments to finding proof of experimental knowledge in ourselves
 - 1. Self-love, carnal confidence and the temptation to unbelief
 - 2. An erroneous principle
 - 3. Judging ourselves by false weights
 - 4. Mistaking the object of our inquiry
- III. Can hypocrites attain practical knowledge about religion?
 - A. Types of so-called Christians
 - 1. Scandalous Christians
 - 2. Historical and temporary believers
 - 3. True Believers
 - B. The experimental knowledge of hypocrites
 - 1. The common gifts of the Spirit
 - 2. The bitterness of sin
 - 3. Desires and affections for things that are good
 - 4. Sweetness and joy in the ordinances
 - 5. A changed life
 - C. The differences between true Christians and false
 - 1. Nature
 - 2. Clearness and evidence
 - 3. Operations
- IV. Assurance may be experienced
 - A. Assurance and certainty
 - 1. Assurance may be had in various ways
 - a. Sense
 - b. Science and knowledge

- c. Testimony of others
- 2. A man may be assured he is wicked
- 3. It is easier for a particular church to know it is a true visible church than for a Christian to know he is a true believer
- 4. No man can by a natural light or evidence in him, be assured of the grace wrought in his soul
- 5. There are four special privileges and mercies about which a Christian may be assured
 - a. Election
 - b. Remission of sin
 - c. Sanctification
 - d. Perseverance until future glory
- 6. It is a sad delusion for an ungodly man to be persuaded that his state is good when it is nothing but sin and death
- 7. The soul of man works in two ways: direct acts and reflex acts of faith
- 8. A believer's assurance cannot be known by or demonstrated to another
- 9. In all acts of faith (whether direct or reflex acts), the firmness and certainty of assurance depends more on God's Spirit confirming our faith than in the clearness of the argument
- 10. Just as a man rationally perceives the motions of his soul, a believer supernaturally feels the motions of his spiritual life
- 11. It is vain to distinguish between the certainty of hope and the certainty of faith
- 12. Scripture uses many words to speak of assurance
 - a. *Persuaded*
 - 1.) ***[Romans 8. 38-39]- For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

V. The Adjuncts of Assurance

A. Two Propositions

- 1. Faith does not necessarily mean assurance
- 2. Assurance of faith does not eliminate all doubt

B. Adjuncts

- 1. Possibility of Assurance
- 2. Necessity of Assurance
- 3. Difficulty of Assurance
 - a. Guilt of Sin
 - b. Desperate hypocrisy and falseness of our hearts
 - c. Proneness to walk negligently and carelessly
 - d. Causes outside of believer
- 4. Excellency of Assurance
 - a. Fellowship
 - b. Filial and evangelical frame of heart
 - c. Support in trials
 - d. Motivation to prayer
 - e. Tenderness against sin
 - f. Impatience and earnestness for return of Christ
 - g. Resting in God and Christ

VI. Difference between true assurance and presumption

A. The causes of assurances and presumption

- 1. Ignorance and inexperienced apprehension of the death and danger of sin
- 2. Self-love

B. The motives and grounds of true assurance and presumption

1. Mere natural light and judgment about the state of regeneration and grace
 2. Worth, merit, or perfection we deem in ourselves
 3. The outward comforts and plenty we enjoy
- C. The manners and methods of true assurance and presumption
1. By a deep and serious humiliation and burden over sin
 2. By doubts and unbelief
 3. Through the vehement and fiery assaults of Satan
- D. The effects of godly assurance and presumption
1. Diligence in the use of means and care in the performance of duties
 2. The greater assurance is-the more it enflames the heart
 3. Potent and able to lift the heart above all discouragements
- E. The companions of true assurance and presumption
1. Holy fear
 2. Humility and lowliness of mind
- F. The opposites of true assurance and presumption
- VII. Remedies for carnal confidence and directions to the godly who lack assurance
- A. Remedies against carnal confidence
1. A powerful and soul searching ministry
 2. The opening and applying of the law in its purity and rigidity
 3. Discovering the necessity and fullness of Christ
 4. Outward and sad afflictions accompanying the Word
 5. Those who seek to have made great progress and but have had dreadful ends
 6. Consider how apt a presumptuous man is to err in the other things
- B. How the godly man may find assurance
1. Examine yourself for unrepentant sin
 2. See if you have been negligent in the means of grace
 3. Realize that assurance is a privilege God bestows when and where he chooses
 4. Understand that the truth of grace may be in you without you being aware of it
- C. Why God does not grant assurance to those who have true grace
1. That we may taste and see the bitterness of sin
 2. That God may keep us low and humble
 3. That when we have assurance, we more esteem it and take heed as to how we lose it
 4. That we may demonstrate obedience to God and give Him greater honor
 5. That we may offer comfort to others in distress
- VIII. Marks of grace and assurance
- A. By the inherent grace of sanctification, we come to have a supernatural being
- B. Inherent grace has something internal and constitutive about it and flowing from it
- C. There are different manifestations of grace
1. Gifts of miracles
 2. Common graces
 3. Marks of true faith
 4. Signs of grace given only to the godly
 5. Marks of godly vary
 6. The properties and effects of grace
 7. Natural vs. voluntary marks
 8. The importance of faith

9. All the signs are not necessary for assurance of salvation
10. The signs and marks of grace are to be used
11. The signs of grace will be consistent with their nature

IX. Using signs for assurance and proving that they evidence Justification

A. Questions about assurance

1. Does a Christian see signs of assurance in his first act of faith? No.
 - a. *[1 John 2.5]- But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*
 - b. *[Matthew 5.4, 6]- Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they, which do hunger, and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*
2. Should a Christian in temptation search for signs of grace in his soul? No.
 - a. *[Job 13.15]- Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*
3. Should a Christian look for signs to rise up to the perfection of the law? No.
4. May inherent qualifications of grace be evidences without the luster of God's Spirit? No.
5. Should the work of God's Spirit in us be rested upon as the cause or merit of our Justification? No
6. Is Sanctification the only witness of our Sanctification or is there an immediate testimony of God's Spirit apart from fruits of Holiness? The fruits of Holiness are the only safe and sure witness.
 - a. Differences in true grace from counterfeit grace
 - b. Commanded to search whether grace is truly in us
 - c. Consider those places in Scripture where the godly took there graces as signs and testimonies of God's love
 1. *[2 Kings 20.3]- I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*
 2. *[Nehemiah 13.14]- Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.*
 - d. Scripture speaks of grace as fruit
 1. *[Luke 3.8]- Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*
 2. *[Galatians 5.22]- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*
 3. *[2 Corinthians 9.10]- Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)*
 4. *[Matthew 12.33]- Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.*
 - e. There are many promises in Scripture that speak comfort and encouragement to those who have various exercises of grace.
 - f. Many places in Scriptures supports this truth
 1. He who has true knowledge of Christ will observe His commandments
 2. We may see by his observation of God's Law, his knowledge is good
 - g. Our fruits may prove that we are justified and sanctified

X. The lawfulness and obligation of proceeding by signs and answering doubts

A. Additional Scriptures

1. *[Romans 8.16]- The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*
2. *[Eph. 1.13]- In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*
3. *[1 John 5.8]- And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

B. Objections

1. Does it not argue weakness and unbelief in a Christian to walk by signs? Does this not denigrate the glorious promise of grace, as if it were not enough?
 - a. Not absolute but comparative weakness
 - b. Thomas
 - 1.) *[John 20. 24-29]- But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*
2. When we receive evidence from our graces, do we not receive a human testimony as a witness of the things of God? Is that not incongruous? Since we are the children of God, the witness ought to be divine, not human. Consequently, we should reject evidences of our faith by our Sanctification.
 - a. A human testimony may first be necessary to believe what is divine
 - b. We do not say that the graces of God's Spirit can or do witness by themselves
 - c. The graces of God are not human testimonies but divine and infallible
3. Aren't evidences of grace by signs useless, seeing that the Spirit of God immediately works in our hearts a strong assurance of faith? And having that assurance, what need have we of anything else? If we have the sun, what need have we of a candle?
 - a. God's Spirit has spoken clearly to a man by an immediate testimony that his sins are forgiven and he is therefore in the state of grace
 - b. Faith is not full persuasion
 - c. Even if such evidences were granted, still the evidences by way of signs would not be in vain, for it has pleased God to multiply those things, which confirm our faith.
 - 1.) *[Hebrews 6.18]- That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*
4. A universal maxim states that no one may be at the same time the person questioned and the judge. But this absurdity would follow if we proceeded by evidences, for the heart of man is questioned as to whether it has true graces in it or not, and the heart must also judge of this at the same time.
5. It is difficult, if not impossible, to have certainty by means of signs. For any sign, like the love of the brethren, must first be explained as the love that exists because people are brothers and have the kind of love that proceeds from upright principles, pure motives, and many other qualifications, which are hard to know as the inward root of grace itself.

- a. Scripture gives many signs and symptoms of grace, so if a man cannot find all of them in himself, yet discovers some even only one-he may conclude that all the rest are there.
 - b. There is a two-fold knowledge. One is distinct and demonstrative; it is a *priori*, from the cause to the effect. The other one is more general and proceeds from the effects to the cause, or a *posteriori*.
 - c. Though a man may doubt some signs, it does not follow that he will doubt all of them because he may be tempted to favor one sign more than another and perceive one sign more easily than another.
6. A man may be easily deceived in the ways of signs, which may be seen in the following syllogism.
- a. *Everyone who loves the brethren is translated from death to life*
 - b. *I love the brethren.*
 - c. *Therefore, I am translated from death to life.*
 - d. *"...when a man by reason makes a conclusion, his reason is only the instrument, not the argument of his faith. His reason is not the ground of his faith, nor does it suggest the matter to be believed, but is the instrument he uses to discover it."*

XI. How people miscarry in self-examination by signs

- A. Prescribing signs to ourselves that are impossible to attain in this life.
- B. Testing our graces by a false touchstone.
- C. Using signs in a prejudicial way.
- D. Making the signs to be more than signs.
- E. Failing to cast away self-love and self-flattery.
- F. Failing to examine ourselves in the right season.
- G. Believing that no signs will suffice until they have persevered to the end.
- H. Failing to pray for the Spirit to enlighten us while we search for signs.
- I. Thinking we may not lay hold of Christ until we have the certainty of signs.
- J. Failing to compose ourselves to properly receive the evidence of grace.

XII. The duties and particulars of assurance. *"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."*

- A. A chain of grace.
 1. So believers will not be barren in the knowledge of Christ.
 2. He who is called a believer but fails to have such graces is blind and cannot see far off.
 3. Believers must wear these graces because so many people are guilty of ingratitude.
 4. The purpose of abounding in grace is that we cannot have assurance of our calling or election unless we are fruitful in grace.
- B. The duty of assurance
- C. The particulars of assurance
 1. The necessity of divine assistance
 2. The nature of assurance
 3. The privilege of assurance
 4. Assurance and doubt
 5. Assurance and the work of the Spirit
- D. How to obtain assurance
 1. Give all diligence and heed to obtain this privilege.
 2. Walk as a fruitful servant in the ways of holiness.
 3. Preserve this assurance by walking in humility and meekness and avoiding all presumption and self-righteousness
 4. Preserve this assurance by tender watchfulness against all known sin.
 5. Take heed lest you grieve the Spirit of God or quench His motions.
 6. Acquaint yourselves with the covenant of the Gospel and it's precious promises, with God's gracious condescensions of love in Christ.

- XIII. The Assurance of our calling demonstrated, and the answers to objection.
- A. Proof text.
1. **[Proverbs 21.2]- “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.”**
 - a. *“Yet the doctrine of the hypocrisy and the desperate guile of the heart does not overthrow spiritual certainty”*
- B. The grounds for affirming the possibility of assurance.
1. Scripture requires it of us.
 2. The Spirit of God seals it to us.
 - a. **[Ephesians 4.14]- That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;**
 - b. **[1 Corinthians 2.12]- Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.**
 - c. **[1 John 3.24]- And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.**
 3. Scripture offers us examples of people with assurance
 - a. **[2 Kings 20.3]- I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.**
 - b. **[Romans 8.15-16]- For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:**
 - c. **[1 John 2.3]- And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.**
 - d. **[Mark 9.24]- And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.**
 4. Joy and thankfulness ought to be evident in the people of God.
 - a. **[Romans 14.17]- For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.**
 - b. **[1 Peter 1.8]- Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:**
- C. The reason for Assurance
1. They think the effects of grace are not sure signs unless they are perfect and complete.
 2. They for the most part keep a remote distance from God
 3. They have a servile, slavish fear about God.
 - a. **[2 Thessalonians 3.5]- And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.**
- D. Objections
1. The Heart of man is so deceitful that it cannot be assured of faith.
 - a. **[Psalm 19.13]- Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.**
 - b. Though a man may be deceived in his judgment about himself, it does not follow that he is de facto always deceived.
 - c. Though the heart is by nature deceitful and full of guile and hypocrisy, through conversion and sanctification it is made sincere and upright.
 - 1.) **[Psalm 32.2]- Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.**

2. Assurance would tempt us to be carnally confident.
 - a. If the truth about God and Scripture cannot be maintained or asserted by men because their corruption will abuse it, we must preach no divine truth at all.
 - b. By its very nature, assurance cannot breed arrogance or cause one to neglect God and godliness for many reasons.
 - 1.) Assurance of faith is only maintained and kept up by humility and holy fear.
 - a.) *[Psalm 25.14]- The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*
 - 2.) Assurance cannot breed arrogance because the exercises of grace are only signs and testimonies of election and salvation.
 - 3.) The gracious effects of salvation are not of our own working.
 - a.) *[Ephesians 2.10]- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*
 - 4.) These very effects of grace which are not wrought by us are also not yet purely good and perfect

XIV. Assurance versus presumption, with directions to the godly.

A. Advantages of assurance for the godly

1. Assurance enflames and enlarges the soul to love God.
2. Assurance breeds spiritual strength.
 - a. *[2 Corinthians 1.12]- For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*
 - b. *[Nehemiah 8.10]- Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*
3. Assurance supports the heart during afflictions and outward ministries.
4. Assurance protects us against temptations and assaults.
5. Assurance brings contentment of mind and a thankful, cheerful heart in every condition.
6. Assurance is an antidote against the fear of death.
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 15.55]- O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

B. The difference between assurance and presumption.

1. The difference is evident in how we live.
2. Presumption is unwilling to be searched and tried.
 - a. *[John 3.20]- For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*
 - b. *[Psalm 26.2]- Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.*
3. Presumption does not bear up under calamity.
4. Presumption is not opposed or assaulted by the devil.
5. Presumption divides the means from the ends.
6. Presumption is about self-deception.
7. Presumption takes pride in self while condemning and undervaluing others.

C. How a godly man may have assurance.

1. Continue to depend on God.
 - a. *[Isaiah 50.10]- Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*

2. Trust that depending on God will strengthen your faith.
 - a. *[Job 13.15]- Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.*