

ASSURANCE

INTRODUCTION

- The question, “Am I a real Christian?” is one that has been asked by almost all true believers at some point in their life
- Assurance of salvation is simply knowing for sure that you are saved
- “What is assurance of faith? Assurance of faith is the conviction that one belongs to Christ through faith and will enjoy everlasting salvation. A person who has assurance not only believes in Christ’s righteousness as his salvation but knows that he believes and that he is graciously chosen, loved, and forgiven by God the Father for him in heaven. Such a person knows the Holy Spirit has regenerated him and continues to sanctify him. In other words, he believes not only the facts of the gospel that Jesus Christ saves sinners by His Spirit merely of grace, but he also believes that these facts apply to him personally – that he has a personal interest in the gospel and that all the blessings proclaimed in that gospel are his.”¹
- “Assurance is the confidence that we are in a right relationship with God through Christ. It is the confidence that we have been justified and accepted by God in Christ, regenerated by his Spirit, and adopted into his family, and that through faith in him we will be kept for the day when our justification and adoption are consummated in the regeneration of all things.”²
- “Assurance of salvation is a God-given confidence for every true believer in Christ of their present approval and future acceptance by their Father. The Bible consistently testifies to the assurance of salvation for all those in Christ and grounds that certainty first, in the objective promises of God and second, in the subjective work of the Spirit in both direct testimony and the indirect testimony of the fruit of conversion.”³
- Various categories of people as it relates to assurance:

Those Who Have Assurance but Shouldn’t

- Some people have assurance that they are saved and belong to Christ but have no right to this claim
- This is because many people are deceived about their salvation

Matthew 7:21-23 ~ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

- People acquire such false assurance of salvation by embracing false information about salvation
- Such false information can include: 1) a failure to properly diagnose their sinful, depraved state; 2) a belief that their “righteous deeds” contribute to their salvation; 3) a false confidence that walking an aisle, praying a prayer, asking Jesus into your heart, or some other form of “easy-believism” makes them saved
- In many cases, “people claim they were born again based on an emotional response to a hyped-up but watered-down evangelistic sermon or invitation, on raising their hand and coming forward at an evangelistic

¹ Joel Beeke, *Knowing and Growing in Assurance of Faith*, 11.

² Sinclair Ferguson, “The Reformation and Assurance, *The Banner of Truth*, Apr. 2017, 20.

³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/assurance/>

meeting, or on mindlessly reciting a ‘sinner’s prayer’ from the back of a tract. They know little of conviction of sin and have never seen their need as a lost sinner before God. They claim forgiveness without repentance. Their supposed ‘new heart’ results in an unchanged life. Their outwardly religious lives or their worldly lives reveal that Christ has not become their Savior and Lord. They are strangers to a personal, experiential acquaintance with Jesus Christ as their prophet, priest, and king. They do not truly fear God, hate sin, love Christ, and pursue holiness.”⁴

- The genuineness of a person’s faith only becomes apparent when it it’s tested

James 1:2-4 ~ Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1 Peter 1:6-9 ~ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

- True assurance is the reward of tested and proven faith; however, if a person’s faith hasn’t been tested or it has failed the test, their assurance might be false and undeserved

Those Who Don’t Have Assurance but Should

- Some believe that no one can have real assurance, not even a true Christian
- For example, Arminianism holds that if a Christian thinks he is secure forever, he might be prone to becoming spiritual negligent
- Other believers desperately long for assurance that they are saved but can never seem to find it
- Even though they believe in the security of salvation and that their faith in Christ is genuine, they are plagued with the insecurity of not knowing for sure whether they will go to heaven
- For some, these moments of doubt are fleeting...for others, they last a long time...for still others, this seems like the way of life
- “Some genuine children of God do not believe they are children of God. They embrace a kind of ‘hard-believism,’ looking for evidences that they have not right to expect. Often they look more at themselves and their works than at Christ and the promises of God. There may be solid, biblical evidence that they are children of God, but they are not satisfied with that. They are their own greatest obstacles in attaining assurance.”⁵
- Scripture makes it clear that God wants true believers to be convinced that they are saved and to enjoy the reality of their salvation
- God desires that we experience genuine freedom from the guilt of sin, joy in our relationship with him, and a confidence in belonging to God’s family
- The writers of Scripture clearly desired that believers be assured of their salvation by examining their lives for evidence of genuine spiritual life

2 Corinthians 13:5 ~ Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

⁴ Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 17.

⁵ Ibid.

2 Peter 1:10 ~ Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

1 John 5:13 ~ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Those Who Possess Full Assurance of Salvation

- Scripture testifies to the fact that believers should have full confidence that they belong to Christ and that their eternity is secure
- Clearly, God doesn't want his children riddled with doubt about whether they are saved

Colossians 2:2 ~ that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Hebrews 6:11 ~ We desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end

Hebrews 6:18-19 ~ 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. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

Hebrews 10:22 ~ 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.

- "It's true that someone can be saved and doubt it. One may go to heaven in a mist, not knowing for sure he's going, but that's certainly not the way to enjoy the trip. God wants you to enjoy that trip."⁶

REASONS WHY POSSESSING ASSURANCE IS IMPORTANT⁷

- When true believers doubt their salvation and fail to live in light of what they truly possess in Christ, there are significant consequences to their spiritual lives
- "The need for a biblically-based doctrine of assurance is compounded by our culture's emphasis on feeling. How we feel often takes precedence over what we know or believe. This attitude has infiltrated the church. The dramatic growth of the charismatic movement can be attributed in part to a formal, lifeless Christianity, for the movement offers adherents emotional fulfillment and excitement to fill the void created by a lack of assurance of faith and its fruits."⁸
- It is impossible to be a healthy Christian without assurance...it is critical for our spiritual well-being

Peace with and Joy in God

- Knowing without a doubt that we belong to God is the foundation to a Christian life of peace and joy
- To put it another way, if we constantly doubt our salvation, we will likely experience a lack of comfort provided in the gospel
- Being certain of our salvation brings a security in this life as well as a confidence in the midst of trials

Psalms 46:1-2 ~ God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea

⁶ John MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 10-11.

⁷ Adapted from Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 15-24.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

- “Surely, no one on earth can have so much happiness as the Christian who has a well-grounded certainty that the triune God is his salvation, and that ‘to live is Christ, and to die is gain’ (Phil. 1:21).”⁹

Usefulness in Ministry

- A believer who is assured of their salvation will also likely be active in Christian service

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8 ~ for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

- A Christian without assurance often spends their time and energy questioning whether they are saved or not
- When that question is unresolved in their minds, they often become spiritually paralyzed, unable to truly serve the Lord and others
- “A believer who lacks an assured hope, will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find that he is so taken up with internal welfare that he has little leisure for other things, and little time for the work of God.”¹⁰

Holy Living

- Assurance is critical to the pursuit of holiness
- Constant doubt and uncertainty about salvation will distract a believer from godly living and will render them ineffective in mortifying sin
- “The person whose assurance is well-founded, who experiences true peace and joy, who is busy in the Lord’s service and lives in close fellowship with Him, will lead a holy life. A believer cannot persist in high levels of assurance while he continues in low levels of holiness. Assurance brings us into close contact with God’s power. When we have a trusting relationship with God and confidence in His mercy and grace, our hearts are inflamed with love for God. This love kindles the will and desire to live a holy life. The closer we are to God, the more love we will feel for God and the more holy our live will be.”¹¹

To Counter Growing Apostasy and Secularization

- As the days we are living in grow darker and the church becomes more susceptible to worldliness, the need to stand firm and stay faithful as believers becomes increasingly important
- Opposition to the gospel will continue to mount and believers will be progressively more persecuted by a God-hating world
- In the face of such hostility, we will need to keep our eyes fixed on Christ
- “We are called to be lights on the lampstand in a day of great darkness, while the devil promotes apostasy on all sides, especially within the church and in our educational institutions. To be lights in such darkness we need much assurance... What idea will the world have about God if God’s people don’t show that it is a wonderful thing to serve the Lord?”¹²

⁹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, 32.

¹¹ Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 21-22.

¹² Ibid., 22.

WHY CHRISTIANS LACK ASSURANCE¹³

- Not to have that assurance of salvation is to live in doubt, fear, and spiritual depression...something God never intended believers to do

Strong Preaching

- Although increasingly rare today, strong biblical preaching forces people to see their sinfulness against the backdrop of a holy God and drives them to the answer to our problems in Christ
- Some believers wilt under such preaching, unable to humbly receive its truths and sanctifying power
- “[The] pulpit is rightly the creator of anxious hearts. How else can it unsettle those who have false assurance? Unfortunately, however, a consistent call to righteousness may also unsettle some Christians – particularly those who are frequently succumbing to temptation...The pulpit is supposed to create anxiety, but it should also give comfort and assurance to precious people...who exalt Christ and desire to be more like Him. Good biblical preaching maintains that balance.”¹⁴

Guilt

- Some Christians lack assurance because they have a hard time receiving God’s forgiveness
- They are often plagued by their past and the sins they have committed and, as a result, are unable to accept God’s mercy and grace in Christ
- This is one of the ways Satan works...by obscuring the love and graciousness of God expressed in the transforming power of the Gospel

Revelation 12:10 ~ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

- “[We] still struggle at times with our past and present wickedness. Increasingly we learn that we have so much internal evil in our mind and hear that we can wonder not so much if we love God, but does He really love us when we have such a tendency to sin?...we are prone to stop and look back at our past sinfulness, as well as our present struggles with sin, and say, ‘That I can love the lovable God is understandable, for He is altogether lovely in Christ. But can God truly love me when I have such a bad heart and such a bad record of sinning? Can I truly be His child and still be such a sinful person? If I am a true believer, how can I still be drawn to secret sins and so prone to love the world?’”¹⁵

Ignorance

- Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone results in a secure and unshakeable faith

Romans 8:1 ~ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- “Many people lack assurance because they do not understand that salvation is an utterly divine, totally sovereign operation. Assurance is built on the historical reality of what Jesus Christ accomplished. It is not a

¹³ Adapted from Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 25-41 and MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 95-109.

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 96.

¹⁵ Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 26-27.

feeling without reason, and you will never have the *subjective feeling* of assurance until you comprehend the *objective truth* of the Gospel. You must realize that God knew you were a sinner, which is why He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to pay the price completely for all your sins – past, present, and future. By His omnipotent power God secured forever the salvation Jesus offered. It is irreversible.”¹⁶

Uncertainty

- Uncertainty about the date of one’s conversion can sometimes contribute to a lack of assurance
- Because they can’t pinpoint exact moment they were saved, they question whether it actually took place
- However, far too much has been made of having a specific date of salvation as Scripture never places emphasis on that reality
- Scripture never exhorts us to look for a past event to confirm our salvation but rather to look at the present pattern of our life

Temptation

- Many believers struggle with assurance because they are faced with temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil, temptations which they at times give in to
- But it must be kept in mind that, though we are free from the penalty and power of sin, we are not free from the presence of it until we are glorified
- As believers, we possess a new nature which is still housed in a fallen flesh, hence the presence of temptation
- “Do you see the impulses of the new nature in your life? If so, that’s indicative of salvation. If God’s will has become your highest joy, and submission to His lordship your greatest delight, you are indeed a child of God – no matter how strong the pull of sin.”¹⁷

Trials

- Sometimes the presence of trials in a believer’s life causes them to doubt their salvation as they wonder how God could really love them if he lets them go through such trials
- They wonder where God is when they really need him and if they truly belong to him
- But Scripture frequently speaks of the importance of trials in a believer’s life as the crucible in which assurance is formed

Romans 5:3-5 ~ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Hebrews 6:10-12 ~ For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Disobedience

- This is probably the biggest reason why true believers experience lack of assurance

¹⁶ MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

- Disobedience to God’s Word always robs a believer of assurance and casts them into debilitating doubt
- High degrees of assurance cannot be enjoyed by those who live in low levels of obedience

Hebrews 10:22 ~ 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.

- “Eliminate a major sin in your life and the rest will follow. When the general is killed, the troops scatter. Thank of what happened when David killed Goliath. By the means of grace available to you as a believer, slay the sins you find most compelling and familiar – your pet sins – and the others will soon disappear. And when you fall into sin, quickly set out to conquer that sin and be aware that Satan will try to make you doubt your salvation. Fall back on the forgiving grace of God, and it will strengthen you for battle.”¹⁸

False Conception of God’s Character and His Gospel

- Our salvation must not be anchored in who we are or what we have done for God, but in who he is and what he has done for us in Christ
- Our assurance must be rooted in a deep and correct understanding of God and his nature
- He is a loving Father who has graciously drawn us to himself in Christ such that we are permanently his

Matthew 7:9-11 ~ Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Romans 5:8 ~ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 8:31-32 ~ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 8:35-39 ~ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- “When we see His love in the breaking of Christ’s body and the shedding of His precious blood, then we have grounds for real assurance, for then we see that the heart of God is yearning for sinners. We see that He is willing to pay the supreme sacrifice to save.”¹⁹

Lack of Clarity on Justification by Faith

- Incredibly, the Bible teaches that God justifies those who are least worthy of it by imputing Christ’s righteousness to their account
- This righteousness comes solely on the basis of faith, apart from any human merit or works

Romans 3:26 ~ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

¹⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

¹⁹ Beeke, *Knowing and Growing*, 28.

Romans 4:5 ~ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness

- “We can do nothing that will make us worthy or fit to receive God’s forgiveness. Nothing is necessary to make us acceptable to God. As poor sinners, we receive the gift of salvation by truth faith and are justified; that is, we begin as Christians in a right relationship with the Lord. There is nothing that we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. God does not justify us because of our sincere sorrow for sin, our good works, or anything else. Justification by faith alone means that all our sins are forgiven only because of what Christ has done. If we base our justification on some condition that we must fulfill or a particular experience that we must have, we inject a kind of legalism into our justification that destroys its gracious character and robs us of its saving and assuring character. Then our spiritual deficiencies can lead us into spiritual depression, for justification by works, no matter how subtle its form, will demolish assurance.”²⁰

Possessing a Doubting or Negative Disposition

- “Some Christians are prevented from embracing personal assurance of salvation because of their own personal disposition. Our natural temperament and damaged mindset can hinder our assurance. The way that our personalities are ‘wired,’ the way our emotions tip quickly one way or another, and the way that we can be up one minute and down the next can threaten our assurance.”²¹

Conversion in Early Childhood or “Gradual” Conversion

- Sometimes those who were converted in childhood or were raised in a Christian home struggle with assurance because there is not a stark contrast in their life as with someone saved later in life
- Despite the incredible blessing of coming to Christ early in life, “they often doubt the genuineness of their conversion, fearing that their love for God and His truth is merely the result of growing up ‘under the truth’ rather than the fruit of the saving ministry of the Holy Spirit.”²²

MEANS OF GROWING IN ASSURANCE

Objective Grounds for Assurance

- Experiencing the assurance of a secure salvation begins with believing God’s promises about the nature of our salvation
- Growing in assurance requires that believers employ their mind by prayerfully meditating on and appropriating his precious promises
- “Much of the confusion that exists in the matter of assurance of salvation may be traced to a failure to rest in the written promises of the Word of God. Those who tend to introspection, to examination of feelings, and are unwilling to take the promises of God at their face value have a corresponding loss in their experience of assurance of salvation. Just as assurance rests upon God’s promise, so lack of assurance inevitably stems from a failure in this area. Ultimately the question is not what a person feels, but what the Word of God states.”²³

²⁰ Ibid., 29.

²¹ Ibid., 34-35.

²² Ibid., 37.

²³ John Walvoord, “The Doctrine of Assurance in Contemporary Theology,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (V116, #463, July 1959), 203.

Promises about the Nature of Salvation

- God genuinely promises salvation to all who believe in Christ

John 20:31 ~ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Romans 10:9-10 ~ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Promises about the Blessings of Salvation

- See previous notes about the blessings that accrue to the believer in salvation...i.e. regeneration, adoption, justification, reconciliation, deliverance, new nature, etc.

Promises about the Security of Salvation

- See previous notes on the security of the believer and the lasting nature of salvation which provide the solid basis for being assured of our salvation

Subjective Grounds for Assurance

From Romans

- God's Holy Spirit confirms the validity of our salvation, not by some inner or audible voice, but by his ministry in our lives

Romans 8:16 ~ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

- "There's no audible voice, nothing esoteric or mystical, but something very concrete. He bears witness by providing you with evidence of His presence in your life – by illuminating Scripture to you, drawing you into fellowship with God through prayer and praise, producing spiritual fruit to grace your life, and enabling you to minister effectively to others."²⁴

From 1 John

- The book of 1 John is helpful in growing in assurance since it was written for the primary purpose of giving believers the confidence that they possess genuine salvation
- This is evident from the purpose statement (1 John 5:13 ~ that you may know you have eternal life)
- Throughout his letter, John gives 11 tests to determine whether someone possesses eternal life²⁵

1. Do I enjoy fellowship with Christ?

1 John 1:2-3 ~ and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us – 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

²⁴ MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 86.

²⁵ This list adapted from John MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 67-91.

2. Am I sensitive to sin?

1 John 1:7-10 ~ but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us..

3. Do I obey God's Word?

1 John 2:3-6 ~ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

4. Do I reject worldliness?

1 John 2:15-17 ~ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

5. Do I eagerly anticipate Christ's return?

1 John 3:2-3 ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

6. Do I see a decreasing pattern of sin in my life?

1 John 3:4-10 ~ Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

7. Do I love fellow believers?

1 John 2:9-11 ~ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 3:10, 14-15, 17-18 ~ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother...14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him...17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth...

1 John 4:7-8 ~ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

8. Do I experience answered prayer?

1 John 3:22 ~ and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

1 John 5:13-15 ~ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

9. Do I experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

1 John 2:27 ~ As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

1 John 4:13 ~ By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

10. Can I discern between spiritual truth and error?

1 John 4:1-3 ~ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

11. Have I suffered rejection because of my faith?

1 John 3:12-13 ~ not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.

From 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1-11 ~ Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- In v. 10, Peter exhorts us to make our calling and election sure by practicing “these things” also referred to as “these qualities” in vv. 8, 9
- What are the qualities Peter refers to that make our salvation certain? → The ones listed in vv. 5-7
- It’s only when we practice these qualities that we are confirming their calling and election
- Assurance of salvation becomes more and more real as we understand and apply these virtues: diligence, excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love
- These qualities make us neither “useless nor unfruitful” (v. 8)
- “If you want to enjoy assurance in all its richness, diligently pursue all those virtues. Why? Because they produce a fruitful Christian life, and nothing is more indicative of true salvation than that.”²⁶

²⁶ Ibid., 125.