

Paper # 7

On Attaining and Maintaining a Full Assurance of your Salvation

“Assurance of salvation” – Divinely given confidence that one has truly received salvation.

From *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* –
Donald K. McKin, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996

Our Paper, “On Attaining and Maintaining a Full Assurance of Your Salvation” will be presented in Three Parts

Part I: 22 Biblical Proofs that the Christian not only can, but should, have a Full Assurance of their Salvation

Part II: Answers to the Doubts, Fears, and Concerns that people raise about having an Assurance of their Salvation

Part III: Maintaining an Assurance of Your Salvation

September, 2025

Paper 7: On Having a Full Assurance of Your Salvation

Part I: 22 Biblical Proofs that the Christian not only can, but should, have a Full Assurance of their Salvation

**We would Open our Look at Having a Full Assurance of your Salvation
with a Simple Question ...**

Do you “enjoy” God?

The first question in a well-known Christian Catechism is ...

“What is the chief end of man?”

The answer is ...

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”.

So, again ...

Do you ‘enjoy’ God?

Many Christians cannot and do not fully “enjoy” God as they should because they live in a perpetual on-again off-again state of worry about whether they are saved or not; whether, if they are saved, they might lose their salvation; and whether, if they have any assurance at all, it might be a false assurance [Jesus did repeatedly warn people about having a false assurance of salvation].

We would submit that one cannot really and truly “enjoy” a Being whom they think and feel is ready, willing, and able to throw them into eternal burning hell the moment they mess up. No, rather than “enjoying” Him, they will have an unholy and unbiblical fear of Him, resent Him, and, whether they will admit it or not, inwardly grumble and murmur against Him.

Fearing Him in this manner, any good works they do or any service they render unto Him or His church will mostly be done out of trying to appease Him, trying to maintain their salvation, or hopefully tipping the balance of going to heaven in their favor – rather than serving Him with joy and delight rising out of the proper motives of love and thankfulness to Him for the great mercy and grace that He has extended to them.

This is very regrettable because most worries and fears about having an assurance of one's salvation are usually born out of misunderstandings and misconceptions about the nature of God, about what salvation really is, what it entails, how it is accomplished, and what the Bible has to say on the subject of having a full assurance of one's salvation – all of which result in too many Christians having an improper and unbiblical fear of God, rather than truly “*enjoying*” Him.

It is true that Christians should “*fear*” God in the proper sense of having a great and reverential awe and respect for His divine majesty, His Godhood, and His all-consuming holiness. But, all too often, people have an improper, unbiblical, servile and somewhat cowering fear and mistrust of Him instead, largely due to worries about whether they are currently saved or not. Indeed, many have been taught that they cannot know for sure whether they are saved or not.

Not having an assurance of one's salvation is a complete inversion of what God wants for His children. As we will shortly see, God wants all His children to have a full assurance of their salvation so that they actually can know and enjoy Him, both “now and forever.”.

So, our second question for you is ...

Would you like to have a full and true assurance of your salvation such that you really can know and “enjoy” God – both now and forever?

You can, you know.

We will show you “how” in two steps:

Our first step will be to indisputably prove that a Christian not only can, but should, have a full assurance of their salvation. That will be done in *Part I* of our present Paper, Paper # 7. As always, we will go to the Bible for our proofs – Twenty-two of them to be exact.

Once convinced that *a Christian* can and should have a full assurance of their salvation, many will naturally ask, “*How, then, can I know for sure that I am a Christian?*”

Interestingly, both the Apostles Peter and Paul actually command you to seek out the answer to this question ...

*“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.”
(2 Peter 1:10)*

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”

(2 Corinthians 13:5)

And so, in our second step, we will show you how, in response to the commands of both Peter and Paul, you can *diligently “test”* and *“examine”* yourself to know for sure *“whether you are in the faith”*, i.e., whether or not you are a Christian, and are, therefore, entitled to a full assurance of your salvation. This step is found in our next Paper, Paper # 8.

But before starting our Proofs that a Christian can and should have a full assurance of their salvation, we would like to clear up six important points:

- 1. First, having a full assurance of your salvation is not a *necessary* part of your salvation itself ...**

... which is to say that you can be saved without having a full assurance of your salvation. But though it is not a necessary part of salvation itself, having a full assurance of your salvation is nonetheless still a part of your birthright as a Christian that you not only *can*, but *should*, have.

- 2. Whenever we speak of one’s having an “assurance of their salvation”, we are speaking of a salvation that is “*eternal*” and “*everlasting*”, i.e., a salvation that cannot be forfeited or lost.**

One certainly cannot rationally claim to have an “assurance” of “*eternal life*” or “*everlasting life*” if it can be lost or forfeited (which would mean that it was never “*eternal*” or “*everlasting*” in the first place). So, again, when we claim that one can and should have a full assurance of their salvation, we are speaking of an “*eternal*” and “*everlasting*” salvation that cannot be lost or forfeited.

Our Biblical “Proofs” will clearly bear this out.

- 3. Having an assurance of one’s salvation is a “*gift*” of God’s “*grace*”. But, just like your sanctification process itself, a full assurance of your salvation is a “*gift*” that you must, with God’s help, “*work out*” and “*pursue*”.**

Just as we are told in the Bible to ...

“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13)

... we are similarly commanded by the Apostles Peter and Paul to “*be even more diligent to make your call and election sure*” and to “*examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves*” ...

We are to “*pursue*” or “*work out*” a full assurance of our salvation through a “*diligent*” use of the means of grace – because “*it is God who works in you*”. In other words, we work with God both in increasing our sanctification and in attaining assurance of our salvation, but we work with Him only because He has first, by His grace, given us the “*gifts*” necessary for us to be able to “*work out*” and “*pursue*” them.

So be forewarned that we call seeking and maintaining an assurance of your salvation a “*pursuit*” because it takes time, effort and commitment on your part to attain and maintain it.

4. Fourth, we want to refute the false, unscriptural charge that having a full assurance of one’s salvation will incline one to “looseness” in living.

To know that this is a false and wholly unscriptural charge, we need only to remember that a true Christian ...

Has received a “new heart”,

Has been given the “gifts” of “faith” and “repentance”,

Has been adopted into the family of God,

Has been spiritually united with Christ,

Has been, and now is, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, who works with him “*to will and to do according to God’s good pleasure*”

Has a proper and holy “fear” of God, not the fear of servile punishment, but a “fear” like unto that of a child for a loving parent. The Christian knows that he will be disciplined, chastened, and even scourged, by a loving Father, if necessary, to bring him back from self-destructively *practicing* any sin. [See Hebrews 12:5-11]

In fact, the Christian’s whole nature has been so radically changed that the Bible terms him to be a “*new creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17) and as having been “*born again*” (John 3:3, 5).

So, rather than being inclined to live ‘loosely’, a true Christian’s assurance of salvation will result in his striving all the more earnestly to obey God’s commandments out of love and thankfulness to God for what He has done for him – which are much greater motivators to

personal piety and obedience than serving God out of servile fear or trying to earn or merit one's salvation by doing good works.

It is, rather, a *false* assurance of salvation, a carnal sense of security resting on the “*easy believism*” and “*cheap grace*” that is so prevalent in modern evangelicalism that inclines one to complacency and slackness in obedience to God's law, *not* a *true* one.

We would agree entirely with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XVIII, “*Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation*”, Section 3, which holds that ...

The true and “*proper fruits of assurance*” are ...

Greatly increased “*peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*”

Increased “*love and thankfulness to God*”

More “*strength and cheerfulness*” in pursuing our duties and obedience to God

These “*proper fruits of assurance*”, fruits gained from attaining a full assurance of one's salvation, are the exact opposite of fostering an inclination to “looseness” in living – which, again, is nothing more than a false and unscriptural charge made by some who oppose the doctrine of assurance of salvation.

Admittedly, if we are asked ...

“*Must a true Christian with a full assurance of their salvation still struggle long and hard against sin?*”

We would reply, “Yes! Most certainly!” In fact the struggle will intensify because before you became a Christian you were a willing member of the enemy's camp. He will hate your defection to the Lord's side and will turn the full force of his hatred upon you. But you will have been given much better and more effective weapons with which to fight back.

[Note: Many will say, “*I don't feel like I am at war. I don't feel like I'm a part of any struggle with sin at all.*” That's because the strongest arrow in the devil's quiver is that of “*complacency*”. If you have no struggle at all with sin and are equally “*complacent*” about the state of your soul and the things of Christ, the devil has pretty much won his battle for the destruction of your soul.]

Another question commonly asked is ...

“Can a true Christian with a full assurance of their salvation still fall hard, long, and deeply into sin?”

We would reply, “Yes, of course they can!” We need only think of King David, King Solomon and others who, as very devout children of God, have fallen long, hard, and deep into sin. We think of Peter and his denials of even knowing Christ. We think of Paul’s great struggles with sin outlined in Romans 7. A true Christian with a full assurance of their salvation must still struggle against sin and can most certainly fall long and deep into sin, but a true Christian cannot long remain content in His sin, but will come to a full repentance and cry out to God along with King David ...

*“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by your generous Spirit.”
(Psalm 51:12)”*

Indeed, the Bible itself warns the Christian of overconfident presumption in this area ...

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (I Corinthians 10:12)

A knowledgeable Christian knows that he needs a diligent and regular use of the means of grace to continue to “stand” and never feels that he has the strength to do so on his own.

A fifth point that we would make about having a full assurance of one’s salvation is that ...

5. It is possible for a person to Biblically discern between a “true” and “false” assurance of their salvation.

As mentioned above, we will fully cover this in our next paper, *Paper # 8, “How can I know for sure that I am a Christian?”*

Our sixth and final point that we would like to clear up is the very fair question ...

6. “You say one thing. Other people say another thing. Whom are we to believe?”

To which we reply ...

“Do not believe either of us.”

Instead, we urge you to be like the “fair-minded” Bereans whom the Apostle Luke commended because they ...

“... were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)

We ask only that our hearers and readers be like the “*fair-minded*” Bereans and “*search the Scriptures*” with us to find out whether the things that we claim are “*so*”. This is why we present “*Scriptural Proofs*” and so many Bible references in all of our papers.

In conclusion ...

We can say for certain that God wants all His children to have a full assurance of their salvation so that they can “*know*” and “*enjoy*” Him both now and forever.

The remaining question for you is ...

“Do you, too, want it enough to ‘pursue’ it?”

And so, let’s turn to our 22 Biblical Proofs that the Christian not only can, but should, have an Assurance of their Salvation

Proof # 1 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

The Apostle John tells us that “*you may know that you have eternal life*” ... not *hope* or *think* or *presume* ... but “know” that you have it

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

[Note: “*Eternal*” means “*Everlasting, unending, infinite, never-ending*”]

Proof # 2 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

John also tells us that IF we “*believe in the Son*”, we have “*everlasting life*”

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36)

Not “may have” or “might have, if he can keep it”, but “has everlasting life”.

[Note Again: “Everlasting” means “eternal, endless, ceaseless, perpetual”]

Proof # 3 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is ...

The sure word of our Lord Jesus Christ ...

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24)

Again, our Lord Himself uses the word “has” and not “might have if he can hold on to it.” And, one more time, exactly what is it that he “has”? Very clearly, our Lord says that he “has everlasting life”.

Proof # 4 that a Christian can know for sure that he has eternal life is that ...

Paul tells us that if we now are, or ever were, at any time, a child of God, we are and will remain, by immutable decree, an “*heir of God and joint heirs with Christ*” and are destined to be “*glorified together*” with Christ

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Romans 8:15-17)

Proof # 5 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

The author of Hebrews similarly tells us to strive for the “*full assurance of hope to the end*”

“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Hebrews 6:11-12)

We note that the word “hope” as used here and elsewhere in the Bible does not mean “desires” or “wishes it might happen”. No, “hope” in this and similar verses refers to the believer’s sure expectation that God will fulfill His promises. Confirm 1 Peter 1:3-5 ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Indeed, some commentators hold that we may substitute “*faith*” for “*hope*” in this particular case.

Beyond any reasonable doubt, it is certain that the author of Hebrews, writing under the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, would not tell us to strive after something we cannot have.

At any rate, we have here another Biblical author urging Christians to “*diligence*” in seeking “*the full assurance of hope until the end*”. God most certainly wants His children to have a “*full assurance*”, or certainty, of their ultimate salvation, i.e., He wants them to have a “*full assurance of hope until the end*”.

Proof # 6 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

Both Peter and Paul actually command us to be *diligent* to “*make our call and election sure*” and to “*test*” and “*examine*” ourselves “*as to whether you are in the faith*”. They would certainly not have commanded us to do so unless we were able to do so.

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10)

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

[Let’s note that “sure” means ... “*certain ... definite ... guaranteed ... incapable of being lost*”.]

Proof # 7 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

Eternal life is certain because both you and your “hope” of salvation are “kept by the power of God” ... and, being “kept” by God, your salvation cannot and “does not fade away” ... but is, indeed, already “reserved in heaven for you”.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Proof # 8 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

The Christian has God’s promises that God the Holy Spirit, God Himself, “seals” them for salvation and is Himself the “guarantee” of it ...

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

“For in this, we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven ... that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared for us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” (2 Corinthians 5:2,4-5)

We are repeatedly taught here that God the Holy Spirit is Himself the “guarantee of our inheritance” and that we “were sealed for the day of redemption” by the Holy Spirit of God. We are also twice told that the Holy Spirit was “given us ... in our hearts as a guarantee”. It should be a wonderful and overflowing source of comfort and joy to us as we go through the dying process to know that by God’s “guarantee” and “seal” salvation is ours and cannot be lost.

Proof # 9 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

The foundational basis of the Christian's salvation, and their assurance of it, is the righteousness of Christ *imputed* to their account and not what they themselves have or have not done.

"Imputed" in this case means that God legally declares, reckons, and transfers the righteousness of Christ from Himself to your account.

This being the case, the legal foundation upon which both your salvation and your assurance of it rests, i.e., the righteousness of Christ imputed to your account, stands outside of yourself, is not dependent on what you do or don't do, and is as absolutely certain and unshakable as the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself.

Whenever you are troubled by any doubt concerning the assurance of your salvation, it is extremely important for you to remember that at the moment you exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ two very amazing things happened to you in the heavenly court of God's justice:

First, God the Father, in a full legal and forensic sense, imputed (i.e., accounted or reckoned) all your sins to Christ on the cross – who paid the full penalty for them in your place – such that you are now, and always will be, legally *"Not Guilty"* before God and His bar of justice. Confirm ...

*"All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)*

Second, God the Father, also in a full legal and forensic sense, legally imputed the righteousness of Christ to your own personal account. This means that when God looks at you both now and on the Judgment Day, He will not only find you *"Not Guilty"*, but *"Righteous"* as well, as He beholds you clothed with the *"righteousness"* of Jesus Christ Himself ...

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

These twin acts of imputation in God's court of law are the foundation and legal basis of what the Bible refers to as your *"justification"*. These two acts are the foundational basis of your salvation – which, again, means that your salvation stands outside of yourself and your actions and is as absolutely certain and unshakable as the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself.

It is also very comforting to know that both your salvation and consequent justification (with its two imputations) came to you *“by grace”* – *“For by grace you have been saved”*. And, not only that, but you were saved *“through faith”*, which *“faith”* itself is also *“the gift of God”*, and which, very specifically, was *“not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* And so, we see that every single aspect of your salvation was a *“gift”* of God’s *“grace”* and stands on its own, outside of you and your actions. Paul sums this up beautifully in his letter to the Ephesians

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

So, as good news bears repeating, when you were *“saved”* by the *“grace”* of God, Jesus Christ not only paid the penalty for all your sins so that you might be judged *“Not Guilty”* before God’s tribunal, but God also made you to be clothed with Christ’s own righteousness, such that when He, in legal judgment, or at any other time, looks upon you, He beholds *“the righteousness of Christ”* imputed to your account and not your own actions and failings. So, by God’s own legal decree in His court of justice, you are not only *“Not Guilty”* but also *“Righteous”*. Again, every bit of this is a *“gift”* from *“God’s grace”*.

[We note that you are not inherently “Righteous” in and of yourself, but are covered by the “foreign” Righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to your account.]

Again, the foundation of your salvation, i.e., your *“justification”*, stands outside of yourself and is founded *“in Christ Jesus”*.

Keep your eyes fixed on that, Christian, on Jesus and His righteousness imputed to your account as the foundational basis of your salvation, and not on yourself and your failings, and you will be fine. Your salvation and your assurance of it are as sure and certain as the righteousness of Christ Himself.

Hear Charles Spurgeon on the matter ...

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (I Corinthians 5:21)

“MOURNING Christian! why weepest thou? Art thou mourning over thine own corruptions? Look to thy perfect Lord, and remember, thou art complete in Him; thou art in God’s sight as perfect as if thou hadst never sinned; nay, more than that, the Lord our Righteousness hath put a divine garment upon thee, so that thou hast more than the righteousness of man – thou hast the righteousness of God. O thou

who art mourning by reason of inbred sin and depravity, remember, none of thy sins can condemn thee. Thou hast learned to hate sin; but thou hast learned also to know that sin is not thine – it was laid upon Christ’s head. Thy standing is not in thyself – it is in Christ; thine acceptance is not in thyself, but in thy Lord; thou art as much accepted of God today, with all thy sinfulness, as thou wilt be when thou standest before His throne, free from all corruption. O, I beseech thee, lay hold on this precious thought, perfection in Christ! For thou art ‘complete in Him.’ With thy Savior’s garment on, thou are holy as the Holy one ... and all this because the divine Lord ‘was made to be sin for us ... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.’”

Taken from “*Morning and Evening*”, Charles Spurgeon, April 4, Morning.

Proofs # 10, 11, 12, and 13 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life all derive from one passage ...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:28-39)

Proof # 10 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

The Bible teaches us that our salvation is comprised of a wonderful and unbreakable chain of events stretching from God's "foreknowledge" of us in eternity past to our future "glorification" with each link forged and fitted together by God Himself ...

*"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."
(Romans 8:28-30)*

As each link in the "golden chain" of our salvation is forged and joined to the others by God Himself, we can rest forever assured that our salvation chain is certain, unbreakable, and indissoluble. Both a simple reading of the passage and its structure tell us clearly and assuredly that IF you are "foreknown" by God, THEN you will most certainly be "glorified" by God. There is no delinking or any chain-breaks along the way. *Read it again ...*

*"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."
(Romans 8:28-30)*

The assuredness of the chain is also shown in that even though our *glorification* is yet to come, its certainty is such that Paul speaks of it in the past tense, as if it has already happened – "and whom He justified, these He also glorified".

Clearly, if you have been "foreknown" by God you will be "glorified" by God. You cannot be delinked, lost, or somehow dropped from this chain along the way to your ultimate "glorification". To be "foreknown" is to be "glorified". Each link in your salvation is assured and joined together by God Himself.

What is even more incredibly amazing and comforting, assurance-wise, about the golden chain of our salvation is that all three members of the holy Trinity were, and still are, deeply involved in it ...

God the Father ... Foreknew you, elected you, predestined you, justified you, adopted you into His family, and will one day glorify you ...

God the Son ... Redeemed you by paying the penalty for your sins on the cross, gave you His own righteousness as a covering, stands even now at the throne of God to make intercession for you, and most glorious of all, has established a firm, unshakable, and very real, spiritual union with you ...

God the Holy Spirit ... as the agent of your “new birth”, removed your old “heart of stone” and gave you a new “heart of flesh”, made you aware of your sin and drove you to Christ for relief and redemption from it. He also gave you the “gifts” of “faith” and “repentance”, has been the agent of your sanctification, actually indwells you, and is Himself the “surety” and “guarantee” of your salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:14)

Can you reasonably believe that the “surety” and “guarantee” of the Holy Spirit can fail, and that all these things done for and to you by all three members of the holy Trinity can be nullified and withdrawn from you?

I don't think so!

And neither would you if you sat down and meditated on it.

[We will have more to say on the assurance implications of the “golden chain” of our salvation in Proof # 22.]

Proof # 11 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

We are told in verses 31-34, that no one, neither man nor devil, can ever possibly bring a sustainable “charge” against “God's elect”, i.e., against a Christian.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” (Romans 8:31-34)

**Just think, Christian! Just think about what you have just read
and the assurance to be derived from it ...**

First, “If God is for us, who can be against us? (v. 31)

This is a rhetorical question whose answer is self-evident. If God is for us, no one can successfully be against us! [Paul will shortly elaborate on this by telling us that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is *“in Christ Jesus”*.]

Second, *“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. (v. 33)*

This is another rhetorical question whose answer is self-evident. Since God Himself is the One who has already legally *“justified”* us by imputing our sins to Christ on the cross and Christ’s righteousness to our account, thereby legally and forensically declaring us both *“Not Guilty”* and *“Righteous”*, how can anyone (including the very devil himself) ever in any way successfully *“charge”* us or hold us legally responsible for any of our sins.

Third, *“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” (v. 34)*

Let’s just think about this for a moment!

Just who is the Judge that *“condemns”* at the last judgment? The answer is *“Christ who died”*. Jesus Christ is the Judge at the last judgment. The same Jesus Christ who died to pay the penalty for your sins and who even now stands and intercedes before God’s throne on your behalf, is the One who is to render the verdict on you at the Last Judgment. This being the case, it is inconceivably foolish to think that anyone or anything could somehow now condemn us.

Talk about a stacked court!

Again, this is an especially important theme for one troubled by assurance to meditate upon – *The Judge you will face at the final judgment is Jesus Christ Himself*. Let that sink in, Christian. The Judge at the Last Judgment, the One who consigns sinners to the wrath of God, is Himself the one who has already borne the wrath of God for you, in your place. So, what can you possibly have to fear from death and judgment?

Proofs # 12 and 13 are very closely related, but separate, assurances ...

Proof # 12 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

We are told in verses 35-39 that nothing shall ever be able to *“separate us from the love of Christ”* (Romans 8:35).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

And not only this, not only can nothing separate us from the love of Christ, but our Lord Himself has told us earlier of *the nature of His love* for us ...

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you, abide in My love” (John 15:9).

The “*love of Christ*” with which Jesus loves you, and from which nothing can separate us, is the highest love imaginable as it is akin to His Father’s love for Christ Himself. Can any thought be more comforting and reassuring than the thought that Jesus’s love for each of us, individually, is likened unto His Father’s love for Him. What a world of comfort and security is to be found here.

How comforting these verses are to one facing death and/or struggling with the doubts and fears that often accompany it, for here we are told that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from “*the love of Christ*”, the Second Person of the Trinity.

What great assurance we have here!

Proof # 13 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

We are also taught in verses 35-39 that just as nothing shall separate us from the “*love of Christ*” that nothing “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:39).

Let’s read the passage again ...

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

God the Father’s “love” for you is founded upon your position “in Christ Jesus” and, because of that, Paul “*is persuaded that*” nothing “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:35-39).

The little phrase “*the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” says it all. For it harkens back to *Item # 3* and tells us afresh that the foundational basis of your salvation is that God’s love for you is a “love” founded or derived “in Christ Jesus our Lord” – and not in you or your actions. Again, the foundational basis of your salvation is “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”, not what you do or have done.

And so we see again that the foundation of your salvation stands outside of yourself, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can ever change it or separate you from “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Note well that you can neither be separated from “*the love of Christ*” nor from “*the love of God*”, and, as if that were not enough, we were also told earlier that he Holy Spirit Himself is given as the “*surety*” and “*guarantor*” of it.

Do not dishonor the blessed Trinity by ever thinking otherwise.

Proof # 14 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

We have the additional clear promise of God’s word that ...

***“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 8:1)***

The fact that this is a clear promise from God’s word puts the issue beyond question, but since in a Paper on assurance we would err on the side of overdoing it, we will give several reasons why it must be the case that “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*”:

First, our justification, having been freely awarded by the “*just*” one Himself, can never be questioned on any ground ...

“... being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith ... that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3: 24-25,26)

Second, there can now be “*no condemnation*” because we have just seen in Proofs 12 and 13 that nothing shall be able to “*separate us from the love of Christ ... [or] ... from the love of God.*”

Third, we are clearly told that we “*have peace with God*” through our justification ...

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1)

and because we have “*peace with God*” we need never fear any condemnation ...

Fourth, there can be “*no condemnation*” because we saw back in Proof # 11 that no one, neither man nor devil, can ever possibly bring a sustainable “*charge*” against “*God’s elect*”, i.e., against a Christian. There can be “*no condemnation*” without a sustainable charge on which to hang it.

For all these reasons, plus the infallible word of God Himself, we can clearly see that there is not now and never will be “*any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

Proof # 15 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

God *knows* right now those who are *eternally* His. He knows it by His own immutable decree (*Ephesians 1:3-6*). Indeed, this knowledge on His part is so sure and certain that it is referred to in the Bible as the “*solid foundation*” and “*seal*” of God Himself ...

“Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’” (2 Timothy 2:19).

God “*knows*” those “*who are His*”. He knows it right now! It is not in question! And, as He is both omniscient and omnipotent, nothing can change it.

He knows those “*who are His*” because they “*are His*” by His own immutable decree. Read it again ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Christ Jesus to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Very clearly, God knows right now those “*who are His*”, not those who ‘*might be*’ His, and He has known it “*from the foundation of the world*”.

He knows it by his own immutable decree. He does not have to await man’s decision on the matter. He does not have to “*peak ahead*” like some kind of cosmic cheat to see man’s decision so He can ratify it as His own – the very thought of which does great and irreparable damage to any concept of God’s sovereignty or omniscience.

No! God knows right now those “*who are His*” and nothing can change it – For it is His “*solid foundation and seal*”.

If you are “*His*” now, you are and will be “*His*” forever. You cannot be lost. Your assurance of your salvation should be total and complete.

**Proof # 16 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that
our Lord has clearly told us ...**

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3)

Do you “*believe also in Me*”? Do you believe the words of your Lord and Savior on the certainty of your salvation?

He says “*Let not your heart be troubled*”.

And just “*Why?*” should you not let your heart be “*troubled*”? Because ...

“I go to prepare place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

He’s not going off to build a “*spec*” house in case you are able to make it in after all. No, He directly tells you that He is going off to build a specific “*place*” (actually, a “*mansion*”) especially “*for you*”, and that after that, He’s coming back to “*receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*”

In the interim period between His going and His coming back, He tells you ...

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

So, again, do you “*believe also*” in Him? Is He worthy of your belief and trust?

If He is, then “*Let not your heart be troubled*”. He’s coming back to get you and take you to be with Him. You have His word and His promise on the matter. What more can you possibly need?

Proof # 17 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

No one can “*snatch*” you (i.e., ‘remove’ you) out of the hand of Jesus (*John 10:28*) or from the hand of God the Father (*John 10:29*).

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.” (Jesus Christ, John 10:27-30)

Hear again exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ has just very plainly and clearly told us. He has very specifically told us ...

That He “*knows*” exactly who His sheep are

That He “*gives them eternal life*”

That “*they shall never perish*”

That no one shall “*snatch them out of My hand*” ... and ...

That “*no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.*”

We would also state that the assertion made by many, without any Biblical basis or warrant whatsoever, that “*you can take yourself out of His hand*” is very easily refuted by Romans 8:37-39 which clearly states that you yourself (being a “*created thing*”) cannot snatch yourself out of God’s hand ...

“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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37-39)

You are a “*created thing*” aren’t you?

Proof # 18 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is that ...

Our two great enemies, “*death*” and the “*devil*” are both “*under the feet*” of our Lord Jesus Christ and their power has been “*destroyed*”, which means that we have been “*released*” from the “*fear of death*” and the “*bondage*” to which it held us subject.

“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (I Corinthians 15:25-26)

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

In these verses we see ...

The death of “*death*” itself – as death has been both “*destroyed*” and placed “*under the feet*” of our Lord Jesus Christ

and we see ...

That “*the devil*” who “*has the power of death*” has himself been “*destroyed*” and, as we are told elsewhere, will soon be dragged behind Jesus’s chariot as a spectacle for all to see.

We want to especially note that the destruction of the one who “*has the power of death*” serves to “*release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” – which means that neither “*death*” nor the “*devil*” can threaten our assurance of our salvation.

Let us therefore boldly say with David ...

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)*

Proofs # 19, 20, and 21 involve the very close and very personal relationship of the Christian with all three members of the Trinity, respectively

They are

Proof 19: Our Adoption by God the Father ...

Proof 20: Our Spiritual Union with God the Son

Proof 21: Our Indwelling by God the Holy Spirit

Proof # 19 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is ...

Our legal Adoption as “*sons of God*” and What it Means for our Assurance of Salvation

Our legal Adoption as “*sons of God*” in God’s court of law is a most wondrous event ...

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)

“... having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Ephesians 1:5)”

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1)

“In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be Your name” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:9)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14-17)

J. I. Packer in his book *Knowing God* writes of the importance of our adoption as sons

You sum up the whole of New Testament teaching in a single phrase, if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the holy Creator. In the same way, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one’s holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. ‘Father’ is the Christian name for God.”

That is truly wonderful!

But how, in particular, did we come to be ‘adopted sons’ and come to have God as ‘Our Father’? And how does that affect our assurance?

As seen above, the apostle John tells us that we were “born” to it. We were “born ... of God” to becoming “children of God” ...

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

In this passage, John first tells us that God gives “*the right to become children of God*” to all those who (by faith) “*received Him*” and “*believe in His name*”. He then tells us that those who came to “*receive Him*” and “*believe in His name*” did so because they were “*born*” to it.

The “birth” to which John refers is, of course, the new birth, described in John Chapter 3, where Jesus tells Nicodemus that the absolute prerequisite for one to ‘see’ or ‘enter’ the kingdom of heaven is that they must be “*born again ... born of water and the Spirit*” ...

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

John next goes on to very specifically tell us exactly how we were and were not “*born*” to it.

To refresh your memory we will give the verse again ...

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)

John first tells us that we did not become “*children of God*” or come to “*receive Him*” or “*believe in His name*” because of who we were – i.e., because of our parents, heredity, lineage, national identity, etc. – for, we were “*born, not of blood*”.

He also tells us we did not become “*children of God*” or come to “*receive Him*” or “*believe in His name*” because of any choice or decision made or any action taken on our part – for, we “*were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*”.

No, we very specifically became “*children of God*” and came to “*receive Him*” and “*believe in His name*” – because we were “*born ... of God*” (some translations have “*born from above*”). John also tells us a little later, in Chapter 3, that the Holy Spirit of God is the Agent that worked the new birth in us [You will remember the Holy Spirit being referred to earlier as “*the Spirit of adoption*”].

Paul also tells us of God’s work in bringing us to our “*adoption as sons*” ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him

before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3-6)

The teachings of John 1:12-13 and Ephesians 1:3-6 make it exceedingly clear that God chose us for adoption, we did not choose Him. It is just as John has told us elsewhere ...

“We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

In sum, you became an adopted son of God and have God as your Father because God in eternity past, with a perfect and full foreknowledge of all the sins that you would ever commit and all the evil that you would ever do, specifically and personally chose, elected, foreordained, and predestined you to salvation and adoption. He did so entirely because it was His “good pleasure” to do so, to the “glory of His grace”. It was certainly “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.” No, you were “born ... of God” and should give all glory for it to Him alone.

Knowing that you have been specifically and individually *chosen by God* for “adoption as a son” should end all questioning of assurance of your eternal salvation. God does not make mistakes or wrong judgments.

Well, having been “adopted” as a “son of God”, two things we should like to know are

What kind of a “Father” will God be to His adopted children? What does He want of us?

How would He treat a greatly erring and wayward child who has for a long time wallowed in the depths of utter degradation and seeks to return home? Would He boot him out of the family?

We don’t have to wonder about either of these questions, because our Lord Jesus Christ gave us specific teachings on both of them.

Let’s look first at ...

***What kind of a “Father” will God be to His adopted children?
What does He want of us?***

Jesus tells us in Luke exactly what kind of a “Father” God will be to His adopted children

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:9-13)

As for “What God wants of us?”

We are told in I Thessalonians that God’s will for us as our Father is our sanctification ...

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (I Thessalonians 4:3)

In short, God loves us and wants us to be like Him. He wants us to bear the family image.

Pursuant to this, we are told in Hebrews, that God, like any good father, will discipline us, if need be, for our benefit, correction, and improvement ...

“And have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as 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 sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all 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 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.” (Hebrews 12:5-11)

And so we see that like all good fathers – God will be very “good” to His children ... will seek our improvement and betterment ... and will lovingly discipline us for our own good, when necessary, because, again, He wants us to be like Him and bear the family image.

This should come as no surprise to us at all. Anyone who has read their Bible should know that God would be the perfect “Father”, and as such would: Love us at all times ... have a great affection for us ... desire fellowship with us ... bid us to approach Him without fear ... always be ready to listen to us ... always be interested in us ... always be concerned with our sanctification ... and ... always show Himself to be trustworthy, faithful, and generous with His love...

As to our second question ...

How would God treat a greatly erring and wayward child who has for a long time wallowed in the depths of utter degradation and now seeks to return home?

Would He boot him out of the family?

We have a direct answer from God Himself in our Lord’s telling of the parable of the prodigal son, which shows us that God would willingly, joyously and enthusiastically welcome back a greatly erring and wayward child ...

“And he [the prodigal son] arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.’ (Luke 15:20-24)

This is most certainly not the picture of a Father who will disown, disinherit, and boot you out of the family if you mess up, even very badly.

All too often people just gloss over this parable. But it is an invaluable teaching tool in helping us to understand the depth of God’s Fatherly love for even a greatly wayward and much degraded son.

The following comments on the forgiveness extended to the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), are taken from a sermon by Pastor Carl Robbins of Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church (PCA), Simpsonville, SC in August, 2022

The prodigal son had expressed total rejection, total disrespect, total abandonment of all fellowship with his father and family ... He had moved off to a far country, away from them, and had an unrestrained waste of his wealth and heritage

Even when it was all gone, he was still not ready to go home.

He continues his downward spiral and falls into the utmost total degradation imaginable for a Jew – feeding pigs and gladly eating the garbage on which they fed

Having made crazy, stupid, and bad decisions, and falling so far, he was still not in his right mind

But, then, he “came to himself” (verses 17-19) and in true repentance and faith made a clean break with sin ... wanting to go back to his father ... and, knowing his guilt and confessing his sin without excuse (blaming no one else), being ready to accept the consequences of his sin, plans to ask only to be allowed to be a “slave” in his father’s house

In the Father’s reaction, described in verses 20-24 above, we are given a great insight into the character of God’s love for His children and the treatment to be expected by any repentant child upon returning home ...

The father had been expectantly watching for his prodigal son (he was never off his father’s mind and heart) ... He saw him from a great way off ... His mind and heart leapt at the sight ... He had compassion and runs to him with great affection ... willing and eager to receive his repentant prodigal son back

He takes off his filthy rags and gives him all the symbols of a full son signifying honor, forgiveness, reconciliation and sonship

Here our Lord shows us our Father’s extreme love and willingness to forgive and accept back repentant sons with rejoicing and love ...

The prodigal, knowing his sins of madness, folly, stupidity, and wallowing in degradation, was content to have been received and treated as a slave in his father’s house – but instead saw his sins totally forgiven, and honor, recognition, reconciliation and the symbols of sonship put in their place ...

And such will God do to all of His children that come to Him in sincere repentance ...

And so we see in our Lord's parable the expression of God the Father's utter and total willingness to forgive, receive back, love, and restore all the privileges of full sonship to the worst sinner imaginable, even one coming back from the lowest conceivable depths of humiliation and degradation, when he comes home in true repentance.

What great assurances of our eternal salvation we have here! What great assurances of the depth of the Father's love our Lord Jesus has given us!

Our Lord's answers to our two questions ...

What kind of a "Father" will God be to His adopted children? What does He want of us?

How would He treat a greatly erring and wayward child who has for a long time wallowed in the depths of utter degradation and seeks to return home? Would He boot him out of the family?

... certainly give us infallible proof and great assurance of our salvation.

In addition to the kind of Father that God would be to us, we also want, for assurance purposes, to consider some of the privileges and implications of being an adopted son of God and what they mean for our assurance of salvation

One great privilege of our adoption by God as sons is that ...

1. We have Jesus Christ for our elder half-brother and are "joint heirs" with Him

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:14-17)

Having Jesus Christ as our elder half-brother is indeed a wondrous thought, a thought of which we can only begin to scratch the surface of comprehending God's love for us.

God's Intra-Trinitarian love for Jesus Christ, His eternally-begotten Son, is, of course, unique to Him in many ways. But God's love for us, His adopted children, though different in nature, is not different in kind – for we are not only adopted as fellow "sons", but are also

covered with His Son's righteousness, are in spiritual union with Him, and are a part of His bride, the church.

But not only is Jesus our elder Half-Brother, we are also told that we are "*joint heirs with Christ*" in a marvelous inheritance that God has planned for us. As this inheritance comes by and with our adoption, i.e., "*if children, then heirs*", and as we are "*joint heirs with Christ*" in it, it can only pertain to an inheritance of eternal blessedness in heaven and much more besides.

That we are half-brothers with Jesus Christ and are "*joint-heirs*" in an inheritance with Him are two sure proofs of our eternal salvation.

Another privilege and implication of our adoption as sons is that ...

2. As our "elder half-brother" and legal representative, Jesus also intercedes for us before the throne of God

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1)

What an assurance-affirming teaching we have here! Our Lord Jesus Christ is even now, at this very moment, in heaven interceding and advocating before the throne of God the Father on our behalf.

Could one possibly conceive that God the Father would refuse the Lord Jesus Christ's intercession on our behalf, ignore the covering of His righteousness that has been imputed to us and not accept His atoning blood as sufficient for our forgiveness? Could one possibly believe that He really cannot "*save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him*"?

Of course not!

Perhaps the most remarkable privilege of all is that ...

3. Our adoption as sons causes us to have "Union with Christ"

Our “*Union with Christ*” is the greatest and probably least understood benefit of our Adoption as Sons. [We will cover our “*Union with Christ*” in much greater detail in Proof # 20.]

For now, we will say only that our “*Union with Christ*” is not a physical organic union, but neither is it an abstract union. No, it is a very real spiritual union that has very real, wondrous and great benefits, not the least of which is what it implies for our assurance of our salvation.

Perhaps the greatest attestation to our union with Christ is the ubiquitous little phrase repeatedly describing the Christian as being “*in Christ*” – a phrase that Paul himself uses over 160 times in the New Testament.

Our union with Christ is certainly one of the bedrock pillars of our assurance of salvation and eternal life.

Another marvelous benefit of our adoption as sons and assurance of our salvation is ...

4. Our adoption as sons also causes us to be indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, who, as we have seen, immediately “seals” us and “guarantees” our salvation

It should greatly strengthen your assurance of eternal salvation to know that by virtue of your adoption as a son, God the Holy Spirit not only indwells you, but has also “sealed” you and pledged Himself as the “*guarantor*” of your salvation.

In addition to keeping, sealing, and guaranteeing our salvation, the careful watch of the Holy Spirit over us is so great that He even intercedes for us and takes our very imperfect prayers and makes them conform to the perfect will of God. He is also the governing agent of our sanctification and teaches and helps us to understand God’s Word, God’s will, and how to “*abide*” in Christ.

Indeed, our relationship with the indwelling Holy Spirit is so close that we can actually “*grieve*” Him by our sins ...

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

We will cover other aspects of our indwelling by the Holy Spirit and their related assurances of our salvation in greater detail later in *Proof # 21*.

Another benefit of our adoption as sons is that ...

5. Because of our adoption as sons, we can, as sons, approach “Our Father” with boldness and confidence ...

“... according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” (Ephesian 3:11-12)

It is also a great assurance to our eternal salvation to know that ...

6. As adopted sons, we are loved with a “perfect love”, a love that should cast out all “fear”

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts our fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” (I John 4:17-18)

We can certainly see how it is that ...

“We love Him because He first loved us.”

That we “love Him” at all is a sure proof of our salvation.

We will close out our look at ...

***“Our legal Adoption as ‘sons of God’
and What it Means for Your Assurance of Salvation”***

with a question for you ...

“In view of the fact ...

That you have been legally adopted as a son of God and have been told to call God “Father” ... that you now have Jesus Christ for your elder half-brother ... and that you are “joint heirs” with Him in a marvelous inheritance ...

“In view of the fact ...

That the Lord Jesus Christ, your “elder half-brother”, is now your legal representative and continually intercedes for you before the throne of God ...

“In view of the fact ...

That you were chosen for adoption before the foundation of the world by God (who at that time had a full and perfect foreknowledge of all the sins and every evil thing that you would ever do, think or say) ...

“In view of the fact ...

That you know all the Biblical attributes of God as a perfect loving “Father” (as confirmed by Jesus’s ‘bread and fish’ testimony) and that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has told you exactly what to expect of God’s love and forgiveness even in the face of the greatest long-term degradation imaginable in the parable of the prodigal son ...

“In view of the fact ...

That you know that your adoption as a son causes you to have a very close and very real “spiritual union” with Christ and that you are a part of His bride, the church.

“In view of the fact ...

That your adoption as a son causes you to be indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, who, as we have seen, immediately “seals” you and “guarantees” your salvation ... who exercises such a careful watch over you that He even intercedes for you and takes your very imperfect prayers and makes them conform to the perfect will of God ... who is also the governing agent of your sanctification, teaching and helping you to understand the Word, the Father’s will, and how to “abide” in Christ ... and whose relationship with you is so close that you can actually “grieve” Him by your sins ...

In view of all of this is it really ‘rational’ or ‘reasonable’ for you to think that God would undo all of this and boot you out of the family if you mess up?”

We would answer, *“No. It is neither rational nor reasonable to think that.”*

And so should you.

Indeed, we would submit that in light of all that we have laid out above (simply from our Adoption as sons discussion alone), it would take a really low and unbiblical view of God to think otherwise.

Proof # 20 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is ...

Our “*Union with Christ*”

The Christian’s union with Jesus Christ is a spiritual union in which the Christian is thoroughly bound together with the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, and very deep union. It is one of the most wondrous, beautiful, sublime and magnificent aspects of our salvation process.

The Christian’s union with Christ is a much-taught theme of the New Testament, with the term “*in Christ*” and its variations (“*in the Lord*”, “*in Him*”, *etc.*) being very prevalent throughout the New Testament, Paul himself using it over 160 times.

The Christian’s union with Christ is a purely “spiritual” union, unlike Eastern religious teachings wherein a person is absorbed into the deity. In Christianity, Christ remains Christ and the Christian remains a Christian, but the Christian is nonetheless spoken of as being spiritually engrafted into Christ. And so, though the union with Christ is not a physical organic union, neither is it an abstract union. Our union with Christ is a very real and very active *spiritual* union, the cause and sustaining force of it being the indwelling Holy Spirit.

John Murray gives a wonderful testimony to the importance of our union with Christ ...

“Union with Christ is in itself a very broad and embrative subject. It is not simply a step in the application of redemption; when viewed, according to the teaching of Scripture, in its broader aspects it underlies every step of the application of redemption. Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ. Indeed the whole process of salvation has its origin in one phase of union with Christ and salvation has in view the realization of other phases of union with Christ. This can readily be seen if we remember that brief expression which is so common in the New Testament, namely, ‘in Christ.’ It is that which is meant by ‘in Christ’ that we have in mind when we speak of ‘union with Christ.’”

*Redemption Accomplished and Applied, by John Murray,
Chapter IX, Union with Christ, page 161*

Our Lord Himself repeatedly spoke of the depth of our union with Him ...

He spoke to his disciples of His upcoming departure and later union with them ...

“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:19-20)

He spoke of our utter dependance on Him in this union, a union which is so intricate and close that He Himself pictured it as that of a vine and its branches ...

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:1-5)

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:9)

He concludes His analogy with the reason why He speaks of these things ...

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

Three important aspects of our union with Christ that we see in His “vine and branches” analogy are ...

First, that our union with Christ is the source of any spiritual fruit that we might bear in our lives, and that apart from Him we are totally unfruitful and barren ...

“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me ... for without Me, you can do nothing.”

The fruit of which He speaks includes, but is not limited to, the “fruit” of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Second, our union involves pruning.

“... My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

Pruning is often painful, but, if there is to be abundant and better fruit, “*the vinedresser*” must cut off things that hinder the growth of fruit. Pruning hurts, but pruning is necessary for our growth.

Third, our Lord tells us a second time, for emphasis, that we must “*abide*” in Him if we are to be productive.

The first time we were told ...

“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” (John 15:4)

The second time we are told ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

When our Lord tells us something we had best listen closely and well. When He tells us something and immediately repeats and discourses on it, we had better pay very strict attention to what He says – which in this case is that we must spend much time in the means of grace if we are to “*bear fruit*”, the reason being, again, that we can do “*nothing*” on our own.

Our union with Christ is nurtured and nourished by our use of the means of grace, especially our reading and meditating on the word of God. In fact, we will shortly see our Lord pray to God the Father concerning our sanctification through meditation on His word ...

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

Again, the Christian receives ALL his spiritual sustenance and growth from his all-encompassing union with Christ, and he should diligently use the means of grace to strengthen that union – especially given God’s promise ...

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (James 4:8)

The Apostle Paul likewise describes the depth and the intricacy of our union with Christ ...

He tells us in I Corinthians that by our union with Christ, we are

“... members of Christ” ... “joined to the Lord” ... and are ... “one spirit with Him”

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... But He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

... and in Ephesians Paul likens our union with Christ to that of a husband and wife ...

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her ... that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated their own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and bones.” (Ephesians 5:25-31)

Thus, we see again the spiritual nature of our union with Christ, in that just as husband and wife are united in marriage and become one flesh, but remain separate people and are not physically confused or mixed with each other, so are we in our spiritual union with Christ.

We also see that in our “Union” with Him, our Lord Jesus Christ totally Self-identifies with us ...

Look at what He says to Paul on the road to Damascus ...

“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’” (Philippians 9:3-4)

And, in Matthew 25, where Jesus speaks of the coming judgment of the nations, see how He frames the discussion ...

“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” (Matthew 25:40)

... and again ...

“Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me’.” (Matthew 25:45)

And so we see that the Christian’s being “*in Christ*” is a very thorough and all-encompassing union.

We should also note that our union with Christ is the source of every spiritual blessing shed upon and received by the Christian ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3)

Even more wonderful, as these blessings are given us “*in Christ*”, they are ours now – even including our future “glorification” which Paul speaks as being so certain that it is in fact already accomplished ...

“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30)

And so we see that our union with Christ is an extremely important part of Christian theology and is an unquestioned assurance of our salvation that can never be taken from us.

To help us more fully comprehend just how greatly it affects our assurance of salvation, let’s take a closer look at just three aspects of our “Union with Christ”

... and see just what it means to us, and for us, and the enormous privileges that we derive from it.

- 1. In addition to the great legal ramifications proceeding from “*Our Adoption as sons*”, the role of Jesus as our legal representative is greatly expanded due to our “union” with Him. Because we are now in spiritual “union” with Him, He also becomes our **FEDERAL HEAD**, and what happened to Him in His death, burial, and resurrection also happened to us, as our lives are now inextricably lived and bound up with His ...**

From a Biblical viewpoint, all human life can be seen in the context of two men – Adam and Jesus Christ ...

Adam ... God’s created man ... “*the first man*” ... “*the man of dust*”

Jesus Christ ... *“the second Man”* ... *“the last Adam”* ... *“the heavenly Man”*

By God’s decree, Adam was the federal head and legal representative of all the human race to come forth from him. As our legal head and representative, what Adam did had resulting consequences and implications for all of future humanity. Thus, when Adam fell, we fell with him.

Both before and since the fall, all human beings are from conception held to be physically and by nature *“in Adam”*.

The good news for the elect of God is that the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ. As *“the second man”*, as *“the last Adam”*, the Lord Jesus Christ is the new federal head and legal representative of His elect people, and is, for them, the instigator of a completely new humanity that will undo and repair what the first man has done.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” (I Corinthians 15:22)

In addition to having Jesus as our Legal Representative and Federal Head, what additional benefits do we derive from our being in “Union” with Him?

Well, for starters ...

a. We were “crucified with Christ” and He now “lives in me”

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Just think about it! Because of my union with Christ, *“I have been crucified with Christ”* and have *“died to the law”*. The law is dead to me as a means of condemnation. I have been freed from its curse and guilt and I now *“live by faith in the Son of God”* and *“live to God”*

Again ...

“... it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God”

As a result of our union with Christ, we no longer live our own life as such, for, now, *“Christ lives in me”* and we derive all our sustenance from Him. Our *“old man”*, our old

unregenerate nature, died to the law and we are now a “*new creation*” that lives to God. We now “*live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*”

All of these aspects of our being “*crucified with Christ*” are confirmed by Colossians 2:13-14, where we see that He has raised us from being spiritually “*dead*” and has “*made alive together with Him*” ...

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)

As our legal representative and head, in addition to our being “crucified with Christ”, our union with Christ also means that ...

b. We were also “baptized” into His death and “buried” with Him

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:1-4)

As a result of our union with Christ, we are dead to sin and no longer a slave to it. We are instead now “*alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*”.

c. We were “In Him” not only “circumcised” and “buried”, but were also “raised ... from the dead”

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11-12)

d. We were, in fact, “created in Christ Jesus”

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Most wonderfully, with Christ as our Legal Representative and Head, by virtue of our “Union” with Him, even now ...

- e. Our “*life is hidden with Christ in God*” and we “*also will appear with Him in glory*”**

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:3-4)

Additionally ...

- f. We are “*enriched in everything by Him*” by virtue of our spiritual union with Him ...**

“I thank My God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him, in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.” (1 Corinthians 1:4-5)

- g. Not only are we “*made alive*” and “*raised up*” with Christ, but even now, by virtue of our “Union” with Him, we also “*sit together in the heavenly places*” with Him ...**

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7)

- h. Indeed, our union with Christ is so firmly established that even in death we are said to “*sleep in Jesus*” ...**

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 4:14) ...

-
- i. **And, finally and most gloriously, with Jesus as our legal representative, we shall be ... *not just “glorified” ... but, “glorified together” with Him***

“... and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:17)

**ALL of these benefits above flow out of our Union with Christ
and having Him as our Legal Representative and Head**

A second very important aspect of our “Union with Christ” that has a great deal to do with our assurance of salvation is that in addition to everything that happened to Christ happening to us, all aspects of our salvation came to us “*in Him*” ...

- 2. Everything that has happened and will happen to us in our chain of salvation events, from our being “chosen” for salvation, redeemed, forgiven, even to the very working out of our “good works” and our “glorification”, comes to us and is grounded upon our being “*in Christ*”**

We have already seen that it was “*in Christ*” that we were chosen by God for salvation in the first place ...

“... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world”

In addition, our redemption, forgiveness, and all the riches of God’s grace come to us “*in Him*” ...

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth – in Him.” (Ephesians 1:7-10)

Amazingly, even the “good works” that we do, we do because we are “*in Christ*”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Even our perseverance comes by virtue of our being “in Jesus Christ” ...

“Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

*To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ”
(Jude 1)*

Finally, as we saw above, even in our glorification, we will be “glorified together” with Him

“... and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Romans 8:17)

3. A third very great aspect of our “Union with Christ” that also has a great deal to do with our assurance of salvation is that we are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, also called the “*Spirit of Christ*”.

We shall take this up in greater detail in our very next Proof, Proof # 21.

In view of all of this, we can certainly see how Paul could write ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3)

**At the conclusion of our discourse on the Christian’s “Union with Christ”,
we would ask ...**

In light of all these teachings of the Bible and all the promises of God encompassed in and attendant to our “Union with Christ”, can you rationally hold that you can have your “Union with Christ” dissolved and be booted out of God’s family if you mess up?

I don’t think so, either.

Proof # 21 that we can know for sure that we have eternal life is ...

Our indwelling by God the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of adoption”.

Back in Item # 8 we discussed the assurances to be derived from God the Holy Spirit’s “sealing” us for salvation and being the “guarantee” and “surety” of it, but we did not take up His actual “indwelling” of the Christian.

That God the Holy Spirit is Himself the “guarantee of our inheritance” and that we have been “sealed for the day of redemption” by Him are great and wonderful thoughts for the Christian’s assurance of salvation. But as great as they are, even more sublime and majestic is the thought that God the Holy Spirit actually resides within us ...

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Indeed, Paul tells us in Romans that the greatest assurance that a Christian can have is the testimony of the indwelling Holy Spirit ‘bearing witness’ with our spirit that we are, indeed, the children of God ...

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of Adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Romans 8:15-17)

But what exactly does it mean that ...

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God”

To understand what it means, we have to first understand how the Holy Spirit works (or, operates) as He “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”.

It is very important to know that “in bearing witness with our Spirit that we are children of God” the Holy Spirit works by and through the ordinary means of grace, i.e., He works through our Bible reading and meditation, prayer, worship, our partaking of the sacraments, etc., to “bear witness” with our spirit that we are, indeed, true children of God.

Conversely, in “*bearing witness with our spirits*”, the Holy Spirit does not work through extraordinary means or special or private revelation in addition to what is found in Scripture.

In sum, the witness of the Holy Spirit to our Spirit is not some kind of charismatic-like second or later blessing of the Holy Spirit operating apart from the word of God. No! The Holy Spirit always works in conjunction with the word of God and not by new or special revelation. He works with us and witnesses to our spirits by and through the word of God and that alone.

We see the truth of His working through God’s word in our Lord’s prayer to His Father concerning those who believe in Him ...

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

... and we also see the truth that all spiritual blessings are to be sought “*in Christ*” alone and not by or through any type of private or special revelation ...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ ...” (Ephesians 1:3)

G. I. Williamson in his book “*The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes*” explains this very well ...

“This means, above all, that true, infallible assurance rests upon the Spirit and the Word of God. God has said certain infallible things in His word. He has said that whoever believes in Christ already possesses life everlasting (John 3:36). He also infallibly declares that “we know that we know Him ... if we keep His commandments.” Moreover the same God who declares these things also produces them in His elect. He enables us to believe in Christ and keep His commandments. Therefore, when we do believe in Christ and keep His commandments, the Holy Spirit enables us to know that we do. And because we know that we believe in Him and keep His commandments, we are then in possession of true assurance. We believe that God’s word is infallible when it speaks to us. It is of paramount importance to insist that this infallible assurance is never ours by some private revelation of the Spirit. To claim assurance on the basis of the witness of the Spirit apart from, or additional to, the Bible is to claim a false assurance. God’s word is sufficient. By Scripture alone “the man of God may be perfect” (II Timothy 3:16, 17). In effecting infallible assurance in the hearts of believers, the Holy Spirit does not impart new revelation. He applies that which is already revealed, namely, the Scriptural truth that believers shall be saved. By bringing the sure word of God (with the infallible promises it contains) and the actually existing graces of the heart (to which these

promises are made) together, the Spirit enables the believer to say with assurance, “I am a child of God, and will be forever.”

“It is true that the Holy Spirit Himself bears witness. But He bears witness with the spirit of man immediately, and not to it immediately. In other words God exerts an immediate influence upon the spirit of man, but not by speaking directly to the man’s spirit apart from the Scripture. Rather the immediate influence is such that man and God speak together – man, by saying, “I am saved because I am a true believer,” and God, by saying, “whosoever believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). When our spirit is brought into conformity with God’s Spirit, what we say will be agreeable with what God the spirit says in Scripture. Thus, the assurance that “we are the children of God” comes, not from a witness of the Holy Spirit alone but from a joint witness effected by the Holy Spirit and from our word being in agreement with His word.” [Taken from the discussion in The Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes, XVIII. Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation, Pages 132-133.]

And so we see that the Holy Spirit not only “seals” and “guarantees” and is the “surety” of our salvation, but also “bears witness with our spirit” that He has done so.

[Do not let Satan deceive you on this point by making it more complex and harder than it is, for he will certainly try to do so. If you are troubled, simply read Williamson again.]

Two things that we need to keep in mind about the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with attaining and maintaining our assurance of salvation are ...

First, that when “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”, the assurance is a Biblical truth grounded in Scripture and not a “feeling”.

It is most certainly true that assurance of one’s salvation is a Scriptural truth that once grasped will produce wonderful feelings and emotions of love, joy, and peace (themselves all “fruits” of the “Spirit of Adoption”). But we also need to remember that feelings themselves are neither the basis or proof of our assurance of our salvation – Biblical truth is. Our “feelings” can and do change very often and very quickly, Biblical truth does not.

Second, again, because it is so important, our assurance of salvation is attained in the first place, and maintained thereafter, by the Holy Spirit operating through our diligent use of the means of grace.

This last point is very important. For though we cannot lose our salvation or have it taken away from us, we can most certainly lose the assurance, joy, and comfort of it by the self-inflicted wound of failing to keep up a diligent use of the means of grace. Thus do we remember King David after his great fall crying out to God in Psalm 51 to please ...

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Psalm 51:12)

An assurance of one’s salvation is a “*grace*”, but, like our sanctification, it is a “*grace*” that must be “*worked out*”, i.e., it must be *pursued*. It is a “*fruit*” that must be carefully cultivated and maintained through a diligent use of the means of grace. We must ever keep in mind the Apostle Paul’s instruction to ...

“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12)

and our Lord’s admonition and warning ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5)

We can do no spiritual good on our own, but must “*abide*” in our Lord Jesus Christ through a diligent use of the means of grace if we are to continue to bear spiritual “fruit” or to accomplish any spiritual good for ourself or others. This applies to the attaining and maintaining of our assurance of salvation just as much as it does to everything else.

Again, as our Lord prayed to His Father to for us ...

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

In our last Biblical proof

... we will add a new dimension to what we discussed about the “*golden chain*” of our salvation back in Item # 10.

Back in Item # 10 we talked of an unbreakable “*golden chain*” of sequential steps in our salvation process which stretches from eternity past out into the future – with each succeeding link being forged and joined to previous links by God Himself.

We based this on Paul’s teaching in Romans 8 ...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”
(Romans 8:28-30)

In Item 10 we concentrated on the certainty of occurrence of every link in the chain as each link was forged and added to the previous one by God Himself ...

In our last Biblical Proof, “Proof # 22” ...

We want to look beyond the certainty of occurrence of each link of the “golden chain” of our salvation to what actually happened to us individually as we passed through them ...

... for, we hold that if Christians would only sit down and think and meditate for a while on just what they are as “*a Christian*” and just what has happened to them as they went through the various links of the “golden chain” to get them to the point of being “*a Christian*”, it will go a long way toward removing any uncertainty at all over their assurance of their salvation.

So ... What exactly do we mean? What exactly are we saying here?

Well, if we took a survey among Christians as to “*What is a Christian?*” – Most Christians would likely respond “*A Christian is a person who has been saved by exercising faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.*”

And they would be right. A Christian is certainly that.

But the particular point at which they exercised faith and actually became “saved”, i.e., the point of their “*justification*”, is only one link in a long chain of salvation events that stretches from eternity past out into the future.

We reviewed some parts of the unbreakable “Golden Chain” of our salvation back in Item # 10 when we looked at the interconnectedness and unbreakable nature of the links of the chain. Now, in Item # 22, for additional assurance of our salvation, we want to look more carefully at what actually happened to us as we passed through the various links of the chain.

But first, let’s briefly review “What exactly is this chain of salvation events that stretches from eternity past out into the future

and where do we find it in the Bible?”

Theologians call this chain of events the “*Ordo Salutis*”. We always like to give the Latin name first because it sounds so much more impressive, but “*Ordo Salutis*” very simply means the “*Order of Salvation*”.

As we saw back in Item 10, there is indeed a definite order to the different steps of our salvation process ...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”
(Romans 8:28-30)

In Romans 8:28-30, we see a series of distinct, separate events that follow a logical sequence, order, and progression. Some of the steps, or links, *occur simultaneously*, but, nonetheless, do, by theological necessity, follow a definite order. Some of the links are *mentioned directly*; some are *mentioned by other names*; one, because of Paul’s extensive preceding treatment of it, is simply *assumed*; and one, not mentioned by name, is there by *necessary implication and the teaching of our Lord*.

[Note: In the Romans 8:28-30 passage, Paul is not trying to give an exhaustive list of the Ordo Salutis, but only to establish the fact that it exists and that its progression is certain and indissoluble.]

Links of the chain that Romans 8:28-30 mentions directly are –

Foreknowledge

Predestination (also referred to in the Bible as Election or Foreordination)

Effectual Calling (mentioned twice)

Justification

Glorification

Links mentioned by other terms or phrases are –

Adoption – *“that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”*

Sanctification – *“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son”*

Perseverance to the end – the phrase *“whom He justified, these He also glorified”* tells us that all that are *“justified”* will persevere to be *“glorified”*. The overall indissolubility of the chain is expressed in the sequence leap from *“whom He foreknew”* ... [directly to] ... *“these He also glorified”* – i.e., from the beginning of the process to the end of the process – the end being assured by the beginning.

The link mentioned by assumption is –

Conversion – Conversion, which consists of receiving and exercising God’s *“gifts”* of *“faith”* and *“repentance”*, had already been extensively treated by Paul in the first eight chapters of Romans. Paul, therefore, simply assumes this prior knowledge on the part of the readers of Romans 8:28-30.

Not mentioned, but there by theological necessity and by the teaching of our Lord is –

Regeneration – also described as being *“born again”*, experiencing a *“new birth”*, having been given a *“new heart”*, becoming a *“new creation”*

Altogether, in sequential order, and with the responsible parties given for each link, ten of the various links in the chain of our personal salvation are ...

Foreknowledge – God

Predestination [Election / Foreordination] – God

Effectual Calling – God

Regeneration – God

Conversion – God and Man. God first gives man the *“gifts”* of *“faith”* and *“repentance”* and man then exercises his *“gifts”* of faith and repentance given to him by God. God does not repent or have faith, man does, but does so only because God has previously given him those *“gifts”*.

Justification – God

Adoption – God

Sanctification – also God and Man. Here Man works very hard to put off sin and put on holiness, but, again, he works only because God has first worked in him “*to will and to do according to His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12-13)

Perseverance to the end – We are “*kept*” by God

Glorification – God

For Assurance of salvation purposes it is very important for us to remember two things

First, that according to Paul, our salvation is comprised of *a linked chain of individual steps that occur sequentially with each link forged by God Himself and joined by Him to the next link with no allowable break in the chain* [our Proof # 10.]

Second, that according to Paul, many massive changes were wrought in us by God as we sequenced through the various links of the chain [our present Proof # 22]

So, in answer to our original question “*What is a Christian?*”, we can now say that a Christian is one who –

Has been intimately *foreknown* by God from eternity past

Has been *elected, foreordained, and predestined* by God unto salvation

Has been *effectually called* by God

Has been *regenerated* and given a *new heart* by God such that he is a *new creation*

Has been given the “*gifts*” of “*faith*” and “*repentance*” by God and has freely and willingly exercised them

Has been *justified* – declared both “*Not Guilty*” and “*Righteous*” by God – having had all of his sins legally imputed to and paid for by Christ on the cross and having had the righteousness of Christ legally imputed to his account such that he is now covered with the righteousness of Christ before God’s bar of justice.

Has been *adopted* into the family of God, whereby he has *been united to Christ* and has *God’s Holy Spirit indwelling* him

Has, supported by God's indwelling Holy Spirit and his use of the means of grace, entered upon *a lifelong process of personal sanctification*, struggling against sin and for holiness – a struggle in which he will *grow* and *persevere* to the end.

Has God's *guarantee* of his future *glorification*, having been *sealed* by the Holy Spirit who also serves as the *deposit*, *surety*, and *guarantor* for the fulfillment of this promise.

All of this is what a Christian is and what a Christian has become.

Given all this, we now ask you the question ...

“In light of all that you have just read, is it reasonable to think that God would or could ...

Un-foreknow you,

Un-elect, un-foreordain and un-predestine you,

Somehow un-call you,

Remove your heart of flesh and give you back your heart of stone, and turn you back into your old-creation self

Take back His gifts of faith and repentance,

Un-impute you twice and restore you to being “guilty” and “unrighteous”,

Un-adopt you and boot you out of His family,

Sever your union with Christ,

Pull the indwelling Holy Spirit completely out of you, ...

De-sanctify you back to where you were

Un-seal you and remove the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of your future glorification (which effectively means He never really was a “seal” or a “guarantee” in the first place)

And even break His salvation covenant with Christ

... *all because you messed up?*”

I don't think so!

Nor would anybody else who comprehends and understands what we have just read about the immense and substantial changes that God has worked in the Christian to bring him to the point of being a Christian in the first place.

And let's not forget the direct word of our Lord Himself in His parable of the Prodigal Son, in which He personally described how God as our Father would receive back with great joy and delight a truly repentant child from even the most degrading of circumstances imaginable.

Having looked at our 22 Proofs, let's now look at the two “thoughts” with which we would leave Part I ...

First, Plan Ahead for a “Final Thought” for the Moment of your Death ...

Having been a great reprobate and blaspheming sinner for decades before my salvation, and, after salvation, having been a “*recovering Pharisee*” for a good number of years, I have often thought of what thought I would like to cling to when the moment of my actual physical death is upon me and the devil throws all of my past sins before my face.

What would be the most comforting and reassuring thought for me when that moment arrives? [*This will likely differ from person to person depending on their individual circumstances.*]

I once read somewhere (I do not remember where I read it or who said it) of someone saying that they would like their last thought just before their death to be that of – *The righteousness of Christ credited to their account as the basis and foundation of their salvation and not what they have or have not done.*

I fully agree with that and hope to make it my last thought as well, for it is an unshakable and indestructible source of confidence and assurance on which to securely and comfortably rest.

Our second “thought” is a short passage from the pen of Charles Spurgeon to read whenever you feel troubled about the assurance of your salvation ...

The Passage is taken from the June 28 Morning message from Charles Spurgeon's Morning and Evening devotional book. His text for the Message is ...

“Looking unto Jesus.” (Hebrews 12:2)

IT is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, “Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus.” All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that “Christ is all in all.” Remember, therefore, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee — it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee — it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument — it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Jesus, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith. We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by “looking unto Jesus.” Keep thine eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh upon thy mind; when thou wakest in the morning look to Him; when thou liest down at night look to Him. Oh! let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail thee. “My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness: I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name.”

Spurgeon, Charles. *Morning and Evening*—Classic KJV Edition.
Hendrickson Publishers. Kindle Edition.

We would close out Part I our paper on *Assurance of Salvation* with that great Reformation phrase ...

Soli Deo Gloria!

“Glory to God Alone”!

Part II: Explores the Doubts, Fears, and Concerns that People Raise against Having an Assurance of their Salvation – Where They Come From, and How to Deal with Them

In Part I of our paper we covered “*22 Biblical Proofs that the Christian not only can, but should, have a Full Assurance of their Salvation.*”

In Part III we will cover “*Maintaining an Assurance of Your Salvation*”

Part II is about dealing with the “*stumbling blocks*” that we will likely encounter on the way to *attaining* a Full Assurance of our Salvation. Part II should be read by all, but is especially for people who accept the teachings of Part I and know that they *should* have a full assurance of their salvation, but still have doubts, fears and concerns about it

We do this because ...

Having a full assurance of your salvation is very important for two reasons

First, you will never really be able to fully “enjoy” God without it. Not knowing for sure that you are a Christian and not having a full assurance of your salvation will greatly affect your attitude and thoughts about God Himself as well as your basic motives for rendering any service or “good works” to Him or His church.

Second, knowing for sure that you are a Christian and that whatever happens to you, you will go to be with God, will be your greatest source of comfort, joy, hope, and help in times of trials, tribulations, pain, suffering and approaching death.

We will address the Common Doubts, Fears, and Concerns about having an Assurance of One’s Salvation in Two Steps

Step 1 will give a GENERAL Overview of the Doubts, Fears and Concerns against having a Full Assurance of One’s Salvation – Where they come from, what can be done about them – and provides 12 GENERAL Principles for dealing with them

Step 2 looks at 14 SPECIFIC Doubts, Fears, and Concerns that people commonly have and how to deal with them.

We started our Paper with the Assertion ...

... that it is the birthright of every Christian to “know” – not think or hope or presume – but “know” – that they “have eternal life” ...

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

So, if this is the case, then ...

“Why do we have Doubts, Fears, and Concerns about it?”

In Step 1, we take a ...

GENERAL Overview of the “stumbling blocks” on the road to having a Full Assurance of your salvation – where they come from and what to do about them.

The “*stumbling blocks*” that people have concerning an assurance of their salvation mostly come from ...

Ignorance and misinterpretation of what the Bible actually has to say on the subject

Our natural human tendency to unbelief and doubt of God’s word and that what it says actually does apply to us individually ...

Unbiblical and unhealthy conceptions and fears concerning the Person and nature of God

Concerns over the enormity of our past sins and our repeated and deep struggles with present sin in our lives and the hold it seems to have on us

Fear that our faith is too weak

The unrelenting attacks of Satan, the ever-present “*accuser of the brethren*” ...

Failure to understand the difference between *surviving sin* in believers and *reigning sin* in mere professors and unbelievers ...

Failure to understand the difference between having a tender conscience that wants to please God in all things and having unbiblical legalistic fears ...

Failure to remember that the Third Member of the Trinity is the “Holy” Spirit ...

Failure to understand the proper function and use of God’s Law today ...

And most important of all ...

Spiritual laziness and failure to “*abide*” in Christ through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace.

Having stated the sources of most of our Doubts, Fears, and Concerns over having an assurance of our salvation, we will now set out 12 General Principles for dealing with them ...

Our 12 General Principles are ...

1. Trust God’s word. Surprisingly, this is something that you have to learn to do (and practice doing).
2. Trust that that what God’s word says *actually, really, really* does, apply to you personally.
3. Overcome your great “*outside*” enemy, Satan, “*the accuser of the brethren*”, by putting on your God-given spiritual armor.
4. Subdue your great “*inside*” enemy, the remaining indwelling remnants of broken sin (i.e., “*the flesh*”), by a diligent and regular use of the means of grace.
5. Realize and remember that there is a great difference between a true believer struggling with surviving *sin* and mere professors and unbelievers struggling (if at all) with *reigning sin*.
6. Remember the proper role of God’s Old Testament Law for the Christian.
7. Remember that there is a vast difference between having a tender conscience that wants to please God in all things and having unbiblical legalistic fears that can shatter your assurance of salvation.
8. Remember that Assurance of Salvation is a “*gift*” of the Holy Spirit, “*the Spirit of Adoption*” – But it is a “*gift*” that you personally have to “*work out*” and “*pursue*” by a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

9. Remember that the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Adoption”, is precisely that, the “Holy” Spirit. Do not expect to “grieve” Him by your actions and retain “*the joy of your salvation*”.
10. Most important of all, always remember that you must “*abide*” in Jesus through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace if you are to persevere in your Christian walk, gain and maintain a full assurance of your salvation, and avoid being lulled into a sense of complacency and indifference toward the things of God.
11. Beware of having a false assurance of your salvation. “*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*” (2 Corinthians 13:5)
12. Though every Christian should “*know*” and have a full assurance of their salvation, it is not necessary for one’s salvation to have a full assurance of it. In other words, one can be a very devout Christian, but still struggle with having a full assurance of it (though they possess it nonetheless).

Let’s briefly look at each of our 12 General Principles

General Principles 1 and 2 can be handled together:

General Principle 1: Trust God’s word. Surprisingly, this is something that you have to learn to do (and practice doing).

General Principle 2: Trust that what God’s word says *actually, really, really* does, apply to you personally.

One of the worst things that a Christian can do is to doubt the word of God or feel that it somehow doesn’t apply to them. Doubting any part of God’s word, i.e., not believing it to be immutable truth or believing that it somehow does not apply to you, is a personal affront to the very being and character of God Himself and is a far greater sin than anything you might have done that keeps you from having a full assurance of your salvation.

You need to forsake such thoughts and repent of them immediately.

When our Lord Jesus says ...

“... *the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*” (John 6:37)

... and when the Apostle Paul writes ...

“Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Romans 10:12)

... they mean for us to believe what they say and not slap them in the face by doubting it, by thinking that it somehow does not apply to us, or that our sin is somehow different from all others.

Never, ever, doubt God’s word or that what it says applies to you, for it is a great affront to the very being and character of God Himself

General Principles 3 and 4 can also be handled together:

General Principle 3: Overcome your great “*outside*” enemy, Satan, “*the accuser of the brethren*”, by putting on your God-given spiritual armor.

General Principle 4: Subdue your great “*inside*” enemy, the remaining indwelling remnants of broken sin (i.e., “*the flesh*”), by a diligent and regular use of the means of grace.

You have two great, powerful, and relentless enemies to your having and maintaining an assurance of your salvation. One, Satan, i.e., the devil, operates from the “*outside*” and the other, the “*flesh*”, operates from the “*inside*”.

Satan is a relentless “*accuser of the brethren*” ...

*“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of the brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.’”
(Revelation 12:10)*

Just as the devil accuses you before God “*day and night*”, he will also relentlessly accuse you to yourself “*day and night*”.

Peter tells us that he is a vicious and unmerciful “*adversary*” ...

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (I Peter 5:8)

He can and will “*sift you like wheat*” unless Jesus protects you.

Our Lord warned Peter about the devil on the night of His betrayal ...

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’” (Luke 22:31-32)

Too many of us are like Peter, who responded to His Lord’s warning with a proud boast ...

“Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” (Luke 22:33)

“Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” (Matthew 26:11)

Whereupon Jesus warned him again ...

“I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.” (Luke 22:24)

And we all know what happened to Peter, just as it has so many times happened to us.

God has provided us with great weapons to help protect us in our warfare with sin – the “armor” of God and the “means of grace”. They are both really the same weapons, but the “armor” is used defensively to protect us against the attacks of Satan and the “means of grace” are used offensively to help us in our fight against sin and for holiness.

Concerning the “armor of God”

We are warned that the battle with the “devil” will be relentless and intense ...

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:10-13)

Paul then describes the “armor of God” ...

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:14-18)

Concerning the “means of grace”

As we stated above, your second great enemy, “*the flesh*”, attacks from within.

The “*flesh*” is comprised of the broken remnants of your old natural, unregenerate, sinful nature, that still remain within you (“*the flesh*” is also known as “*the old man*”).

The flesh that remains within is at war with God’s Holy Spirit which also indwells us

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

You must offensively battle “*the flesh*” through the “means of grace”. The “*means of grace*”, the means by which God imparts his grace to us, include, but are not limited to – prayer, Bible reading and meditation, worship (individual, family, and corporate), and partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

[Note: We also have a third great enemy, “the world”. The “world” is comprised of the powers and forces that stand in opposition to God and the enforcement of His will, but the “world” itself is not as directly and personally involved in the assurance of your salvation.]

Both “the devil” and “the flesh” will do everything they can to make you doubt that you are a Christian and to keep you from believing that you can have a full assurance of your salvation and eternal life. You must oppose them both with the means God has provided.

Every Christian has been given a very serious warning from his Lord on the necessity of “abiding” in Him ...

Our Lord likened our relationship with Him to that of a vine and its branches ...

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

I hope the words “*without Me, you can do nothing*” get through to you. For “nothing” is the sum total of what you can accomplish on your own in the spiritual warfare with your great enemies. You absolutely, unequivocally, and unconditionally must “abide” in Jesus if you are to put off sin and put on holiness. You can do “nothing” otherwise.

We “*abide*” in Jesus through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace. And, yes, as the Lord’s Prayer teaches us, we should “abide” in our Lord on a daily basis.

If you are neglecting to put on your spiritual armor, if you are not seeking to “*abide*” in Jesus through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace, you are ignoring our Lord’s warning “*without Me, you can do nothing*” and are following in Peter’s proud and boastful footsteps. You are, at best, heading for a decline in your spiritual life or, at worst, a great fall or “*sifting*” by Satan.

You would do well to remember the admonition of the Apostle Paul

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (I Corinthians 10:12)

General Principle 5 deals with the greatest problem that people have with attaining an assurance of their salvation – Present sin in their lives and the regularity and intensity of their battle with it.

We will therefore spend a great deal of time on General Principle # 5, which is ...

A Christian must realize that there is a great difference between a true believer struggling with *surviving sin* and mere professors and unbelievers struggling (if at all) against *reigning sin*.

One of the main reasons that Christians come to doubt and worry over the assurance of their salvation is the continued presence of sin in their lives and the intensity of their battle with it. This is what we want to address in General Principle # 5.

It is a true, but deplorable, fact that the Christian is still a sinner.

God Himself has shattered the “*dominion*” of sin over the Christian. But the broken remnants of that shattered sin (variously termed “*the flesh*” and “*the old man*”) still linger within the Christian and engage in a constant warfare with the Spirit of God that also indwells the Christian.

This warfare is the Christian’s struggle with *surviving* sin, the internal struggle with “*the flesh*”. The Apostle Paul speaks of it in Galatians ...

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:16-17)

You can read of the Apostle Paul’s personal struggle with *surviving* indwelling sin, and the intensity of it, in Romans 7:13-25.

Sadly, the Christian can fall into and remain in a state of great sin for a long time – We think of the cases of King David and the near total apostasy of King Solomon. But, most often, the period of sin is short-lived, and remorse and repentance set in very quickly, as in the case of Peter after his denial of knowing Jesus on the night of His capture.

One of the reasons that the Christian’s struggle with the shattered remnants of broken sin is so intense is that before becoming a Christian, the Christian was safely in the enemy’s camp and doing his will. But now, by God’s grace, he has moved into God’s camp. And the devil is very angry with him for his defection and will turn the full force of his fury upon him, a fury limited only by the grace and restraining hand of God.

The devil cannot take a Christian’s salvation from them. But, failing that, his main goal for the Christian is to make them think he can, so as to rob them of the joy of their salvation, make them a poor witness to others, and, as much as possible, drag them into a whirlpool of depression and despair as to whether they really are a Christian or not.

**Our main purpose in *General Principle # 5* is to show that
the Christian should not despair of their salvation
because of struggles with “*surviving*” sin.**

It is true, and right, that the Christian should be very distressed with any sin that remains in their lives. They should hate it, repent of it, forsake it, and take further steps to subdue it.

But they should never be led into (or cast themselves into) doubt and despair over being a Christian because of it.

The Christian may well cry out with the Apostle Paul ...

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24)

But the Christian should also take solace with the Apostle Paul and say ...

“I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25)

[If you would know the full extent of the Apostle Paul’s struggle with surviving sin, read Romans 7: 18-25].

Fully realizing the loss of the “joy” of their salvation (but not the loss of salvation itself) because of their sin, the Christian may rightly cry out with King David, who upon his repentance of his great sin, cried out ...

*“Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
And uphold me by your generous Spirit.” (Psalm 51:12)*

Once again, a Christian should have a genuine contrition and repentance over any surviving sin in their lives, but there should be no despair of salvation itself because of it.

As stated earlier, there is a vast difference between a Christian struggling with surviving sin and mere professors and unbelievers struggling (if at all) against reigning sin – a difference as to motive, nature, effect, consequence and resulting behavior.

**But though there is a “vast difference”, we still must not, in the least,
relax our vigil and fight against sin and for holiness ...**

**We need to always remember that a sin committed by a Christian is much
worse than the same sin committed by an unbeliever.**

How so?

The Christian has numerous advantages and helps in his fight against sin that the unbeliever does not have.

For starters, the Christian is a “*new creation*” with a “*new heart*”. He has been adopted into God’s family, is in spiritual union with Jesus Christ and is a part of His “*bride*”, the church, and is actually indwelt by God the Holy Spirit.

The Christian has been promised that ...

“... sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14)

The Christian never faces an *extraordinary* temptation, is *never tempted beyond* what he is able to endure, and is *always provided* with a means of escape from any temptation that he faces ...

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Corinthians 10:13).

The Christian is likewise promised “*self-control*”, if he will but take the time to use the means of grace to develop it ...

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22)

In short, when the Christian sins, the Christian sins not only against God Himself, but also against a mountain of grace, mercy, and love that God has shown to him throughout his Christian life and even before.

But, again, though in many ways the sin of the Christian is worse than the sin of the unbeliever, the Christian should never be led into doubt and despair of being a Christian because of the “*surviving*” sin that continues to dwell within them.

So, in answer to, “What to do?”

You should put on your spiritual armor and diligently and regularly use the means of grace to fight against remaining indwelling sin with all your might!

You should not despair over your final victory and doubt your salvation because of it!

For assurance purposes we need to be aware of the great differences between the believer's struggle with *surviving sin* and the unbeliever's struggle (if any) with *reigning sin*.

We would especially point out ...

First, that there is a vast difference in their motives for sinning ...

It is true that the Christian sins by deliberate and willful choice, but the Christian sins *against* his new regenerate nature, whose main motivation is to "*glorify God*" in all things.

The unregenerate sins *because it is his nature* to do so.

The unbeliever's struggle against sin may well be for "good" reasons – self-improvement, concern for his fellow man, general civic good – but the unbeliever can never do a truly *good* work for God, for ...

"... without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6)

Again, no one denies that the unbeliever may be a very good and moral person from an earthly viewpoint, even striving to live according to a Biblically-based moral code of some sort, as do the Jews and Mormons. They may do many wonderful things, make many great discoveries, come up with many wonderful inventions, find great cures for diseases, and do much civic good. But they do so only by God's blessing and by His common grace that is distributed to all men. They do not do their earthly "good" through or by their own innate goodness, of which they have none.

Confirm the Apostle Paul ...

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells." (Romans 7:18)

Confirm our Lord Jesus Christ ...

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63)

Second, the reactions of the Christian and the unbeliever to their sins are quite different

Let's take the case of visiting a pornographic website.

After doing so, the true Christian will be conscience stricken, ashamed of himself, and have great remorse for his sin, especially for having dragged the indwelling Holy Spirit into the website with him. He will keenly feel his betrayal against his Savior who has done so much for him. He will go to God in true repentance and ask Him for help to never do it again. He will cry out with King David, “*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.*” (Psalm 51:12)

[Note: If the Christian does not really feel any remorse over their sin or have any plans for stopping it, he should reread our Lord’s warning in Matthew 7:21-23 and skip to General Principle 11.]

The unbeliever, on the other hand, likely does not consider visiting a pornographic website to be a sin at all, will likely feel no remorse in going there, and will look forward to doing it again.

The unbeliever does at times feel great sorrow for his sin – We think of the Biblical cases of Esau after losing his birthright, Saul after the kingdom was torn from him, and Judas after betraying his Lord – but these were cases of mere sorrow and remorse for their sins and the results of them, and not a true repentance and change of life.

The unbeliever can also engage in great struggles with sin – as in fighting alcoholism or drug addiction – but, without the change of heart and power of the Holy Spirit, they are not doing it, as commanded, for the glory of God ...

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17)

A third difference between the Christian’s struggle with surviving sin, and the unbeliever’s struggle with reigning sin, if any, is that God will not allow the Christian to continue in his sin

After many warnings and promptings by the Holy Spirit, God will, in the fashion and manner of a loving Father, step in and administer discipline to his errant child. God loves His children dearly and wants them to be holy and bear the family image. He will not leave them to self-imposed ruin. No, rather, the Christian is ...

“... kept by the power of God through faith for salvation” (I Peter 1:5).

You can read all about God’s loving Fatherly discipline in Hebrews 12:3-11. [Note: “Scourging” and “chastening” are not pleasant ordeals.]

The unbeliever, on the other hand, is left alone in his sin and continues to build up wrath against himself for the day of judgment.

Fourth, the Christian and the unregenerate person have different “fathers” and different worldviews

Paul writes to Timothy of the totally lost spiritual nature of the unregenerate person and how to approach him with the gospel ...

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (II Timothy 2:24-26)

Spiritually, natural unregenerate men do not “*know the truth*”, are out of “*their senses*”, and are in the “*snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*”

Paul likewise tells the Corinthians that “natural man” (i.e., unregenerate man) does not, will not, and cannot “*receive*” the things of God and will only consider them to be “*foolishness*”

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Corinthians 2:14)

Our Lord Himself makes the distinction in “fathers” when He instructs Christians to address God in prayer as “*Our Father*”, but says to those who oppose him ...

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.” (John 8:44)

The fifth and greatest difference between the Christian and the unbeliever is the great and unshakable love of the Father for His children, a love from which nothing can separate them

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written

*‘For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’*

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

However weak, feeble, foolish, doubting and prone to error the child of God may act or be, no matter how deeply into sin he may have fallen, His Father loves him still, with a love “*which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*”. God’s adopted child is in union with His Son, indwelt by His Spirit, and has the righteousness of Christ Himself as his covering – and is therefore as safe and secure in the love of God as Christ Himself.

God has an especially tender love for even the weakest of His children, for it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ

*“A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench.” (Matthew 12:20, quoting Isaiah 42:3)*

Nothing is more fragile, breakable, and in need of tender loving care than a “bruised reed” or “smoking flax”.

In sum ...

The Christian, though he will continue to struggle with sin until the day he dies and is made perfect and holy in heaven, should never despair of his salvation because he has the sure hope and pledge of victory exhibited through the Father’s eternal, unchanging, and tender love for him. His adoption as a “*son*” by God the Father, the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited to his account, His spiritual union with Christ Himself, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are a four-fold surety and guarantee of it.

The unbeliever, not having the imputed righteousness of Christ as his covering, is still under the yoke and bondage of the “covenant of works”, a covenant which demands total perfection and holiness of word, thought, deed, and action, a yoke and bondage from which, outside of Christ, there is no hope.

General Principle 6: Remember the proper role of God’s Old Testament Law for the Christian.

In the Old Testament, God’s Law had three distinct parts: The Ceremonial, the Civic or Judicial, and the Moral (summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments).

Both the *Ceremonial* and *Civic/Judicial* parts have had their fulfillment in Jesus Christ and are no longer binding beyond the “*general equity*” teachings of the Judicial part. But, the ‘*Moral*’ law, written by the very finger of God Himself, is still as fully binding as it ever was.

That the Ceremonial and Civic/Judicial parts of the Law have had their fulfillment in Jesus Christ does not mean that they have no use or purpose for us today, for the Bible tells us that, being a part of God’s Word, they are still “*profitable*” for us to read and study ...

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

“Things for which they are ‘profitable’ would include ...

They are a light to expose our sin and point us to the Savior (Rom. 3:20; 7:7, 8, 13; Gal. 2:19; 3:21, 24).

They are a curb to restrain wickedness in this fallen world (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15)

They are a rule to guide the believer in knowing how to live (Ps. 119:9-16; Jn. 14:15; Rom. 3:31). “

(Taken from “The Three Uses of the Law” by Dr. Marcus J. Serven)

And so, the Christian can (and should) look at all of God’s law to “*profitably*” see if there are areas of needed repentance and improvement in his life. But a Christian should never look at the law and the works of the law as a measure of his salvation, his assurance of it, or of his standing before God.

Again, the foundation of a Christian’s salvation and his assurance of it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to his account – not how well he himself upholds God’s perfect law. The chief function of the law is now, and in reality always has been, to show us our failure to keep it and to drive us to Christ for salvation.

As to the requirements of the law, our Lord Jesus “*has “taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14).

Always remember that as a Christian, your standing before God is “*in Christ*” and not in yourself or in the Law.

Cling to that, Christian, cling to Christ, and do not resubmit yourself to the bondage of the law. Do not allow Satan, “*the accuser of the brethren*”, to destroy the joy of your salvation and drive you to despair through showing you “day and night” your failure to perfectly keep the law of God. Rather, think on and “*abide*” in Christ through the means of grace and you will be fine.

General Principle 7: Remember that there is a vast difference between having a tender conscience that wants to please God in all things and having unbiblical legalistic fears that can shatter your assurance of salvation.

It is a good thing to have a tender conscience, i.e., to have a conscience that seeks to recognize sin for what it is and where it is, a conscience that strives to obey God in all things out of love and thankfulness. But it is not a good thing to let a tender conscience override the clear word and teaching of God on the matter of having an assurance of your salvation.

A tender conscience is a good thing when kept in its proper place, but there is always a risk for people with very tender consciences to turn their eyes INWARD on themselves and their actions and get them OFF OF Jesus and His actions.

All too often, for a person with a tender conscience, man-made rules can come to take the place of God’s teaching on a given matter and their assurance of their salvation can come to rest and be based on an unbiblical legalistic fear that is still, to a degree, rooted in a “*faith + works*” salvation mentality. At the least, people with very tender consciences run the risk of forsaking Christian liberty and becoming “*weak brothers*” in various situations.

Again, a tender conscience is a good thing if it is properly instructed, informed, and bridled by God’s word.

General Principle 8: Remember that Assurance of Salvation is a “*gift*” of the Holy Spirit, “*the Spirit of Adoption*” – But it is a “*gift*” that you personally have to “*work out*” and “*pursue*” by a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

Paul in Philippians instructs Christians pursuing sanctification to ...

“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13)

Paul is not instructing us to work out salvation itself, but is instructing us to take very seriously (“with fear and trembling”) the command to “*work out*” the *implications* of our salvation, including an assurance of it, through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

Again, full assurance of your salvation is a gift from God that you must diligently “pursue” and “work out”. If you do *pursue* it, the Holy Spirit will see that you attain to it at the perfect time for you to attain to it. Simply trust God in the matter. As Spurgeon has said,

“Our admission into full privileges may be gradual, but it is sure.”

Again, it is “work”. The question for you is ...

“Do you want it enough to ‘work’ at it?”

General Principle 9: Remember that the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of Adoption”, is the “Holy” Spirit. Do not expect to “*grieve*” Him by your actions and retain “*the joy of your salvation*”.

We have seen that in the Bible the Holy Spirit is referred to as the “*Spirit of Adoption*.” As such, He is the giver of the assurance of our salvation. As He is the Holy Spirit, there are two things you should never expect of Him concerning an assurance of your salvation ...

First, do not expect the Holy Spirit, the “*Spirit of Adoption*”, to bless you with a full assurance of your salvation if you don’t care enough to regularly come to Him in prayer and reading and meditating on your Bible.

Remember that Paul has told us to ...

“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his own good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13)

If you really don’t care enough to regularly come to God in prayer and in reading and meditating on your Bible (the chief means by which He imparts His grace to you), then you should not expect to experience a full assurance of your salvation.

Second, especially do not expect the Holy Spirit, the “*Spirit of Adoption*”, to bless you with a full assurance of your salvation if you are causing Him “*grief*” (*Ephesians 4:30*) by the unrepentant *practice* of any sin in any your life. He is, after all, the “*Holy*” Spirit.

General Principle 10: Most important of all, always remember that you must “*abide*” in Jesus through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace if you are to persevere in your Christian walk, gain and maintain a full assurance of your salvation, and avoid being lulled into a sense of complacency and indifference toward the things of God.

The consequences of a prolonged neglect of the means of grace can be devastating to our assurance of our salvation as well as our spiritual life in general. For not only will you gain “*nothing*” by a prolonged neglect of the means of grace, you will also *lose much* along the way. Dangers from a prolonged neglect of the means of grace, other than a developing complacency and indifference to the things of God, would include ...

Having a deteriorating and lower view of God.

Walking on a downward moral slope and experiencing spiritual decline

Developing a cold heart and weakening faith

Having a loss of assurance, a loss of the joy of your salvation, and, should a crisis develop, possible despondency and despair

Lastly and very importantly, if you are a child of God and neglect the means of grace for a prolonged period of time, you are inviting God’s loving Fatherly discipline for, as a good Father, God will not leave you on a road to self-imposed spiritual destruction.

Again, not regularly and diligently pursuing the means of grace can lead you to complacency and indifference in your Christian-walk and render you susceptible to all of the other losses and dangers mentioned above.

Hear again the word of our Lord on the necessity of “*abiding*” in Him through the means of grace ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in Him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Our Lord Himself clearly tells you that the sum total of spiritual “good” that you can accomplish on your own is “*nothing*”! Zero, zip, nada!

“*Abiding*” in Jesus through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace is the only way to attain and maintain a TRUE assurance of your salvation and accomplish any spiritual good.

General Principle 11: Beware having a *false assurance* of your salvation.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” (II Corinthians 13:5)

We are repeatedly warned in the Bible of the danger of having a *false* assurance of our salvation ...

“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

*‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.’”*

(Jesus Christ, Matthew 15:7-9)

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:21-23)

“But why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”

(Jesus Christ, Luke 6:46)

“But, be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (James 1:22)

Sincerity is not enough. Witness Paul's lamentation over his fellow Jews ...

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Romans 10:1-4)

... we must also have correct "knowledge".

Our capacity for self-deception in this area is great ...

*"The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)*

This is especially true in our present evangelical culture of "easy believism" and "cheap grace", where many *professing* Christians say things like ...

"I don't regularly and diligently use the means of grace and I don't have, or feel, any sense of a 'struggle' with sin! I certainly don't feel like I am in a war with it and I definitely have a full assurance of my salvation!"

For a *professing* Christian, these statements can be true for one of two reasons ...

If they truly are a Christian, the devil has successfully used his strongest and most effective weapon on them – a developing complacency and indifference to the things of God – such that they no longer even recognizing their own sinfulness and need. They are heading for serious disciplinary action on God's part.

The other reason is that they have had a false assurance of their salvation all along ... (See *General Principle 11* below).

Avoiding a false assurance of their salvation is precisely why the Apostles Peter and Paul command us to *diligently "test" and "examine" ourselves "as to whether you are in the faith" and "to make your call and election sure"*

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure"
(2 Peter 1:10)

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves."

If you have any doubts, concerns, or fears about having a full assurance of your salvation, we refer you to our next Paper, Paper # 8, “*How Can I know for Sure that I am a Christian?*”, where we go into great depth in setting up and explaining how, as Peter and Paul put it, you can ...

“Examine yourselves ... Test yourselves ... as to whether you are in the faith [and] make your election sure.”

General Principle 12: Though every Christian should “*know*” and have a full assurance of their salvation, it is not necessary for one’s salvation to have a full assurance of it. In other words, one can be a very devout Christian, but still struggle with having a full assurance of it (though they possess it nonetheless).

We would close out our “GENERAL” Overview with the words of the “Prince of Preachers”, Charles Spurgeon, on the importance of “*abiding*” in Christ by the means of grace

“Gracious souls are never perfectly at ease except they are in a state of nearness to Christ; for when they are away from Him they lose their peace. The nearer to Him, the nearer to the perfect calm of heaven; the nearer to Him, the fuller the heart is, not only of peace, but of life, and vigor, and joy, for these all depend on constant intercourse with Jesus. What the sun is to the day, what the moon is to the night, what the dew is to the flower, such is Jesus Christ to us. What bread is to the hungry, clothing to the naked, the shadow of a great rock to the traveler in a weary land, such is Jesus Christ to us; and, therefore, if we are not constantly one with Him, little marvel if our spirit cries in the words of the Song [of Solomon], ‘I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love [i.e., that I am lovesick].’” (Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, August 22, Morning, Song of Solomon 5:8)

Let’s now move from an Overview of the GENERAL Stumbling Blocks that people raise to having an Assurance of their Salvation to ...

Addressing Some of the SPECIFIC Doubts, Fears, and Concerns that arise over having a Full Assurance of One’s Salvation

Specific Objection # 1: My sins are so great. You don't know what I have done! And you would not like me if you did!

You are right – I don't know what you have done.

But I do know what Manasseh had done. So ... Let's compare your sin with Manasseh's.

Manasseh, as king of Judah ...

“rebuilt the high places ... raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images ... worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served them ... built altars in the house of the LORD ... built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD ... caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom ... practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists ... did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger ... set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God ... [and] seduced Judah and Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Chronicles 33)

I seriously doubt that your sins are anywhere near as bad as Manasseh's. Yet God, after Manasseh's sincere repentance, forgave him, restored him, and used him. Surely, if God could forgive, restore, and use a man such as Manasseh after his repentance, He can and most certainly will forgive, restore, and use you. You have His word on it.

It's just as the LORD told the prophet Isaiah ...

*“Come now, and let us reason together,
Says the LORD,
Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)*

No matter how great your sins, God's mercy and the righteousness of Jesus Christ which covers you are greater still.

Look! When our Lord Jesus said ...

“... the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37)

... He did sincerely mean it and He did mean it to apply directly to you!

So, let's hear no more of your listening to the accusations and whisperings of Satan, and believing them over the clear teaching of the word of God.

You also need to realize that it is natural that as you draw nearer to God, you will come to more fully see the depth, heinousness, and vileness of your past sins and the strength of the sin that remains within your flesh. This is actually a GOOD sign of progress in your sanctification and should make you even more appreciative and thankful for the grace, mercy, and love that God has shown to you.

But be forewarned that Satan will try to beat you with your heightened awareness of your sin and try to convince you that you cannot be saved. You can prevent his success only by "*abiding*" in Christ through a regular and daily use of the means of grace.

Also, lastly, no matter how old you are, you will always need to continue working on, confessing, and mortifying any sin you might have remaining within.

Specific Objection # 2: I know myself to be a wretched person – weak, changeable, defective in many ways.

Most of us will readily admit to being ... weak ... changeable ... and defective in many ways. But always take heart and remember that when God looks upon you, He does not see the wretchedness of your sins and failures, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to your account.

As a Christian you are a new creation and need to advance in your sanctification. In fact, by *abiding in Christ* through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace, you can totally "*transform*" your mind. As Paul says ...

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
(Romans 12:2)

Do this and you too will be able to say with Paul ...

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

And never forget the words of our Lord ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

We all start our Christian lives as “wretched persons, weak, changeable and defective in many ways.” But we are now a “new creation” with a new regenerate “heart”. We have been adopted by God the Father, are in spiritual union with God the Son, and have God’s Holy Spirit indwelling us. Though we will always retain some of the vestiges of our former “old man”, we can improve upon them and at the same time “transform our minds” (Romans 12:2) through “abiding” in Christ by a diligent and regular use of the means of grace.

For more on this “transformation” and how it works, we would refer you to the last Paper in our series, Paper # 9, titled ...

*From “Milk” to “Solid Food” – The Joyous and Glorious Road to “Full Age”
Christian Maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14)*

Specific Objection # 3: But my faith is so weak.

It is the object of your faith, not the strength of your faith, or even faith itself, that saves you.

Faith, and the measure of it, is a gift of God’s grace. So is an assurance of your salvation. But you have to pursue them both. If you would have a stronger faith and attain to a full assurance of your salvation, then pursue them through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace

Specific Objection # 4: There seems to be no good within me and I seem to accomplish very little of lasting value for God and His church.

It is not what you are now that is important, but what you can be.

We don’t clean our act up and then come to God. No! We come to God and then He helps us to clean our act up.

Whether you are a new Christian or an old one, it is good that you have come to recognize that there is no “good” within you. The Apostle Paul felt the same way ...

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)

... and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told us that ...

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

The good news is that the Holy Spirit of God is also now within you, and will, starting at any point or time in your Christian life, through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace on your part, enable you to advance in your sanctification and accomplish many “good” works for God and His church.

Again, because it is so important, our Lord has specifically told you that you are a branch on a vine – the vine being the Lord Jesus Christ Himself – and that unless you “*abide*” in Him through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace, “*you can do nothing.*” (John 15:5), You can accomplish no spiritual good “*on your own*”.

On the other hand, Our Lord also tells us,

“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (John 15:5).

By “*abiding*” in Christ through the means of grace, you can come to be able to truly say with the Apostle Paul ...

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

Specific Objection # 5: There are so many things going wrong in my life that I fear that God may be angry with me and is punishing me.

Always remember that whatever is going wrong in your life, including pain, suffering, and the onset of approaching death, you are not being punished by God. God is a just God and would never punish you for any sin that has already been punished on Jesus Christ on the cross.

Is God ...

Administering loving Fatherly discipline to you? *Maybe* ...

Training you and strengthening your faith? *Maybe* ...

Punishing you? *Never!*

When God looks upon you, He sees the righteousness of His own dear Son imputed to your account, not your sin.

So, when anything and everything goes wrong, as it often will, you should ...

“Be still and know that I am God.”

God is sovereign over all the things going on in your life and will work “good” out of all of them for you. Confirm ...

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

So, simply trust Him, for He is worthy of your trust. God knows what is going on in your life and what He is doing in your life. It may be that so many things are going wrong in your life because God wants to draw you into a closer and deeper relationship with Himself because He loves you.

You can most certainly continue to pray and expectantly hope and watch for deliverance from any difficulty or affliction, but always pray in the manner of our Lord Jesus Christ who prayed on the night of His arrest ...

“Father, if it is your will, take this cup away from me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

Our next three “Specific Objections”, Objections 6, 7, and 8, all relate to a common problem, but differ in the degree of intensity of the problem and how it should be addressed.

Specific Objection # 6: I still have times of doubt and unbelief and periods of great spiritual weakness.

Always remember that it is not your hold on Christ, but His hold on you, that matters.

Tell God of your periods of doubt, unbelief and weakness and cry out to Him along with the father of the severely afflicted child ...

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)

Specific Objection # 7: I have times when my belief remains intact and I don’t doubt that God’s word is true, but God nevertheless seems so far away, as if I

had lost Him. I have no real peace of mind or joy in my salvation, no enjoyment in the means of grace, and no zeal whatsoever for the things of God. I begin to wonder if I really am a Christian, after all.

There are several possible reasons for having these types of feelings. Three of them are, in order of likelihood ...

First, you have been neglecting the means of grace and a spiritual malaise and decline has set in because of it.

Second, according to Charles Spurgeon ...

“... it may be the result of idolatry. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; He must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of His presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in self-confidence and self-righteousness. Pride is busy in the heart, and self is exalted instead of lying low at the foot of the cross.” (Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, Morning, August 11.]

Third and last, sometimes God will withdraw a measure of His abiding presence from us to simply strengthen our faith by teaching us anew our total and utter dependence of Him for everything.

Whichever or whatever the cause may be, this is a good time to get out and review your “*Summary Sheet*” (discussed at the end of Part II).

Specific Objection # 8: I am at times suddenly seized by very intense paralyzing doubts and fears about my salvation. I look at my poor worship, poor prayers, and poor praise of God, and wonder if I am really a Christian at all and if God’s promises of assurance are really for me.

These very intense and paralyzing doubts and fears about our salvation are referred to in the Bible as the “*fiery darts of the wicked one*” (*Ephesians 6:16*).

You will remember that “*the wicked one*”, i.e., the devil, is called the “*accuser*” of the brethren and that he “*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” He is a “*liar*” and “*there is no truth in him*”. He will look for opportune moments to seriously attack you with his “*fiery darts*”.

Satan hates God and he hates you. Most of all he hates that you have become a Christian. Though he can't take your salvation from you, he will mount an all-out frontal assault on you to rob you of the joy of your salvation, destroy your witness before others, and, as much as he can, sink you into a whirlpool of depression and despair.

I have myself been through these sudden attacks a number of times [and Satan will keep them up until he is finally “*cast down*” by our Lord, Revelation 12:10]. We will always be attacked in this manner, *especially* as death approaches. We cannot control Satan's attacks, but we know One who can, and we can control our response to them.

So, “HOW?” do we effectively respond to and repel these sudden “fiery darts”?

We need to do three things.

First, we need to prepare ourselves beforehand by a diligent and regular use of the means of grace so that when they come, we can *convincingly* remind ourselves ...

“I have been through this before. I know what is happening and where it comes from. And I know what to do about it.”

Second, if the attack persists, we need to pull out and review our prepared “*Summary Sheet*” of important “*bullet point*” reminders to use in times like this. We present a prototype *Summary Sheet* at the end of Part II.

Third, harking back to General Principle # 1, you simply have to *train yourself to trust God*. Yes, that's right, you do have to “train yourself” to “trust” Him, to trust Him over the lies of Satan and to especially “trust” Him over your own feelings. “*Fiery darts*” can be very unsettling, and you have to resolutely know and believe that you really can trust God and what He says, if you are to maintain your composure and “*quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*” (*Ephesians 6:16*)

This third point, that of training yourself to trust God, is very important!

In addition to knowing that you can “*trust*” God for repelling the “*fiery darts*” of the wicked one and for maintaining an assurance of your salvation, it is also important to know that you can safely trust God because “*trusting*” God is a major part of the answer to many of the doubts, fears, and concerns listed throughout this Paper.

People sometimes wonder ...

“Can I safely trust God? He sometimes seems very distant and to really not care about me at all. I sometimes feel as if I have lost Him altogether.

Besides, there are some passages in the Bible that confuse and frighten me – Passages such as Matthew 7:21-23, Hebrews 6:4-6, and the passages on the unpardonable sin for which no forgiveness will be given now or later. I fear I might have committed it.”

Let’s deal first with the issue of difficult passages of Scripture

Some parts and teachings of Scripture are more complex and difficult to understand than others and it is important for us to remember that the first rule of Biblical hermeneutics (the science of interpreting Scripture) is *“Let Scripture interpret Scripture.”* This simply means that where Scripture speaks very clearly on a subject, that portion of Scripture should be used to interpret any other difficult passage on the same subject.

For example, as Jesus clearly and unambiguously said ...

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (John 6:37)

.. and as Paul clearly and unambiguously wrote ...

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:13)

These two verses should be used to clarify any seeming difficulty that you might find in any other passage of Scripture concerning your salvation. Very clearly, if you have sincerely “come” to Jesus and have “called on the name of the LORD”, you will NOT BE “cast out” and you WILL “be saved”. In Scripture, both Jesus and Paul clearly tell you so!

Let’s next deal with the issue of whether we can fully “trust” God or not

We can determine this by looking at what the Bible tells us about God, what He is like, and use that to determine whether we really can fully “trust Him” or not.

So, exactly what do we know from the Bible about God that helps us to fully and resolutely “trust” Him?

Well, for starters, Jesus claimed that He is “the truth” itself ...

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’” (John 14:6)

As such, we know that He will never lie to us.

Another thing we know from the Bible is that God is a “*consuming fire*” of holiness (*Hebrews 12:29*). This means that He is absolutely pure and holy, and that there is not, never has been, and never will be, the least shred of deceit, trickery, or hidden or confusing meanings to be found in Him or in His word. He says only what He means, and says it clearly. He will never trick you, mislead you, betray you, deceive you, fool you, confuse you, or misinform you. Because He is a “*consuming fire*” of holiness, you can trust Him and what He says.

We also know from Scripture that “*God is love*” ...

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:8)

... and that He will treat His children well and will never get angry and boot them out of the family. First, our Lord tells us ...

“Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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 good things to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9-11)

... and then tells us in His parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24) that God is merciful and ever ready and willing to forgive anyone who sincerely repents from even the deepest, darkest, and most degrading of circumstances.

A sixth thing about God that we know from Scripture is that Jesus is now and ever will be very tender with His sheep, so tender, in fact, that it is said of Him ...

“a bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench” (Matthew 12:20 – quoting Isaiah 42:3).

We also know from Jesus’s own Self-testimony that He is “*gentle and lowly of heart*” and wants to give you “*rest for your soul*”, for He himself bids you to ...

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

So, to the Question, “Can we really and fully trust God?”, we have six proofs that answer “Yes! You really can ‘trust’ Him and His word!”

The Christian should strive to never have Jesus have to ask him ...

“... if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8:46)

You know He tells the truth and that He is “*the truth*” incarnate. So, *why* would you ever allow yourself to be swayed and not believe Him, especially anything concerning your salvation for which He died?

As for you “losing your grip on Jesus”

It is not “your” grip on Him that matters, but His “grip” on you.

If you feel that you have “lost your grip on Jesus”, it is likely because you have neglected the means of grace. Hear Charles Spurgeon on the matter ...

“Tell me where you lost the company of Christ, and I will tell you the most likely place to find Him. Have you lost Christ in the closet by restraining prayer? Then it is there you must seek and find Him. Did you lose Christ by sin? You will find Christ in no other way but by the giving up of the sin, and seeking by the Holy Spirit to mortify the member in which the lust doth dwell. Did you lose Christ by neglecting the Scriptures? You must find Christ in the Scriptures. It is a true proverb, ‘Look for a thing where you dropped it, it is there.’ So look for Christ where you lost Him, for He has not gone away.”

(Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, January 19, Morning.)

A final word on your concerns over “my poor worship, poor prayers, and poor praise of God.”

It is right for us to be concerned if our worship, prayers, and praise of God are poor and not what they should be. But there is a vast difference between our worship, prayers, and praise “needing improvement” and our “not being a Christian”. Believe me, thoughts that our worship, prayers and praise of God are not what they should be are NOT the thoughts and concerns of a lost man, but the thoughts of a Christian. So, when these thoughts come, you should thank God for revealing a need for improvement to you (it is a sign of His Fatherly

love and desire for a deeper relationship with you) and get to work through the means of grace to improve your worship, prayers, and praise.

And don't just think about it, do it.

Specific Objection # 9: My past sins haunt and trouble me greatly.

Even though we know that as Christians we are fully forgiven for all of our sins, we will likely always have some remorse for things done in the past that greatly dishonored both ourselves and God and hurt other people. But there is a great difference between the godly sorrow of the Christian over past sins and the sorrow and fear of the unbeliever that is born of guilt and a fear of the wrath that is to come. Always remember that Jesus has paid the full price for your sin and that no guilt at all can or ever will adhere to you in any way.

When these thoughts about your past come up, you should tell yourself ...

"Yes, I was that way. But, praise God, I have been delivered from that and the blood of Christ has cleansed me from all unrighteousness."

Plus, God has told me ...

*"As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)*

*"Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)*

*"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death,
nor sorrow, nor crying." (Revelation 21:4)*

All of your sins have been fully paid for. Jesus gave His life that you might have a clear conscience. Do not dishonor His sacrifice by listening to the whisperings of Satan. Accept what you now are and have become in Christ. You are a new creation and should act and think like one ...

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away;
behold, all things have become new." (II Corinthians 5:17)*

You also need to heed the advice of the Apostle Paul, speaking of his own spiritual journey

“... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14)

Further treatment of this issue can be found in Part III of our Paper

Specific Objection # 10: I have to fight very hard every day against the temptations of particular sins!

Every Christian has to fight very hard on a daily basis against remaining sin in his life.

The Apostle Paul wrote of his own intense struggles with surviving sin in Romans 7 ...

“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:21-25).

... and warned us ...

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these things are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

In your struggle with sin, always remember that, concerning assurance, there is a great difference between a Christian struggling with the broken remnants of *surviving* sin that remain within them and a mere professor or unbeliever struggling with *reigning* sin. [You might review our *General Principle 5* above.]

Four very important things for the Christian to always remember when struggling with present sin in their lives are that ...

1. A Christian is an adopted son of God, is in spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
2. Sin cannot dominate you. You can overcome it ...

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14)

3. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear and will provide you with a way out ...

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

4. God has promised you “self-control” if you will pursue it. “Self-control” is one of the “fruits” of His Spirit that is available for every Christian willing to pursue it through a diligent use of the means of grace

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22)

Note also what Paul wrote to his Corinthian church members

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

These Corinthians were saved from fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, and so on. But that does not mean that they didn't have to fight and continually strive against the temptations of their old sin natures. The Christian most assuredly *can* advance in their sanctification and progressively put off sin and put on holiness, but it will be a struggle nonetheless.

The degree of the victory that you gain over sin in your life will depend on how much you “abide” in Christ through the means of grace.

You can do it! As we just saw, one of the promised “fruits of the Spirit” is “self-control”. You can have it, but you cannot get and maintain it on your own. You need the help and assistance of Christ at all times. Always remember what our Lord has said ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

And so, the choice lies before you:

You can “bear much fruit” OR you can “do nothing” spiritually.

It’s up to you!

The means of grace and the Holy Spirit Himself are there to enable you to “abide” in Christ. Beware of any neglect of them on your part.

Hear the words of Charles Spurgeon on the matter ...

“It is to be feared that many believers lose their strength as Samson lost his locks, while sleeping on the lap of carnal security. With a perishing world around us, to sleep is cruel; with eternity so near at hand, it is madness.” (Morning and Evening, September 24, Evening)

Specific Objection # 11: I still greatly fear evil and its continuing grip on me.

You have good reason to be fearful of the powers of evil that infect our world ...

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12)

But even though our enemies are powerful and great, God has promised us victory and given us both defensive and offensive weapons to achieve it – if we will but avail ourselves of them ...

We have great defensive weapons ...

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

In its full context ...

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit ...” (Ephesians 6:10-18)

And we have great offensive weapons ...

The means of grace.

The way to overcome evil is through putting on our spiritual “armor” and “abiding” in Jesus through a regular and diligent use of the “means of grace”.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

And, most importantly, in our fight, we have the additional Biblical promise that ...

“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

Specific Objection # 12: Jesus is very attractive to me, but God Himself, the God of the Old Testament, terrifies me. I really fear Him and certainly don’t feel like approaching Him for help with assurance of my salvation

The Christian Trinity is not made up of three different “Gods” with three different personalities. NO! There is but one God existing in three distinct Persons – God the Father, God the Son (our Lord Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. And they all share the same substance and have the same attributes.

Very importantly ...

The Bible clearly teaches us that God of the Old Testament

is just like Jesus in the New Testament

Look, for instance, at the following discourse between Jesus and Phillip, found in the Gospel of John. Jesus states to Phillip ...

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.

Phillip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’

Jesus said to Him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.’” (John 14:7-11)

Later in John, Jesus tells us that to “know” Him is to know the Father ...

“Then they said to Him, ‘Where is your Father?’

Jesus answered, ‘You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.’” (John 8:19)

... and that to “see” Him is to see the Father ...

“Then Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.’” (John 12:44-45)

We also clearly see Jesus’s attributes of forgiveness and mercy displayed throughout the Old Testament and attributed to God the Father...

*“The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.*

*For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;*

*As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
As a father pities His children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
For He remembers our frame;
He remembers that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:8-14)*

Nothing could be farther from the truth than the notion that a New Testament Jesus came to die for our sins in order to appease the anger of the Old Testament Father. In actuality, Jesus came to die for our sins at the request and behest of the God the Father ...

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.” (I John 4:14)

*“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin ...” (Isaiah 53: 10)*

[We note that “*pleased*” does not mean that God was happy about it, but that it was His will to do it.]

Likewise, in the New Testament, we see that Jesus is the same as the God of the Old Testament

For one thing, Jesus spoke more often on the reality of hell, warning against it, than any other topic.

And, in Matthew, after describing Himself as “*The stone which the builders rejected*”, we see Jesus, in the manner of God the Father in the Old Testament, severely warning people not to reject Him and His word, saying ...

“And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” (Matthew 21:43)

Being ‘*ground to powder*’ is not a light punishment.

Finally, Jesus Himself, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, tells us how wonderfully, joyfully, and fully, God (the God of the Old Testament) receives back a repentant child who has long wallowed in the most degrading of circumstances.

Again, all three Persons of the Trinity are the same God and share the same attributes. There is no difference between Jesus of the New Testament and God the Father of the Old Testament. You can and should come to God the Father just as readily and easily as you can come to Jesus the Son.

It is especially bad for a “*child*” of God to have an unbiblical fear of their loving and merciful “*Father*”

Hear Charles Spurgeon on the matter of having a wrong and unbiblical fear of God

“Dear friends, this evil works a thousand ills, operates in ways of evil quite innumerable. It dishonors God. Oh, it is infamous, it is villainous to make out our God, who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all, to be an object of horrible fear. It is infernal; I may say no less; it is devilish to the highest degree to paint Him as a demon, who is Jehovah, the God of Love. Oh, the impertinence of the prince of darkness, and the madness of man to consent thereunto, that God should be depicted as being unwilling to forgive, unkind, untender, hard, cruel; whereas He is love; supremely and above all things, love. He is just, but all the more truly loving because He is just. He is true, and therefore sure to punish sin, yet even punishing sin because it were not good to let sin go unpunished. This is base ingratitude on the part of a much-receiving creature that he should malign his benefactor.”

[This passage is taken from Spurgeon’s sermon “*God Incarnate, the End of Fear*”, the text being “*And the angel said unto them, Fear not.*” (Luke 2:10)]

Specific Objection # 13: I fear that I might have committed the unpardonable sin.

We would refer you to our Website, *Question # 17*, for a rather lengthy “*Look at the Unpardonable Sin*” – what it is, what it entails, and how we can know if we have or have not committed it. [We also cover it somewhat in Part III.]

For now, we will simply say that if you are worried about having committed this sin, you have not committed it. It is a complex issue and explanation, and we ask you to “*search the Scriptures*” with us in *Question # 17* to see if what we say “*is so*”.

We do have one last, and somewhat different, “Objection” to cover

Indeed, it is really more of an *Assertion* than an *Objection* and takes up a specific application of General Principle 10. It goes something like ...

Specific Objection (Assertion) # 14: I really don't need any of this. I've always had a full assurance of my salvation. Never doubted it for a moment. And I really don't have any big struggles with sin and certainly don't feel like I'm at war with it. So what would you say to me?

First, I would say that I hope your assurance is a true one.

But, if it is a true one, if you are a Christian, then know for certain that God will, for your own good, soon move to active discipline in your life in order to turn your heart from yourself to Him, shaking you out of your complacency and indifference. It could be a painful chastening. I would go to Him immediately and confess your complacency and indifference, ask for forgiveness, and ask Him to help you through the means of grace develop a better awareness for sin and greater love for Him.

On the other hand, if you really don't have any struggles with sin and see no real need to pursue the means of grace, it can only mean one other thing, that the devil, the "accuser of the brethren", the "roaring lion seeking someone to devour", is just fine with your sense of assurance and complacency and will not trouble you at all about any part of it. In that case, you have just and serious cause for concern about your very salvation itself.

Either way, you should not take your complacency and indifference lightly because our Lord Jesus Christ did very specifically give ALL of us (weak and strong alike) many warnings about having a "false" assurance of one's salvation.

And, very importantly, the Apostles Peter and Paul did very specifically command ALL who call themselves Christians to "*test*" and "*examine*" themselves to "*make your call and election sure*" and to see "*whether you are in the faith.*"

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10)

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." (2 Corinthians 13:5)

So, clearly, we ALL need to "*test*" and "*examine*" ourselves so that we can know and rest assured that our assurance is true and genuine.

As stated earlier, Satan's greatest success is to lure a person into a false assurance of their salvation. He has been especially successful in this in our present church age of "easy believism" and "cheap grace", a time when "complacency" and "indifference" and "lukewarmness" (Revelation 3:14-16) all run rampant in our churches.

This is precisely why Jesus gave us so many warnings about having a false assurance and why the Apostles Peter and Paul tell us to "test" and "examine" ourselves in the matter.

Again, we invite you to look at our next Paper in the series ...

Paper # 8, "How Can I Know for Sure that I am a Christian?"

The "test" and "examination" process found in Paper # 8 is a positive one, looking for evidences of God's work in your life. It is not an exercise in morbid introspection over your failures to keep God's law perfectly, which neither you, nor I, nor anyone else, save our Lord Jesus Christ will ever do.

Know for certain that if you do have a false assurance of your salvation, the devil will never trouble you about it, and will do everything he can to keep you from "testing" and "examining" yourself "as to whether you are in the faith".

**So, you really have nothing to lose by taking our "test" and "examination",
and you might have a lot to gain.**

**As we close out Part II of our Assurance of Salvation Paper, the Part dealing
with the "Doubts, Fears, and Concerns" in attaining and maintaining it ...**

We would give you three reminders to keep in mind ...

First, God never punishes His children. God is a just God and would never punish His children a second time for sins for which the full penalty has already been paid by our Lord Jesus Christ. He may, in Fatherly love, apply discipline (sometimes severe) where needed and send trials of various kinds to improve your faith, but He never ever *punishes* a child of His.

Second, at your Justification you were covered with the imputed righteousness of Christ. When God looks at you, in judgment or otherwise, he does not see your sins and failings, but the righteousness of His own dear Son imputed to your account. It is imperative that you always remember that the foundation and basis of your salvation is righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to your account, and not what you yourself do or don't do. Again, the basis,

foundation, and assurance of your salvation all *stand outside of yourself* and are as sure, safe and secure as the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Third, one last time, it is only through a diligent and regular application of the means of grace that you can be prepared beforehand to “trust God” and “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

**Our next page will provide you with a prototype
“*Example of a Summary Sheet*”**

... and we will then move on to Part III, the final Part of our Paper,

For purpose of review ...

In Part I of our paper we covered “*22 Biblical Proofs that the Christian not only can, but should, have a Full Assurance of their Salvation.*”

In Part II we gave both General and Specific “*Answers to the Doubts, Fears, and Concerns that people raise about having an Assurance of Salvation*”

In Part III we will cover “*Maintaining an Assurance of Your Salvation*”

Prototype Example of a “Summary Sheet”
[to be pulled out and used whenever the need arises]

Note to Self: You have been through this ordeal many times before. You know what it is, where it comes from, and what to do about it. So, trust God and His word, go to God for sustaining grace, and do not concern yourself with it any more. Believe and trust the word of God on the matter, not your own feelings or the lies of the devil.

The foundational legal basis of your salvation, and the assurance of it, is the righteousness of Jesus Christ *imputed* to your account and not what you yourself have done or not done. Again, the foundational basis upon which both your salvation and your assurance of it rests stands outside of yourself and is as absolutely certain and unshakable as the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself. That being the case, you are “*accepted in the Beloved*” (*Ephesians 1:6*) and nothing “*shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (*Romans 8:35-39*)

God the Father has adopted you and “*keeps*” you as His child (I Peter 1:4-5). God the Son is in a very real spiritual union with you and has made you a part of His bride, the Church. God the Holy Spirit indwells you, seals you, and is the surety and guarantor of your salvation.

Our Lord asks us “... *if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?*” (*John 8:45*) It is a good question to consider just now. Do not believe Satan’s lies or your own feelings, believe instead our Lord Jesus’s words and teachings.

God tells us to “*Be still and know that I am God.*” (*Psalms 46:10*). So, do it!

When we go through extended periods of pain and suffering, periods that may lead us to doubt God’s love for us, we need to remember that when our life is over and we stand in the presence of God and see the wonderful tapestry of our life that He has woven, including the good for ourselves, others, and His own glory that He accomplished through our pain and suffering, we will, like Job, stand in awed wonder and silence before Him and will not want to go back and change one minute of it. We will only rejoice that we were considered worthy to suffer for Him and His glory.

Finally and lastly, always remember, as Dr. Terry Johnson has said ...

“Don’t wallow in guilt, wallow in God’s grace.”

Part III: Maintaining an Assurance of Your Salvation

In Part III we will look at how a Christian can overcome the most common “Challenges” to Maintaining a full assurance of their salvation, three of which are ...

1. The “Challenge” of a sudden and greatly heightened sense of anxiety and spiritual depression over PAST (pre-Christian) sins, sometimes over one sin in particular
2. The “Challenge” of a greatly heightened sense of anxiety over the strength of PRESENT sin in our life
3. The “Challenge” of doubts and fears that arise from an actual, but perhaps unrealized, refusal to take God at His word and to believe that what He says in His word about assurance actually does apply to us personally – i.e., the “*Challenge*” of a doubting and unbelieving heart.

We note that our first two “*Challenges*” are very closely related and have their origins and roots in our third “*Challenge*”, the “*Challenge*” of a doubting and unbelieving heart.

Let’s first look at “*How?*” and “*Why?*” these “*Challenges*” might arise ...

How do we come to have a renewed and greatly heightened sense of the depth and enormity of either our *past* or *present* sin, or both, and “*How?*” and “*Why?*” could we come to have a doubting heart?

We can give you at least four reasons “*Why?*” these things happen

The first reason is that ...

1. **You have three great enemies that are constantly endeavoring to trip you up – the “*world*,” the “*flesh*,” and the “*devil*” – especially the devil.**

The devil, also known as the “accuser of our brethren”, “*accuses*” you relentlessly, “*day and night*” – “*before our God*” and to yourself.

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

The devil is a most powerful “*adversary*”, and should not be taken or treated lightly. Indeed, you are personally instructed to ...

“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (I Peter 5:8)

In short, the devil will relentlessly accuse you before God and before yourself up until the very moment he is “*cast down*”. He will especially do so as you near death, so you need to be prepared beforehand for it.

Do not underestimate him or his power.

The “*flesh*” is comprised of the broken remnants of your old natural, unregenerate, sinful nature, that still remain within you, and is also referred to as “*the old man*”.

The “*flesh*” is at war with God’s Holy Spirit which also indwells us

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

Our third great enemy is “*the world*”. The “*world*” is comprised of the powers and forces that stand in opposition to God and the enforcement of His will, but the “*world*” itself is not as directly and personally involved in the assurance of your salvation.]

A second reason that these things happen is that ...

2. As we progress in our Sanctification, we naturally come to see more and more of the enormity and depth of our sin (both *Past* and *Present*).

It is a natural experience of the Christian life that as we grow closer and closer to God in our sanctification process, we increasingly come to view all spiritual matters, including our past and present sins, against the backdrop of His holiness, and, therefore, come to gain a much clearer and truer picture of the enormity and depth of our sin – both past and present.

This heightened realization can be a very distressing experience for us – and the devil will beat us mercilessly with it – IF we let him.

In truth, the more we see of the enormity and depth of our own sin, the more we should love, trust, and thank God for His mercy and grace to us and the more securely and firmly we should rest in our 22 *Proofs* of His sovereign assurance of our salvation.

A third reason that these things happen is that ...

3. Christians are still sinners.

Let's note first that to "*face the fact that Christians are still sinners*" is in no way meant to salve our conscience or mitigate the heinousness of our sin. No, we are still fully responsible for our sin because – we sin willfully, there is no external compulsion for us to do so, and we actually enjoy doing it.

What makes it so bad is that a sin committed by a Christian is a much worse than the same sin committed by an unbeliever for at least six reasons:

First, you are not your own person. You were personally "*bought*" by God "*at a price*" and your body and spirit are His ...

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

Christ had to suffer and die to pay the penalty and price due for the very sin you just committed.

Second, the Christian is an adopted son of God and a member of His family, Jesus Christ being his elder "*Half-Brother*."

Third, the Christian is in a very real spiritual union with Christ and is a part of His bride, the Church.

Fourth, the Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, who is “*grieved*” by his sin ...

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

... and Who, because He indwells the Christian, is dragged along with him into whatever sin he commits.

Fifth, the Christian has the spiritual fruit of “*self-control*” readily available to him (Galatians 5:22), if he will but pursue it ...

Sixth, the Christian was provided with a promised “*way of escape*” for every sin he commits (I Corinthians 10:13)

So when a Christian sins, the Christian sins against all three members of the Holy Trinity and against a veritable mountain of the love, grace, and mercy that God has shown to him.

It is sad, but true, that Christians are still sinners.

A fourth and most probable greatest reason of all that these “Challenges” arise is due to

4. Our own failure to diligently appropriate and apply the means of grace.

Everything the Christian has and is comes to him from the *grace* of God, which is why it is so important for him to diligently and regularly use the “*means of grace*” (the chief of which, again, are Bible reading and meditation, prayer, individual, family, and corporate worship, the sacraments, etc.) – for our use of the means of grace is the way that God dispenses His sanctifying grace to us. Our use of the means of grace is also the way that we communicate with God and He with us. We communicate with God through *prayer* and He communicates back with us through *our reading and meditation upon His word*.

It is only through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace that we can guard ourselves against the “*accuser*” of the brethren; that we can comfort ourselves as we see more and more of the enormity and depth of both our past and present sin; and that we can protect ourselves against developing a doubting and unbelieving heart.

In our fight with sin, there are two very important truths that we must always bear in mind ...

The first is that we are not to put any faith or trust whatsoever in ourselves or in our own strength and ability to combat sin or grow in sanctification. Indeed, the Apostle Paul said of his own self, his own *“flesh”* ...

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)

The second is that we are totally, utterly, and completely dependent on our Lord Himself if we are to progress in our sanctification and maintain an assurance of our salvation. Our Lord Himself told us, in no uncertain terms, that ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Note well our Lord’s statement *“without Me you can do nothing.”*

[You might consider running a little test of your own. Go into your yard or choose a plant in your house. Cut a “branch” off of its “vine” and set it aside. Then over the next few days, watch it wither and die. The same is true of each of us in our spiritual life, for “without Me you can do nothing.”]

Our Lord summed up both of these points when He stated that ...

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

And so, if you want to bear much *“fruit”*, including the *“fruit of the Spirit”* which includes *“love, joy, peace [and] self-control”* and if you want to maintain an assurance of your salvation, you must *“abide”* in Christ through the means of grace, because, one more time, you, on our own, can do *“nothing”*.

If you neglect a diligent and regular use of the means of grace in your life, you will leave yourself open to attacks from Satan, spiritual falls, the development of doubt and unbelief in your heart, and a diminishing sense of the assurance of your salvation.

Let’s now take a more in-depth look at each of our three main *“Challenges”* to maintaining an assurance of our salvation, which, again, are ...

1. *The “Challenge” of a sudden and greatly heightened sense of anxiety and spiritual depression over PAST (pre-Christian) sins, often over one sin in particular.*
2. *The Challenge of a greatly heightened sense of anxiety over the strength of PRESENT sin in our life*
3. *The “Challenge” of doubts and fears that arise from an actual, but perhaps unrealized, refusal to take God at His word and to believe that what He says in His word about assurance actually does apply to us personally – i.e., the “Challenge” of a doubting and unbelieving heart.*

We will take an in-depth look at each of these “Challenges”.

Our first “Challenge” to attaining and maintaining assurance is ...

1. The “Challenge” of a sudden and greatly heightened sense of anxiety and spiritual depression over PAST (pre-Christian) sins, sometimes over one sin in particular

We said earlier that even after becoming a Christian and knowing that we are fully forgiven for all of our sins, we will likely always retain a measure of remorse, regret and sorrow for certain things done in our past that greatly dishonored both God and ourselves and that were especially mean or hurtful to others. *This is not what we are talking about here.* A measure of continued remorse over past sin is natural for the Christian, and is, indeed, a sign of our regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

The “Challenge” we are talking about here arises when we are fairly suddenly confronted with an overly heightened awareness of the depth and enormity of our past sins, or one past sin in particular, such that they haunt and trouble us deeply and are a stumbling block to our having a full assurance of our salvation

This was the case in my situation.

One day, years after becoming a Christian I was reading my Bible and came to one of the sections that mentioned “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”, a sin that will not be forgiven “in this age or in the age to come.” Hebrews 6:4-6 greatly exacerbated the matter.

Long story short – I suddenly remembered some things I had said and done while in college, was convinced that I had committed the unpardonable sin, and was plunged into a 3-5 months period of deep depression and despair, barely able to function.

With some extensive Bible study and the help of several Pastor friends, the Lord pulled me out of it. But it was a terrible, terrible time to go through., and is one of the reasons that I am now writing these Papers.

[I would also note that John Bunyan went through a similar period after he became a Christian, one much longer than mine.]

This particular “Challenge” can arise for several reasons ...

One is that many Christians have never really thought long and deep over their PAST sins, beyond the initial recognition, fear and dread of them that drove them to Christ for salvation. Later, when the full enormity and depth of their past sins finally sets in and hits them, it can knock them for a loop.

Another reason for a heightened recognition of the enormity and depth of our past sins, is that, as we stated earlier, the more we advance in our sanctification process, the more we will come to see the enormity and depth of our past sin as we view them against the backdrop of an increased understanding of God’s holiness.

These two reasons often combine to delay a fuller and more thorough realization of the enormity and depth of our past sins until a later time in our Christian life. And when they do appear, perhaps years later, they can really unsettle and trouble us if we have not fully prepared ourselves for it beforehand.

Several types of Christians are especially susceptible to this “Challenge” over Past sins.

Among them would be ...

Those who have very tender and overly-sensitive consciences.

Those who have come out of Roman Catholicism, having been taught that ...

They not only cannot have a full assurance of their salvation, but also that they are deemed to be “*anathema*” (or cursed) if they should even think that they can have it.

The teaching that any grace that they may have built-up can be killed and themselves cut off from God at any time by committing a “mortal sin”.

Other groups susceptible to this particular Challenge would include ...

Many of our Arminian brothers and sisters (whom we dearly love in the Lord) whose belief that Jesus Christ only made their salvation *possible* and that it was up to them to choose or decide on their own whether to turn God’s offer of a possible salvation achieved for them by Christ into a real salvation for themselves, also raises the very logical, and very real, possibility that one could also lose their salvation on their own.

Other groups yet would include ...

Those Christians who have come out of very legalistic Christian backgrounds, and are still struggling with being “*recovering Pharisees*”.

Those who have come out of very sinful backgrounds. Some have had ... multiple abortions ... a long homosexual past ... a long history of fornication or adultery ... a long immersion in pornography ... a history of purposeful blasphemy ... and a history of having been very hurtful or mean to other people. Some have even _____ [you fill in the blank].

We will have more to say on the causes of anxiety and spiritual depression over PAST sin when we get to *Challenge # 3*.

Until then, there are four things that the Christian should always remember when struggling with the *Challenge* of a heightened anxiety and spiritual depression over PAST sins ...

He should first remember that Jesus Christ has paid the full penalty for all his sins and that the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself has been imputed to his account, such that when God looks at him, He sees the righteousness of His own dear Son and not what he himself has or has not done. The foundation of the Christian’s salvation and the assurance of it stand outside of himself and is as certain and sure as the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself.

He should remember second, regarding assurance, that there is a great difference between a Christian struggling with *surviving sin* and a mere professor or unbeliever struggling with *reigning sin* ... and ... that there is also a great difference between the godly sorrow of a Christian in disappointing and grieving his loving heavenly Father and the worldly sorrow of the unbeliever that is born of guilt and fear of punishment.

Third, he should take the advice of the Apostle Paul concerning his past sins ...

“... one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

Lastly, the Christian should take the very sound and great advice of Dr. Terry Johnson of Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia, whom I once heard say at a Bible Conference

“Don’t wallow in guilt, wallow in God’s grace.”

Again, no Christian should ever have a fear of *God’s judicial wrath*, for Jesus Christ has paid the full price for all of your past, present and future sin – such that no penal guilt can ever again adhere to you in any way.

Should we feel disappointment in ourselves at sinning and at “*grieving*” the Holy Spirit of God? Yes.

Should we fear or feel penal guilt? Never!

It is just as the Psalmist has said ...

*“As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)*

When thoughts of PAST sins come, instead of dwelling on them, you should think instead ...

“Yes, I once was that way. But, praise God, I have been delivered from that and the blood of Christ has cleansed me from all guilt and all unrighteousness.”

One particular PAST sin that many Christians (like myself) have come to fear that they might have committed is the “unpardonable” sin!

Many true Christians are very deeply troubled by thoughts of having possibility committed the sin of ...

“... blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” [found in Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 12:8-11]

“... the sin leading to death,” [found in I John 5:16-17]

... the sins of Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-31.

All three of these sin-type passages taken alone lend themselves to great misinterpretation and needless anxiety on the part of many true Christians.

As we have provided a very extensive answer to all three of these fears in Question # 17, “What is the Unpardonable Sin? How can I know if I have committed it?” on our website, to which we now refer you, we will give only a short answer here.

Let’s take a look at one particular type of fear of the unforgivable “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”, that of “speaking against” Him, that arises because of our Lord’s statement in Matthew 12:31-32 ...

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32)

We want to take particular note of the statement that this sin ...

“... will not be forgiven him, either in this age or the age to come.”

... which, taken by itself, is a very fearful statement.

We are not only *fearful* about the statement itself, but are also *confused* about it, because our Lord has also told us ...

“... the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.” (John 6:37)

... which is confirmed by Paul’s statement that ...

“... whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (Romans 10:13)

So how can it be that there is a sin that will not be forgiven “*either in this age or the age to come*”? A sin that results in one being kept out of the Kingdom of God, without any hope, both now and later.

To adequately address this, we will need to look at ...

“Exactly what this sin is.”

“Why [in the light of what both Jesus and Paul have said] it is unforgivable.”

“How I Can Know if I have Committed It.”

We know from the passage and the nature of Jesus’s warning that in this particular case the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a *verbal* sin, namely to knowingly, willingly, and deliberately pour contempt on the Holy Spirit and His works – in this particular case, attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to the devil.

It is also very important to note that as Jesus is giving *a warning* to the Pharisees that they are *in the process* of committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit that this sin is not a one-time thing, but is cumulatively committed over a period of time.

OK ... BUT ...

“Why?” is it ‘*Unpardonable*’ ... and ...

How can I know if I have committed it or not?

Well, when such a sin as this is unrepentantly committed over a long period of time there eventually comes a point at which God will judicially harden the person committing it (just as they have been hardening themselves in committing it), such that they will never come to seek repentance or forgiveness for it – for Jesus by His own word has said that He would forgive them if they did come to Him for forgiveness.

Again, the reason that this sin will not be “*forgiven him, either in this age or the age to come*” is that the person who has committed it has so hardened themselves and been further judicially hardened by God that they will never come to repent of it or seek forgiveness for it.

So, very importantly, if you think you might have committed the sin of verbal “*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*”, or that you might have been in the process of committing it, and you sincerely seek and desire to repent of it and be forgiven for it, you cannot have committed this sin!

Again, anyone who sincerely seeks to be forgiven for any sin, even a sin which he thinks might have constituted a final blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, cannot have committed the unpardonable “*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*” or “*the sin unto death*” IF they sincerely seek forgiveness for it.

We have our Lord's own word on it!

"... the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37)

... which is confirmed by Paul's assurance that

"... whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (Romans 10:13)

Another very important fact to consider is that the first rule of Biblical Hermeneutics (the science of correctly interpreting Scripture) is to *"Let Scripture interpret Scripture!"* – which simply means that if there is a passage of Scripture that presents some questions or difficulties about its exact meaning, it should be interpreted in the light of other Scripture passages that speak to the same issue whose meaning is very clear.

Our present passage, Matthew 12:31-32, on the sin of *"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit"* is a good example.

Because our Lord has clearly said ...

"... the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37)

... and because Paul clearly confirmed that ...

"... whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (Romans 10:13)

... we know that we cannot have committed the unpardonable sin, if we sincerely seek forgiveness for it, because anyone who sincerely *"comes to"* Jesus and/or *"calls on the name of the LORD"* will *"by no means be cast out"* and *"will be saved"*, i.e., they will be fully pardoned.

Again ...

If anyone truly wants to repent of any sin that he thinks might have constituted continuing or final blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and be forgiven for it, and "comes to Jesus" or "calls on the name of the LORD" for forgiveness, he cannot have committed final "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" or "the sin unto death".

Both Scripture and sound Biblical Hermeneutics tell us so.

In sum, no one should ever, ever, even begin to think that any of their sins have put them past God's willingness or ability to forgive, if they sincerely wish to repent of it and be forgiven for it.

[For a further and more in-depth treatment of the issue, we refer you again to Question # 17, "What is the Unpardonable Sin? How can I know if I have committed it?" on our website]

Our second "Challenge" to maintaining a full assurance of our salvation is ...

The "Challenge" of a greatly heightened sense of anxiety over the strength of PRESENT sin in our life

It is true that the Christian is a "*new creation*", has been adopted by God the Father, has had all his sins paid for by the blood of Christ, has the righteousness of Christ as his covering, is in a true and real spiritual union with Christ, and has the Holy Spirit of God actually dwelling within Him. But, as we saw earlier, even though the Christian is all of this, he, sadly, also continues to be a sinner.

At times, usually because of a prolonged neglect of the means of grace, a neglect which presents our "*roaring lion*" adversary with an opportune time to attack, the Christian will face a much more intense series of struggles against present sin in his life, and may have a number of setbacks along the way. The intensity of these struggles, and any failures, can, aided by "*the accuser of the brethren*", bring his assurance of his salvation into doubt.

So, what can we say to the Christian who is engaging in a very intense struggle against PRESENT sin in his life to help him maintain his assurance of salvation?

We would say four things ...

We would say first that ...

The Christian should always keep in mind that he no longer bears any penal guilt for any of his sins, past, present, or future, because Jesus Christ has already made a full atonement for all of them.

The Christian should never fear the punitive wrath of God that is directed against guilty, unrepentant, or unbelieving sinners. Because Jesus Christ has atoned for all the Christian's guilt (past, present, and future), God, being a "*just*" God, would never punish anyone a second time for a sin that has already been punished on the Lord Jesus Christ.

A second thing the Christian should keep in mind as he battles PRESENT sin in his life is that ...

Though God will never punish him for any sin, He will, as a good and loving Father, sometimes use trials and tribulations, when needed, to exercise discipline or provide instruction for his own good.

We read in Hebrews ...

“And have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as 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 sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all 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 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.” (Hebrews 12:5-11)

“Chastening” and “scourging” are not pleasant experiences! But they are and will be used, if needed, by a loving Father for our own good.

So, what you are experiencing as a Christian may arise from discipline or training, but, again, it is not, and never will be, *punishment* for guilt that you no longer bear.

A third thing we would say to the Christian battling PRESENT sin in his life is that ...

We need to take our continuing sanctification process very seriously.

Not taking our sanctification process seriously is very probably the reason for the fix we are in, because to not take it seriously is for the Christian to risk spiritual decline, loss of assurance, and to invite God’s loving Fatherly discipline.

Paul stresses the seriousness with which we should “*work out*” our sanctification when he tells us to approach it with “*fear and trembling*”

“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

We are to seriously and diligently “*work out*” the implications of our salvation, i.e., work out our sanctification process (not our salvation itself), precisely because “*it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*”

[Note: Man works with God in his sanctification process, but he “works” only because of God’s prior grace in his life.]

God, as a loving Father, is very serious about your sanctification. It is His “*will*” for you ...

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (I Thessalonians 4:3)

God “bought” you at a great price. You are His child, and He wants you to bear the family image and He will “*scourge*” and “*chasten*” you, if necessary, to achieve it. So, to avoid discipline and to advance in your sanctification and nearness to God, you must seriously “*work out*” the implications of your salvation with “*fear and trembling*” by diligently and regularly applying the means of grace in your daily life.

The fourth (and most important) thing we can do to help the Christian who is engaging in a very intense struggle against PRESENT sin in his life and is fearful of his assurance of salvation because of it, is to ...

Help him to make a make a full assessment of the nature, depth, and motive behind his striving for obedience to God’s commands, because, according to our Lord, our striving to obey His commands is the surest and most important way to know IF we truly “love” Him – WHICH IS THE KEY to maintaining our assurance of salvation.

First, let’s address the question, “*How do we know that striving to obey our Lord’s commands is the best way to tell if we truly love Him?*”

Well, our Lord Himself has told us so. In fact, He specifically told us so four times over, in the space of 10 verses, in John Chapter 14 ...

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” (John 14:21)

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word” (John 14:23)

“He who does not love Me does not keep My words” (John 14:24)

Clearly, from His own mouth, our Lord tells us that obedience to His commands is THE best and surest way to tell if we truly “love” Him or not.

The Old Testament tells us the same thing ...

Solomon, the wisest man who ever has or ever will live, save our Lord Jesus Christ, concludes Ecclesiastes and sums up the whole of his long search for wisdom with ...

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter”

*Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man’s all.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)*

We likewise see the great Prophet Samuel, when informing King Saul that he would lose his kingdom over his act of disobedience to God’s command, making obedience to God’s commands the reigning priority in a believer’s life and actually comparing disobedience to “witchcraft ... iniquity and idolatry” ...

“So Samuel said:

*‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from being king.’” (I Samuel 15:22-23)*

So we clearly see that in both the Old and New Testaments, obedience to God’s commands is exceedingly important to Him as and is the best and most valid measure

of our love and commitment to Him. It is, thereby, for us, the surest and greatest proof of assurance of our salvation.

WHICH IS PRECISELY WHY we need to spend the time to make a full assessment of the nature, depth, and motive behind our striving for obedience to His commands,

We will do this by examining ourselves in four areas of obedience ...

1. *Do we really strive to obey His commands?*
2. *Why do we strive to obey His commands, i.e., what is our motive?*
3. *Are we guarding against self-deception in this area?*
4. *Are we striving to obey ALL of His commands?*

It bears repeating that the Christian will never keep all of God's commands perfectly, but ...

The Question at hand IS NOT *"Do you keep all of His commands perfectly"*

The Question IS *"Do you earnestly strive to obey His commands?"*

So, let's begin our examination.

First, and most important for making a full assessment of the nature and depth of our obedience, and, therefore, our "love" of Christ ...

"Do you bear proof of your professed 'love' for Jesus by seriously striving to obey His commands?"

Again, according to our Lord Jesus Himself, this is the chief test of your "love" for Him.

Obedience to the commands of God necessarily involves both striving for obedience and repenting over any disobedience. "*Repentance*" involves both sorrow and remorse over sin and a forsaking of it. For example, sorrow and remorse over viewing pornography, but continuing to view it, is not repentance over viewing pornography, but a continuing "*practice*" of it.

Let us remember here the warning of our Lord for those who "*practice*" any sin ...

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:21-23)

Know for sure that “*God is not mocked*” ...

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)

For a professing Christian to continue to “*practice*” a sin of any kind is a “*mockery*” of God and His commands, and will have very bad repercussions for him – for it invites serious disciplinary actions on God’s part.

More importantly, according to our Lord, if we are continuing to unrepentantly and regularly “*practice*” any sin, including the sin of viewing pornography, we have legitimate reason for concern over whether our assurance of salvation, and even our salvation itself, is real.

This said, we do recognize and make allowance for the intensity of the *believer’s struggle* with surviving sin in his life, a struggle which is constant, hard, life-long, and which has setbacks. Having to continually struggle against a sin and continuing to unrepentantly practice a sin are two very different things.

For help in testing and examining yourself in these and other areas, we would refer you to our Paper # 8, titled “How Can I Know for Sure that I am a Christian?”.

A second, but equally important, question concerning the nature of our obedience is ...

“WHY do you strive to obey God’s commands? WHAT is your motive for striving for obedience?”

Regarding motives ...

The ONLY CORRECT MOTIVE for striving to obey Christ’s commands is that of love and thankfulness to Him for what He has done for you and because He is your God

One very INCORRECT MOTIVE for striving to obey Christ's commands is that you think it adds something to or in some way helps in the attaining and/or maintaining of your salvation. This is totally incorrect because, as we have seen, salvation is by God's "grace" alone, comes "through faith" alone, and is very specifically "not of works, lest anyone should boast". Confirm ...

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Striving to obey because you think it is a necessary part of attaining or maintaining your salvation was the incorrect motive of the Pharisee and the Judaizer, both of whom were condemned by our Lord and the Apostle Paul.

It is also the incorrect motive of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church in the Council of Trent, the last major dogmatic Council of the Roman Catholic Church, pronounced an "anathema" or curse on anyone who thinks they are saved by "faith alone" instead of by "faith + works". In short, the Council pronounced a curse of damnation on all Protestants.

[Let it be noted that we are simply agreeing with the Roman Catholic Church, via their anathema against evangelical Protestants, that Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism are two different religions. For further discussion, we would refer you to our website's *Question # 9, "What are the main differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism?"*]

A third reason for making a full assessment of the nature and depth of our obedience, and therefore "love", of Christ, is that ...

Our Lord repeatedly warned us that obedience to His commands is an area in which "many" people will be self-deceived.

Several examples of His warnings are ...

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:21-23)

—

“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

*‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.’”*

(Jesus Christ, Matthew 15:7-9)

“But why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”

(Jesus Christ, Luke 6:46)

That “many” are self-deceived in this area is one of the reasons that both the Apostles Paul and Peter command us to ...

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.” (2 Peter 1:10)

You are to diligently “test” and “examine” yourselves “*as to whether you are in the faith*” and to “*make your call and election sure*”. Again, you do this with much prayer and by looking at the Biblical earmarks given to us as to what a Christian should be and do. We refer you to our “Paper # 8” titled “How Can I Know for Sure That I am a Christian?”

A fourth very important question concerning the nature of your striving for obedience is ...

Do you strive to obey ALL of God’s commands?

Partial obedience is disobedience.

As we have just seen above, to unrepentantly “*practice lawlessness*” (practice disobedience) in any one area will draw the following response from Jesus Christ at the final judgement ...

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done

many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:21-23)

Again, to “*practice lawlessness*” is to willfully, regularly, and unrepentantly engage in any sin.

Note well that our Lord tells us in Matthew’s passage that no matter how much service you do for the church, up to and including “*prophesying, casting out demons, doing many wonders in Jesus’s name*’, it means nothing if you “*practice lawlessness*” in any area of your life.

In short, Jesus will have ALL of you or He will have NONE of you.

Do not be “deceived” about it ...

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards; nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (I Corinthians 6:9-10)

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.” (Galatians 6:7-8)

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Jesus Christ, Revelation 21:5, 7-8)

And so, again, the very important Question here is “*Do you strive to obey ALL of His commands?*”

“ALL” would especially apply to God’s continuing “moral law”, summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments, written by God’s very finger. And, within the Ten Commandments, it would apply even more so to the first four Commandments, which govern our relationship with God, one of which is to ...

‘Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.’ (Exodus 20:8).

Again, we do recognize the difference between a Christian *struggling against surviving sin* in their life and a person who is *willfully, regularly, and unrepentantly practicing* (i.e., refusing to forsake) a sin.

In continuing our look at our Second “Challenge” to maintaining a full assurance of our salvation ...

There is one final reason that we might have come to have a heightened awareness of our PRESENT sin

... and that is that sometimes God Himself will, in Fatherly love and for our betterment, withdraw a measure of the light of His countenance from us to teach us some things we need to learn or learn better – things such as our total need of Him, our total dependence on Him, our remaining “flesh’s” natural propensity to sin, and that we should never depend on ourselves alone, but should “abide” in Christ. God also might be getting us to reconsider some area of disobedience that we have been toying with or moving toward.

Like we said earlier, God is very serious about our Sanctification. It is His will for our lives

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (I Thessalonians 4:3)

God is our heavenly Father, we are in spiritual union with His Son, and we are indwelt by His Holy Spirit. He will do whatever needs to be done to see that our sanctification progresses – even to the point of withdrawing some of His close countenance from us (though He will never withdraw it so completely as to leave us in despair).

Ever and at all times and in all things, God will always have our good and betterment in view.

In conclusion, concerning Challenge 2, the Christian’s battle with PRESENT sin, the Christian needs to remember Five things ...

First, the Christian needs to remember that he no longer bears any penal guilt for any of his sins, past, present, or future, because Jesus Christ made a full atonement for all of them.

At the sinner’s Justification, God imputed his sins to Christ on the cross, who paid the price for them, so that he is “Not Guilty” in God’s eyes.

He may at times face God's loving Fatherly discipline, but he will never face God's punitive wrath or punishment for any sin.

Second, he needs to also remember that God, at his Justification, also imputed the righteousness of Jesus Christ to his account, so that he has the righteousness of Christ for his covering.

This being done, the foundation of a Christian's salvation is the righteousness of Christ imputed to his account and not what he has personally done or not done. The security and assurance of his salvation stand outside himself.

Third, in the Christian's battle with PRESENT sin, the Christian needs to remember his very deep three-fold identification with the Divine Trinity.

He has been Adopted by God, is in Union with the Son, and is Indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, he needs to remember that in that in his battle with sin, he is promised that

"... sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14)

But even though it is true that "*sin shall not have dominion over you*", the believer's fight with *surviving* sin (the broken remnants of shattered sin that remain in his "*flesh*") will continue and be very intense until the day he dies. His three great enemies – the "*world*", the "*flesh*", and especially the "*devil*" – will see to that.

The degree of success that the Christian will have in keeping sin at bay and triumphing over it can, and will, vary greatly, depending upon how diligently and effectively they appropriate the means of grace in their continuing battle with sin. We have only to look to the struggles of the Apostle Paul with his "flesh" and the failings of such great stalwarts of the faith as King David, King Solomon in his later life, the Apostle Peter, and others to see that this is so.

[Note: The reason that sin cannot achieve "dominion" over a Christian is that God, as a loving Father, will not permit it, and will stop it by applying chastening, scourging, and other means of discipline, including suffering, pain, and perhaps even letting you (like the prodigal son) hit bottom to show you just how well you can do on your own without Him. Believe me, you do not want any of these to happen.]

The Fifth thing the Christian needs to remember in his battle with PRESENT sin are the great promises and aids that God has made to and for him, which include ...

- a. The Christian has access to "*self-control*" through his use of the means of grace ...

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 6:22)

- b. The Christian is told that he will never have a special temptation that is not common to all men

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man” (I Corinthians 10:13)

- c. The Christian is told that God will not allow him to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear ...

“... but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able (I Corinthians 10:13)

- d. The Christian is told that God will always provide him with an escape route from every temptation ...

“... but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Corinthians 10:13)

- e. Most important of all, the Christian is also promised that he can do “*all things*” through Christ

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

These five things should give the Christian great aid and comfort in his fight against PRESENT sin.

We now come to our third, and most dangerous, “Challenge” to maintaining a full assurance of our salvation, which is ...

The “Challenge” of doubts and fears that arise from a simple refusal (perhaps unrealized) to take God at His word and to believe that what He says in His word actually does apply to us personally – i.e., the “Challenge” of a doubting and unbelieving heart.

Our third “Challenge” lies at the root of Challenges I and 2 and all the common doubts, concerns, fears and stumbling-blocks raised in Part II.

If we can learn to successfully handle and overcome “*Challenge 3*”, then all of these other challenges and concerns will disappear as well.

For this reason, we will spend a great deal of time in looking at “*Challenge 3*”.

Let’s start by asking, “*How does Challenge 3 arise?*”

It is not an unusual thing for a doubting and unbelieving heart to arise. We remember how often our Lord had to rebuke and admonish His own disciples with “*O you of little faith*” for their lack of belief and their slowness to believe.

Likewise, many Christians who have come to be convinced that a Christian can and should have a full assurance of their salvation, who have resolved all of their concerns and stumbling blocks to having a full assurance, who have started applying our teachings in their lives, and have perhaps even attained a good measure of an assurance of their salvation, can themselves begin to increasingly doubt their assurance of salvation.

This doubt usually arises due to some combination of the following four reasons

1. Starting or returning to indulging in a sin of some sort in their lives
2. Developing a fear that they are self-deceived and not really a Christian at all – Jesus did give us numerous warnings about self-deception, didn’t He?
3. Coming to think or feel that somehow, for some reason, the full assurance teachings in the Bible just don’t apply in their case because their situation is somehow “*different*” or of a more “*difficult and complex*” nature.
4. Having gone through a prolonged neglect of the means of grace. When we let our defenses down by neglecting the means of grace, we allow ourselves to start listening to the lies and accusations of Satan and to be guided more and more by our *feelings* and the *lies of Satan* instead of by the word of God.

So, what should we do?

Well, let’s start by taking a look at each of the four reasons as to why we might develop a doubting and unbelieving heart ... and what can be done about them

Our first Reason for possibly developing a doubting and unbelieving heart was ...

1. Our starting, or returning to, indulging in a sin of some sort in our lives

If we have started to “*practice*” a sin of some sort, we need to immediately forsake it. This would include a new or renewed “*practice*” of sins like “*hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions*” as well as “*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness*” (of which a renewed viewing of pornography would be a prime example). Confirm Galatians 5:19-21.

Keep in mind that we are NOT talking here about the normal struggles and failures of a Christian struggling with *surviving sin* in his life, BUT about a willful return to a regular and *unrepentant* “*practice*” of a sin of some sort from which we may feel guilt, shame, and remorse, but are unwilling to give it up.

We should also keep in mind that no Christian can ever say that he is “*not able*” to quit practicing any sin because one of the promised fruits of the Holy Spirit is “*self-control*”. Plus, he has God’s promise that “*sin shall not have dominion over you*” (Romans 6:14).

Because they are so important, let’s look again the words of our Lord concerning those who unrepentantly “*practice*” any sin ...

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 7:21-23)

So, on the basis of our Lord’s own statement, we can say that if you are currently “*practicing*” any sin and refuse to give it up, you have just cause to lack an assurance of salvation, and to even question your salvation itself.

Again, we want to always bear in mind there is a vast difference between a believer struggling against sin and a merely professing Christian or unbeliever practicing it.

Our second Reason for possibly developing a doubting and unbelieving heart was ...

2. Developing a fear that we are self-deceived and not really a Christian at all.

Self-deception is a real threat about which our Lord warned us many times, so, we should take it seriously. Most certainly, if we begin to worry about being self-deceived, Satan will come in and relentlessly use it as an opportunity to assault us with both our Past and Present sins in order to cast doubt upon and destroy the joy of our salvation and our witness to others.

To successfully face and counter the concern of having a false assurance of our salvation (which can recur repeatedly if we do not handle it right), we need to develop a “*full trust*” in God and His word. And, “*Yes*”, I did say we “*need to develop*” a “*full trust*” in God and His word. Trusting God and His word rather than our feelings does not come naturally. It comes only through a diligent and regular use of the means of grace.

Most important of all, we have been told (actually, commanded) by the Apostles Paul and Peter to diligently “*test*” and “*examine*” ourselves “*as to whether you are in the faith*” and to “*make your call and election sure*” ...

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.” (2 Peter 1:10)

So, you need to do this.

For help with doing this, we would refer you to “Paper # 8”, our next Paper, titled “How Can I Know for Sure That I am a Christian?”

We want to very specifically note that our “*test*” and “*examination*” is done in the nature of a *positive look at* the evidences of God’s grace in our lives *and not* a morbid introspection of our failures to perfectly keep His law (which failures will always be there).

Again, according to the Apostles Peter and Paul, we need to “*test*” and “*examine*” ourselves “*as to whether you are in the faith*” and to “*make your call and election sure*” to be able to know that our assurance of our salvation is true and genuine.

If after you have examined and tested yourself, and know that you are a Christian, your fears of self-deception continue to persist, you need to do three things ...

First, you need to go to God and cry out to Him “*with tears*”, like the father of the sick child ...

“Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” (Mark 5:24)

The need to do so will likely be more than just a one-time thing. You will, rather, likely have to, for a time, regularly and forcefully assault God’s throne with your pleas until you, by His grace, have resolved it within yourself. Until that happens, don’t give Him any rest, but ... boldly assault His throne ... lay His own promises out before Him ... and plead your rights as His child ... because the truth of the matter is that He dearly wants to give you an assurance of your salvation, but only when you have finally come to value and want it enough yourself.

Second, you need to increase your use of the means of grace. We need to come to the place in our spiritual lives where, when Satan does attack us with fears of self-deception, we can with a prayer dismiss it and him, based on a full trust in God and in His word. But we can reach that place only by and through a diligent use of the means of grace.

Third, you need to develop a one-page “*Summary Sheet*” of helpful “*bullet points*” concerning your fears of self-deception that you can pull out and read whenever these fears hit you. [Please see our example of a *Summary Sheet* at the end of Part II.]

If after all of this, your fears of self-deception continue to persist, you need to consider getting some competent Christian counseling.

Our third possible Reason for developing a doubting and unbelieving heart was ...

3. Coming to think or feel that somehow, even though we are a Christian, for some reason, the full assurance teachings in the Bible just don’t apply in our case because our situation is “*different*” and our sins are more “*complex and difficult*”.

First, let’s get rid of the belief that your situation or your sin is somehow “different” or “more complex and difficult” than that of others.

The Bible tells us very clearly that ...

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Corinthians 10:13)

Here we are clearly told that ...

That all of our temptations are ones that are “common to man” and none of them are “different” or unique to us

That God “*will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able*” to bear ...

And that ... “*with the temptation [God] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*”

Second, we need to get rid of the belief that somehow the promises and assurances of God don't apply to you in particular.

This is actually a fairly common, but very, very wrong, belief. It is wrong because ...

When Jesus says ...

“All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” (John 6:37)

And when Paul confirms it with ...

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:13)

... they FULLY DO mean for their teachings to apply to you personally!

You need to realize that for you to hold that the assurances of God somehow don't personally apply to you is a grievous insult to God's very character, for it implies that He is somehow not being fully open or truthful with you or is somehow misleading you.

The same goes for even thinking that your sin could be so great as to be beyond God's forgiveness or beyond the power of Christ's atonement. You should never, ever, ever, be guilty of diminishing the value of Christ's atonement or the extent of God's willingness to forgive. You have our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son to assure you that He will joyously welcome even the most debased of His children back.

So, in response to the fear that the assurances of the Bible just somehow don't apply to you or your case ...

Let's have no more thoughts of God's being insincere in your case or of His saying things that somehow do not apply to you when He clearly says that they do – for that is to call into question His very nature, goodness, integrity, power, and the veracity of His word.

Let's hear no more of your listening to the accusations and whisperings of Satan and believing them over the very clear word of God.

Let's have no more of your leaning on your own feelings and trusting them over against the very words of God Himself.

And, especially, let's never again even start to think that God will not receive you if you sincerely come to Him, or that any of your past or present sins put you beyond God's willingness or ability or readiness to forgive you.

You need to forsake all such unworthy thoughts of God forever and repent of allowing them to linger in your mind.

Our fourth Reason, and the most common cause, for our developing a doubting and unbelieving heart is, once again ...

4. A prolonged neglect of the means of grace on our part.

We have said throughout this Paper that a neglect (especially a prolonged one) of the means of grace is the root cause of virtually all of our spiritual problems, concerns, fears, and doubts.

Paul has told us repeatedly to NEVER rely on ourselves and our own abilities if we want to progress and be victorious in our spiritual battles ...

*“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells”
(Romans 7:18)*

Our Lord Himself has told us that ...

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

... and that if we are to have any success at all in our spiritual warfare, we must rely ENTIRELY on Him, for ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

So ... as our Lord has said ...

IF we want to “*bear much fruit*” in our Christian lives ...

IF we want to progress in sanctification ...

IF we want to maintain an assurance of our salvation, and by God’s grace overcome all of our Challenges, concerns, doubts and unbelief concerning it ...

THEN we must fully rely on and “*abide*” in Jesus Christ through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

The utter simplicity of it all is really remarkable!

If you would keep yourself from developing a doubting and unbelieving heart, and overcome the Challenges, concerns, doubts, fears, and “*fleshy*” unbelief, you have only two very simple rules to follow ...

First, put no reliance on yourself, for in your flesh “*nothing good dwells*” and in your struggle for sanctification “*the flesh profits nothing*”

Second, put all of your faith and reliance on Jesus Christ alone, “*for without Me you can do nothing.*”

One last time ...

If you would ... advance in your sanctification ... maintain your assurance of salvation ... “*bear much fruit*” ... and overcome the fears, doubts, and “*challenges*” to the assurance of your salvation ... you must not neglect a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

There is no other way.

It truly is that simple!!!

**We have looked at three “Challenges” to maintaining
an assurance of our salvation**

Our Lord, in John 13, gives us a wonderful teaching which beautifully covers all three of our “Challenges” and shows us the sure the remedy for them

The occasion of this wonderful teaching was our Lord’s washing of the disciples’ feet ...

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, are You washing my feet?’

Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.’

“Peter said to Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet!’

Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.’

Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’

Jesus said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’” (John 13:3-11)

We want to zero in on the last part of the passage where ...

“Peter said to Him, ‘You shall never wash my feet!’

Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.’

Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!’

Jesus said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” (John 13:8-10)

It is very important to note the distinction our Lord makes between “he who is bathed” and he who “needs only to wash his feet”.

We don't want to miss the significance of our Lord's statement that *“He who is bathed”* does not need to be *“bathed”* again, but *“needs only to wash his feet”* and that *“He who is bathed”* is *“completely clean, and you are clean”*. For this verse shows us the simplicity and childlike faith with which we can settle forever all three of our *“Challenges”* to maintaining an assurance of our salvation.

So, let's look more closely at this teaching of our Lord

The phrase *“He who is bathed”* refers to one who has been *“justified”*. Our justification occurs in God's heavenly court and is a one-time cleansing from the penal guilt of all our sin. In our Justification, God imputes (accounts, reckons) all of our sins to Christ on the cross and also imputes (accounts, reckons) the righteousness of Christ to our account. These two imputations in God's heavenly court enable God to legally and justly declare us to be both *“Not Guilty”* and *“Righteous”*. As such, we have been *“bathed”* and are now *“completely clean, and you are clean”* from the guilt and stain of sin and also wear the *“righteousness”* of Jesus Christ as our covering garment.

[We note that we are not “righteous” in and of ourselves, but are covered with a “foreign” righteousness, that of Jesus Christ imputed to our account.]

It is very important to understand that *Justification* is a one-time act. We are never any more *‘justified’* than when God originally declared us to be *“justified”* in His heavenly court. We do not grow or progress in our Justification.

Both of the imputations from our Justification, i.e., from our *bathing*, are very important ...

The imputation of our sins to Christ on the cross means that the penalty for all of our sins – past, present, and future – has been paid and we are forgiven. Thus, we have been *“bathed”*, declared *“Not Guilty”* and are now, and always will be, *“completely clean, and you are clean”* of any guilt and shame.

The imputation of the righteousness of Christ to our account means that we are now *“righteous”* in God's sight and that whenever God looks at us, in judgment or otherwise, He sees not our sins, but the righteousness of His own dear Son imputed to our account. We see yet again how we are accounted to be *“bathed”* and to be *“completely clean, and you are clean”*.

This is why our Lord could state that those who are Justified have been “*bathed*” and are “*completely clean*”. They have been absolved from the guilt of all their sins, both PAST sins (Challenge # 1), PRESENT sins (Challenge #2), and future sins. They have been “*bathed*” and are “*completely clean, and you are clean*”.

This should doubly sooth our consciences over all of our sins – past, present, and future. And it should completely do away with any guilt concerns over PAST and PRESENT sin, and also set an unbelieving and doubting heart to rest (Challenge # 3).

But if we have been “*bathed*” and are “*completely clean; and you are clean*,” why are we told that “*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet*.” ...

Why is there a “*need to wash [our] feet*”?

Even though the redeemed Christian has been twice-assured that he is “*completely clean*” and “*clean*”, he must still continue his intense daily struggle with sin for the rest of his life and will, as a consequence, “*need*” a daily washing of his “*feet*” by the Holy Spirit, i.e., he will still need a daily cleansing from the presence of *sin* and *sinful desires* that remain as a part of our “*flesh*” or “*old man*”. We stress “*presence*” of sinful desires and *not* “*guilt*”.

Whereas being “*bathed*” refers to our Justification, “*washing our feet*” refers to our Sanctification process. Our Sanctification involves the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives helping us to put off sin and put on holiness. Unlike Justification, Sanctification is an ongoing process.

It is vitally important for us to understand that we, as Christians do not acquire new guilt in our daily sin.

New guilt from new sins does not, and cannot, adhere to the Christian for the simple reason that the Lord Jesus Christ has already paid the penalty and atoned for all of the Christian’s sins (past, present, and future).

So though we greatly “*grieve*” God when we, as Christians, sin, there is no judicial wrath in God’s attitude toward the Christian sinner, only a great “*grief*” and disappointment, a grief and disappointment that we personally have caused Him (Ephesians 4:30).

Again, because it is so crucial that we understand it, there is no newly acquired penal guilt in our daily sin from which we need to again be “*bathed*” – But we do “*need*” a daily “*washing of our feet*” from the effects of daily sin and sinful desires.

That is why our Lord told Peter

“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean” (John 13:10)

We need the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit to daily “wash our feet” from sinful desires and help us to more and more live to Christ and die to sin.

Thus does John Calvin comment on our passage ...

“For Christ makes us clean when he removes the guilt of our sins by his atoning sacrifice, that they may not come into judgment before God, and on the other hand, he washes us when he takes away, by his spirit, the wicked and sinful desires of the flesh.” (Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. XVIII, John 13:8, Page 58.)

On the phrase “needs only to wash his feet”, Calvin further states ...

“Thus Christ always finds in us something to cleanse. What is here spoken of is not the forgiveness of sins, but the renewal, by which Christ, by gradual and uninterrupted succession, delivers his followers entirely from the sinful desires of the flesh.” (Calvin’s Commentaries, Vol. XVIII, John 13:9, Page 59.)

Christians should always hate and immediately repent of any sin in their lives. To hate and truly repent of any and all present sin in our lives is a sure sign of God’s sanctifying grace working in our lives. But, again, very importantly, in our repenting and acknowledgement of our present sin, WE ARE NOT asking for pardon of newly acquired guilt, BUT ARE asking for the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit to help us to hate the sin more and more and to more thoroughly “abide” in Christ through a more diligent use of the means of grace that we may abandon the sin altogether.

This is why ...

“He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean” (John 13:10)

And so, on the basis of our Lord’s own word, we can say concerning our Three “Challenges” to MAINTAINING a full assurance of our salvation

Concerning Challenges 1 and 2, the Challenges of PAST and PRESENT sin ...

... you have been “washed” (i.e., you have been “bathed” and “justified”) and are now like the redeemed Corinthian Christians ...

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards; nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (I Corinthians 6:9- 11)

The Corinthian Christians were once themselves “guilty” before God of all of the damnable things mentioned above. They were ...

“... fornicators ... idolaters ... adulterers ... homosexuals ... sodomites ... thieves ... covetous ... drunkards ... revilers ... extortioners”

But they were “washed” (i.e., they were “bathed”, they were “justified”) and “were sanctified” and are now “completely clean; and you are clean”.

The same is true of you.

Concerning Challenge 3, the Challenge of a doubtful and unbelieving heart ...

Our Lord Himself has very clearly told you twice that you are

“... completely clean; and you are clean”.

Can you not simply accept with childlike faith the word of your Lord and Savior? You must do so, for He has also told us ...

“Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” (Jesus Christ, Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17).

Do not bring shame upon yourself by doubting or disbelieving the truth of such a great teaching of our Lord, or by thinking that it somehow does not apply to you!

Do not make our Lord have to look you in the face and ask you the same question He asked of the unbelievers of His day ...

“And if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8:45)

It’s a good question. Give it some thought.

**And so, the choice of maintaining an assurance of your salvation
is yours to make ...**

If you would ...

Overcome our three challenges,

Get past unbiblical assurance-defeating concerns, doubts, and fears,

Prevent the development of a doubting and disbelieving heart,

Advance in your sanctification,

And maintain a full assurance of your salvation,

... you must remember our two main rules ...

1. First, never rely on yourself or your own ability to do any of these things ...

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” (John 6:63)

2. Second, rely only and entirely on our Lord Jesus Christ. You must do this if you are to have any success at all, for it is exactly as our Lord Himself has told us ...

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Again, you “*abide*” in Christ through a diligent application of the means of grace. There is no other way to maintain an assurance of your salvation, advance in your sanctification, and prevent the development of a doubting and unbelieving heart.

IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE!!!

**In sum, you need to advance from being a “milk” Christian
to being a “solid-food” Christian**

The author of Hebrews tells us that there are great differences in different Christian's spiritual maturity levels ...

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Paul in a similar vein writes to the Corinthian Christians ...

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal”. (I Corinthians 3:1-3)

So, if you want to maintain an assurance of your salvation, overcome our three Challenges, and progress in your sanctification, you have to decide whether you want to

- a. remain a *spiritually immature*, “milk-fed” Christian “babe” ... or ...
- b. progress to being a “solid food” Christian, a Christian of “full age ... who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

While you are deciding, you should note that the “*milk*” Christian draws a stern rebuke and admonishment from the author of Hebrews (probably Paul). Saddest of all, when the “*milk*” Christian faces his Lord, having advanced very little in his Christian maturity level, he risks not hearing the most wonderful and desired of all approbations, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (Matthew 25:21).

It does not have to be that way.

You have a choice to make, Christian, and your choice will determine the degree of love, joy, peace, faithful witness to others, and degree of assurance of salvation that you will experience in your Christian life.

You must have the help of Christ's Spirit if you are to overcome our three Challenges, maintain an assurance of your salvation, and advance in your sanctification.

You will especially need to take Paul's advice to ...

"... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13)

... and you will need help *'both to will and to do'* ...

Again, you can do all this only by "*abiding*" in Christ through a regular and diligent use of the means of grace.

In closing, let us reemphasize one last time the overwhelming importance of your abiding "*in Christ*"

The tiny phrase "*in Christ*", which Paul uses over one hundred and sixty times in the New Testament, is exceedingly important to the attaining and maintaining of an assurance of your salvation ...

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Always remember that your assurance is based on the fact that you are accepted "*in Christ*" and not in yourself or in your works. Your salvation and the legal foundation of it are founded and rest on on your being "*in Christ ... in Him ... in the Beloved*". Your salvation stands outside of yourself and is founded "*in Christ*." You ARE "*accepted in the Beloved*" and NOT in yourself or what you do or don't do.

It is only by "*abiding*" *in Christ* that you can advance in your sanctification, solve all doubts and fears, meet all "Challenges" and maintain an assurance of your salvation.

We would close with the words of Charles Spurgeon, the "Prince of Preachers" who gives us a beautiful summary of all that we have said throughout this Paper

His selected verse is ...

"Looking unto Jesus." (Hebrews 12:2)

IT is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, "Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you will never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold of Jesus." All these are thoughts about self, and we shall never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that "Christ is all in all." Remember, therefore, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee — it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee — it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument — it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Jesus, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith. We shall never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what Jesus is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by "looking unto Jesus." Keep thine eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh upon thy mind; when thou wakest in the morning look to Him; when thou liest down at night look to Him. Oh! let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail thee. "My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness: I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name."

[Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, June 28th)]

We would also invite you to read our Paper # 9 ...

From "Milk" to "Solid Food" – The Joyous and Glorious Road to "Full Age" Christian Maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Soli Deo Gloria

[Glory to God Alone]