

1 John Lesson 22-“Certainty of Our Assurance” FAQ

June 4, 2025

- **Is it possible to have assurance of salvation?** Yes, the scripture teaches that it is possible to know if you are saved and on your way to heaven. The Bible not only teaches that assurance is possible but also commands believers to pursue the path where that assurance lies, as emphasized in 2 Peter 1:10 to "be even more diligent to make your call and election sure." Assurance is presented as a privilege and a birthright for a Christian.
- **Why is assurance of salvation not frequently taught in contemporary Christianity?** Assurance of salvation is often ignored in modern evangelical circles for several reasons. Some believe that if someone says a specific prayer, walks an aisle, makes a statement, or is baptized, they are automatically saved, making further discussion of assurance unnecessary. This approach is sometimes referred to as decisional regeneration or baptismal regeneration. Additionally, some churches avoid discussing assurance because they do not want to raise doubts about people's salvation, preferring to keep people feeling content. The idea of assurance is also often ignored by those who believe salvation can be lost, as this belief makes assurance impossible.
- **How has the understanding of assurance of salvation evolved throughout Christian history?** Historically, assurance has been a major issue in the church. Roman Catholicism, for example, traditionally denies that anyone can have full assurance of salvation, viewing salvation as a joint effort between God and the sinner, where the sinner might fail to do their part. This perspective often emphasizes works as the way to reach heaven. The Reformation movement, led by figures like Martin Luther and John Calvin, sought to recover the gospel and taught that believers *can* and *should* be fully assured of salvation. Calvin specifically taught that assurance is the essence of faith. Later, the Westminster Confession of Faith in the 17th century suggested that infallible assurance does not *so* belong to the essence of faith that it is immediately attained, implying it may come after difficulties. The Puritans, following this, sometimes went to the extreme of demanding preachers produce a widespread lack of assurance to encourage striving for election. More recently, some evangelists, like Billy Graham, have reportedly avoided the issue of assurance to avoid confronting the possibility that some people they told were saved might not have been.
- **What did John Calvin teach about the relationship between faith and assurance?** John Calvin taught that assurance is "of the essence of faith." He believed that when a person puts their trust in Jesus, they experience this act of faith and, based on the promise of God's word that salvation is by grace through faith, they can know they are saved. Calvin argued that there is an inherent essence of faith that is a component of your assurance of salvation. This faith involves a cognitive understanding of truth, an emotional response, and an action of confessing Christ.
- **What are the different elements that contribute to a believer's assurance of salvation, according to the speaker?** The speaker identifies three elements of assurance. The first is a **cognitive assurance** that comes from the promises of scripture. This is knowing in

your mind that the Bible is true and that if you embrace Christ as Lord and Savior, you are saved based on God's promises. However, this cognitive assurance is not always "full assurance." The second element is **subjective assurance**, which comes from the Holy Spirit witnessing within the believer. The third element is **behavioral assurance**, which is determined by examining one's life to see if it aligns with God's word and reflects a transformed life. Full assurance is described as requiring all three elements.

- **How does the Bible address both true believers and false Christians regarding assurance?** The Bible encourages true believers with the promise of secure and eternal salvation and prompts them to pursue the path that makes their calling and election sure. At the same time, the Bible intentionally makes false Christians insecure by demanding self-examination and by not validating a superficial, event-based "salvation" that lacks transformation. The Bible aims to make false Christians uncomfortable and fearful by challenging their false sense of security.
- **What is the potential danger of focusing solely on an event like praying a prayer for salvation?** Focusing only on an event like praying a prayer can lead to a shallow understanding of salvation and a false sense of assurance. People may profess faith for less than genuine reasons, and if this profession is not accompanied by the internal work of the Holy Spirit and external evidence of a transformed life, the assurance based solely on the event may be false. This approach can lead to people believing they are saved without the reality of a genuine saving faith.
- **According to 1 John 2:3, how can believers know if they know God?** According to 1 John 2:3, "By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." While acknowledging that believers will not keep His commandments perfectly all the time, the passage indicates that a genuine knowledge of God is evidenced by the desire of one's heart to keep His commandments. This aligns with the concept of behavioral assurance and being known by one's "fruits," as mentioned by a participant.