

Briefing Document: 1 John Lesson 65 - The Foundation of Christian Assurance

Wednesday-June 10, 2026

Executive Summary

This document summarizes the core teachings from 1 John regarding the assurance of salvation. The central theme is that God desires for believers to have full confidence in their relationship with Him. This assurance is not based on human effort but on the finished work of Jesus Christ and the eternal nature of God's promises. While factors like strong preaching, a nagging conscience, and the strictness of the Law can cause temporary doubt, these elements are designed to drive the believer toward Christ rather than away from Him. True assurance results in maximum joy, boldness in prayer, and a life marked by spiritual fruit rather than fear.

The Foundation of Assurance in 1 John

The primary purpose of the Epistle of 1 John is to provide believers with the certainty of their standing before God. The text outlines several key reasons why this assurance is vital for the Christian life.

The Purpose of Joy

- **Fellowship as the Source:** True fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing this relationship is secure leads to a full and overflowing joy.
- **The Problem of Joyless Christians:** Many believers appear "sour" or unhappy because they lack certainty regarding their salvation. John writes so that their "joy may be full" (*1 John 1:4*).

The Thesis of 1 John

The core mission of the letter is captured in *1 John 5:13: 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.*

- **Knowing vs. Guessing:** The Greek term used is *ginosko*¹, which means to know, find out, or be persuaded.
 - **Confidence in the Truth:** Believers are urged to anchor their hearts in the "Truth," which refers to both the written Word of God and the incarnate person of Jesus Christ.
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The Doctrine of Eternal Security

A major theme of the teaching is that salvation, by its very nature, is eternal and cannot be lost. If salvation could be forfeited, it would imply that the work of Christ was insufficient or "deficient."

The Unbreakable Chain of Salvation

God's plan for the believer is a complete process that began before the world was created. This "perfect plan" follows a specific progression:

1. **Election:** God chooses the individuals He will save before the foundation of the world.
2. **Calling:** He calls those He has chosen.
3. **Justification:** Everyone He calls, He also justifies (declares righteous).
4. **Glorification:** Everyone He justifies will eventually be glorified in heaven.

The Finished Work of Christ

- **The Intercessory Work:** Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, ensuring no successful accusation can ever be brought against a believer.
- **The Holy Spirit as a Guarantee:** The Holy Spirit is described as the "engagement ring" or the "first fruit" of salvation. He is the seal that holds the believer until they see the Lord.
- **Deliverance:** As noted in *2 Timothy 4:18*, *And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.*

Why Believers Struggle with Assurance

Despite the security of salvation, many Christians struggle with doubt. The teaching identifies several reasons for this struggle, noting that some are actually signs of spiritual health.

1. The Impact of Strong Preaching

Weak preaching often makes people feel comfortable in a "minimalist gospel" where nothing is questioned. However, strong, biblical preaching focuses on God's holy standards.

- **Anxious Hearts:** The pulpit is intended to create "anxious hearts" that lead to self-examination.
- **Self-Testing:** According to *2 Corinthians 13:5*, believers must *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*

2. The Role of the Conscience and the Law

- **The Conscience:** The conscience is designed by God to accuse and berate the individual for sin. It does not know how to provide mercy or forgiveness; it only knows how to identify when a standard has been missed.
- **The Law:** The Law of God is black and white. It says, "Do this or die." It contains no grace or forgiveness. Its purpose is to act as a "schoolmaster" to drive the sinner to find mercy in Christ.

3. The "Barn Door" of Guilt

The document uses an analogy of a man who hammered a nail into a barn door for every sin. Even after the nails were pulled out (representing forgiveness), the holes remained.

- **Lingering Guilt:** Many Christians walk in guilt because they cannot get over the "holes" in their past. They feel they are "too bad" to be saved, which ignores the depth of God's grace.

The Danger of Lacking Assurance

Lacking assurance is described as "conversing with Satan." When a person doubts God's love, they become susceptible to further spiritual misery.

The Progression of Doubt	Description
Initial Doubting	A person begins to question if they are truly saved.
Suspicion of Grace	The individual becomes suspicious of Christ's mercy and distrusts His love.
Full Conclusion	The person decides that Christ does not love them and never will.
Aggravated Condemnation	The longer they live, the more they believe their condemnation is certain.

Practical Application and Outcomes

The ultimate goal of teaching on assurance is to move the believer from a state of fear to a state of bold confidence.

- **Bold Access:** Because of Christ, believers have *boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him (Ephesians 3:12)*.

- **Spiritual Anchoring:** Hope serves as an *anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast* (Hebrews 6:19).
- **Fruit Inspection:** One way to verify assurance is to look for "fruit"—changes in character and righteous actions—which indicate the Spirit is at work.
- **Shelter from Legalism:** Assurance provides a "shelter" for those who have been spiritually "beaten up" by perfectionism or churches that focus only on criticism and judgment.

Phonetic Guide and Definitions

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Brief Definition
Ginosko	ghin-occe'-ko	To know, to come to know, to recognize, or to understand completely.

Footnotes ¹ *Ginosko* is used in the context of *1 John 3:19* to describe the means by which we know we are of the truth.