

Study Guide-1 John Lesson 67

Wednesday-July 1, 2026

This study guide examines the biblical doctrine of the assurance of salvation as presented in the First Epistle of John and the historical teachings of Jonathan Edwards. It explores why believers sometimes doubt their standing with God and how trials and "holy affections" serve as evidence of a true relationship with Jesus Christ.

Quiz: Understanding the Lesson

Instructions: Answer the following questions in two to three sentences based on the information provided in the lesson.

1. Why can strong, convicting preaching sometimes lead a person to question their salvation?
 2. How does an inability to accept God's forgiveness create a lack of assurance in a believer?
 3. According to the lesson, how do some people mistakenly interpret the presence of trials in their lives?
 4. What was the Lord's response to the Apostle Paul when he pleaded for his "thorn in the side" to be removed?
 5. Why did the speaker suggest that God is in the "business of breaking people down" or pruning them?
 6. Who was Jonathan Edwards, and what role did he play in American religious history?
 7. According to Jonathan Edwards, what is the difference between the "saving operations" and the "common operations" of the Holy Spirit?
 8. How does the "Reformed" or Calvinist viewpoint describe the nature of salvation and its manifestation in a person's life?
 9. Describe the "No Lordship" theology that has emerged in the last few decades.
 10. What is the necessary relationship between justification and sanctification in a true convert?
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The Foundations of Assurance

The following sections summarize the core teachings regarding why believers lack assurance and how they can find confidence in their faith.

Reasons for a Lack of Assurance

The document identifies six primary reasons why individuals may struggle to feel certain of their salvation:

- **Strong Preaching:** Powerful teaching can be so convicting that it causes listeners to wonder if they are truly saved.
- **Inability to Accept Forgiveness:** Some people continue to dwell on their past sins and fail to forgive themselves, even after God has forgiven them.
- **Misunderstanding the Gospel:** A failure to grasp the complete work of Jesus Christ can lead to doubt.
- **Lack of a Specific Memory:** Some worry because they cannot remember the exact moment or date they were saved.
- **The Presence of Indwelling Sin:** Seeing the "flesh" or sinful desires still active in their lives causes some to question their conversion.
- **Misinterpreting Trials:** Many believe that if they were truly God's children, He would not allow them to suffer or face severe hardships like illness or job loss.

The Role of Tested Faith

Contrary to the idea that trials prove God does not care, the lesson suggests that trials are the source of the strongest assurance.

- **Perfecting in Weakness:** As recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Lord told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."
- **Pruning for Growth:** God uses trials to strip away distractions so that believers can see Him more clearly, as He did with Job, Peter, and Paul.
- **Refinement:** When faith is tested and the believer relies on God, their faith is refined and increases. As Romans 8:35 asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" The Apostle Paul experienced these and found his assurance in God's sustained love.

Historical Perspective: The Great Awakening

During the mid-1700s, a period known as the Great Awakening occurred in America.

- **Jonathan Edwards:** A preeminent theologian and preacher known for the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." He called for deep repentance and holiness.

- **Religious Affections:** Edwards wrote a treatise titled *On Religious Affections* (1746) to help people identify evidence of true conversion. He concluded that true salvation is marked by "holy affections"—a genuine passion for righteousness and a zeal for holiness.

Theological Viewpoints on Assurance

The lesson compares three major perspectives on the nature of salvation:

- **Reformed (Calvinist):** Teaches a permanent nature of regeneration. If you are saved, it is a permanent change that will consistently show up in your life through your actions and desires.
- **Arminian (Wesleyan):** Suggests that regeneration is temporary because a person can lose their salvation and then get it back. Therefore, the evidence of salvation is also only temporary.
- **No Lordship (Modern):** A more recent view claiming that a person can be permanently saved but may only show a temporary or non-existent change in their life. This view suggests one can accept Jesus Christ as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord.

Answer Key

1. Strong preaching is often very convicting, highlighting sin and the high standards of God. Because of this intense conviction, some people begin to doubt if they have truly met the requirements of being saved.
2. Even when God has forgiven a person, they may continue to think about their past sins and fail to forgive themselves. This focus on past guilt prevents them from resting in the peace and assurance that comes from God's complete forgiveness.
3. Some people believe that if they were truly children of God, He would never let bad things happen to them. When they face severe tests like cancer or financial loss, they interpret these trials as evidence that God does not love them or that they were never saved.
4. The Lord did not take the trial away but instead told Paul that His grace was sufficient. He explained that His divine strength is made perfect when a human is in a state of weakness.
5. The speaker notes that God often prunes or "breaks down" believers to remove the things they rely on other than Him. By stripping away self-strength, God makes the believer more useful for His kingdom and allows them to see Him more clearly.
6. Jonathan Edwards was a famous American theologian who preached during the Great Awakening in the 1740s. His powerful preaching on repentance and holiness led many to seek a deeper understanding of true conversion and assurance.
7. Common operations are influences of the Holy Spirit that may convict a person or bring them to a surface-level faith, but these fall short of a true inward change. Saving operations result in a complete renewal of the person's nature, leading to a lasting pursuit of holiness.

8. The Reformed view argues that when a person is saved, they receive a new nature that is permanent. This permanent change will naturally and continually manifest itself through the person's desire to live righteously and obey God.
 9. This modern viewpoint suggests that a person can be permanently saved by praying a prayer or making a decision, but they do not necessarily have to change their lifestyle. It claims one can have Jesus Christ as Savior without following Him as Lord or showing any "holy affections."
 10. Justification (being declared righteous) and sanctification (the process of becoming holy) cannot be separated. According to the word of God, those who are genuinely justified will also undergo the process of sanctification and manifest a new, transformed nature.
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Essay Questions for Further Reflection

1. Explain the statement "Nobody is too weak to be useful to God, but many people are too strong to be useful." How does this relate to the concept of "tested faith"?
 2. Compare and contrast the "No Lordship" theology with the teachings of James 2:17, which states that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."
 3. Discuss Jonathan Edwards' concept of "Holy Affections." What are they, and why did he consider them the primary evidence of a true conversion?
 4. The lesson mentions that the modern church environment is often "experience-driven" and "shallow." How might this lack of depth contribute to a false sense of assurance among churchgoers?
 5. Reflect on the relationship between the Great Awakening and the American Revolutionary War as mentioned in the lesson. How did the spiritual revival prepare the people for the events that followed?
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Glossary of Key Terms

- **Affection:** In this context, a deep-seated passion, desire, or zeal for something, such as "holy affections" for the things of God.
- **Arminianism (Wesleyanism):** A theological view that salvation is not necessarily permanent and can be lost through a lack of faith or falling into sin.
- **Assurance:** The internal confidence and certainty that a believer has regarding their salvation and their relationship with God.
- **Beguiling:** Deceptive or charming in a way that can be misleading (used in the text to describe a small child).

- **Conviction:** A strong persuasion or belief, often referring to the Holy Spirit making a person aware of their sin.
- **Epistle:** A formal letter; in this study, it refers to the letters written by the Apostle John.
- **Gospel:** The "good news" regarding the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.
- **Irrevocable:** Something that cannot be changed, reversed, or taken back.
- **Justification:** The act of God declaring a sinner righteous through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Lordship:** The authority and sovereign rule of Jesus Christ over every area of a believer's life.
- **Reformed (Calvinism):** A theological tradition emphasizing the sovereignty of God and the permanent nature of salvation for those who are truly regenerated.
- **Regeneration:** The "new birth" or spiritual transformation where God gives a person a new nature.
- **Sanctification:** The ongoing process by which a believer is set apart for God and grows in holiness and righteousness.
- **Treatise:** A written work dealing formally and systematically with a subject.
- **Tribulation:** A period of great trouble, suffering, or distress.

Foreign Language References

The speaker used a few informal terms at the end of the lesson to check for understanding among the listeners. While he referred to some as "Greek," they are actually a mix of common slang and other languages.

Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Capich [¹]	kah-PEESH	A slang version of the Italian <i>capisci</i> , meaning "Do you understand?"

[¹]: Footnote: Although the speaker humorously identified his closing remarks as including "a little Greek," the term "capich" is actually an Americanized Italian slang term. No actual Greek vocabulary words were used as part of the formal teaching in this lesson.