

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Virgil Warren, PhD

I. BASIS OF ASSURANCE

The assurance of salvation lies more in God than in us.

A. Messiah's work

1. Atonement removes sin.
 - a. Permanent cleansing: Hebrews **10:10**
 - b. Continuous cleansing: 1 John **1:7**
2. Intercession removes sins: Psalm **110:4** + Hebrews **2:17-18**.

B. God's character

1. Loving: Romans **8:32**
2. Willing: 2 Peter **3:9** God is not trying to see how many he can send to hell.
3. Unchangeable: Hebrews **6:17-18**

C. God's promises

1. Protection
 - a. From conquest: John **10:28-29**
 - b. From overwhelming temptation: 1 Corinthians **10:13**
2. Empowerment: 1 Corinthians **10:13** (Ephesians **3:14-19**)
3. Guidance: 2 Peter **1:3**

God did not just set up a system of salvation and let it go at that. That is only half the story. There is the work of the Son, but also the work of the Holy Spirit.

D. Our experience (condition)

1. Our past responses: 1 John **3:18-20**
2. Our present feelings: 1 John **3:21**
3. Our present intentions

II. CONTENT OF ASSURANCE

The assurance of salvation has more to do with deliverance from sin than deliverance from sinning.

Salvation removes sin.

Salvation removes sins.

Salvation does not remove sinning.

A. Problem of sins after conversion

1. Goal: Matthew **5:48**: *"Be therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

Reality: 1 John **1:8**: *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."*

2. How can we balance the goal (perfection, the unachievable) with sinning uncharacteristically (the achievable)? How much sin is too much sin?

Marriage example: Things are measured not in terms of number, but in terms of attitude ("spirit").

3. Change from a quantitative (law) to a qualitative basis for relationship (interpersonal)

Aspiration is counted for achievement;	because	faith
attempt is counted for accomplishment.	vs.	works

B. Some false expectations

1. Temptation will have no power.
2. We will have a supernatural gift.
3. We will be receiving obvious, miraculous guidance.
4. Health will be strong.
5. Wealth will be ours.
6. No more difficulties will come.

Name-it-claim-it and health-and-wealth-gospel are self-centeredness dressed up in religious wool.

C. Doubts that come

III. MEANS OF ASSURANCE

The assurance of salvation comes from the experience of “spiritual” (interpersonal) growing.

A. Growth generally

Growth tends to keep us faithful in fact;
so growth tends to keep us feeling faithful.

B. Growth in understanding: Hebrews **1-9a**

1. We keep ourselves immersed in Scripture.
2. We do not give up what we have until we find something better.

C. Growth in activity with people: Hebrews **9b-13**

1. Keep yourself around God’s people.
2. Fellowship with the faithful: Hebrews **10:24-25**
3. Imitation of the faithful: Hebrews **13:7**
4. Service to all mankind—learn to love: Hebrews **13:2**

D. Personal growth: Philippians **4:8-9**

Growth plus positive reinforcement creates assurance of salvation. Growth as the means of perseverance becomes also the means of assurance.

IV. TIME OF ASSURANCE

The assurance of salvation lies in the present more than in the future.

- A. Hebrews **10:37-39**: Wherever a punishment is specified, the possibility of apostasy is real.
- B. Hebrews **2:4**: A Christian principle is stated; hence, the Hebrew writer cannot mean that such an idea does not apply to Christians.

Concluding Notations

We are not talking here about making truth relative, but about God’s avowed willingness to overlook honest ignorance of the truth. We are not talking about making morality relative, but about God’s avowed willingness to overlook (repentant) behavior against morality or by omission of morality. God forgives ignorance as well as sin, so we do not need to have complete knowledge or complete goodness to be in relationship to him. Attitude makes the difference in both cases.

If God is willing to forgive sin not based on ignorance, surely he is willing to forgive behavior based on ignorance, especially when it is something like, say, the form of baptism, a positive commandment, which cannot be derived from first principles (positive commandment about formal acts).

Our salvation does not depend on complete goodness (1 John 1:8-10).

complete knowledge (Acts 17:30; Romans 2; 5:13).

Our salvation does depend on attitude (1 John 3:24b).

love (1 John 5:2).

christir.org