

Our State of Theology – 9g(4)

The Holy Spirit: The Fruit of the Spirit – Assurance of Salvation

- Have you ever doubted your salvation?
- Have you wondered that, if you died, you would go to heaven?
- How can you know, have a deep-seated assurance that you are saved?
- One of the manifestations (fruit) of the Holy Spirit is that He gives Christians that assurance of their salvation.

Isaiah 32:9-17 (NIV84)

¹⁷The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

- This verse was addressed to a people who were complacently lounging in false security and trust of their abundant physical and material resources.
- God was warning them that their misplaced complacency would be coming to an end through judgment.
- The complacent women (v.9) was an illustration of a society that did not trust in God, but trusted in their abundant harvest.
- Judgment would come and nothing would change the devastation, until (v.15) the Holy Spirit is poured upon them from on high.
- As a result of the Holy Spirit's presence (indwelling), the fruit of righteousness would spring up, producing peace. The effect of the fruit would be quietness and confidence *forever*.
- This promise (and warning) is not only for Israel, but for all of us today.
- When a Christian lacks peace, quietness and confidence, a very good possibility would be that their trust is based on the false security of material things and not in the Lord.
 - A false security and complacency often exists when there is an abundance of material possessions
 - Trembling, shuddering, mourning and a feeling of abandonment (v.10-14), when the abundance they trusted in is destroyed.
- Where God grants righteousness, with it comes peace and assurance. God who grants us righteousness with it grants assurance.¹
- How do you know if the assurance you have is genuine or false?

False Assurance

- There are people who have assurance but they have no right to it.
 - How did they get it?
 - Somebody gave them some information about salvation which was not true. They believed that, and because they believed what they think is truth, they feel secure.
- There are other people who misjudge their spiritual condition.
 - They know the truth and they think they have really believed the truth but they haven't.
- Much of our modern-day evangelism contributes to this false hope by using Scripture as little *formulas*.
 - The formula: using God's commands to arrive at a conclusion that is not necessarily God's.
 - Example:* Romans 10:9 says that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
 - *Command #1:* Confess, "Jesus is Lord."
 - *Command #2:* Believe in your heart God raised Jesus from the dead.
 - You ask them if they did that, and they say, "Yes."
 - *Conclusion:* They're saved.
- The problem is that you don't know if they're saved.
 - How was this verse presented to that person?
 - Were they offered a "*health and wealth gospel*," followed up with a *get-saved quick formula* at the end by just saying, "Jesus is Lord," and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead.

Matthew 7:21 (NIV84)

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

James 2:14–26 (HCSB)

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can his faith save him?

¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food

¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it?

¹⁷In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [John MacArthur Sermon Archive](#) (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

dead by itself.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works.

¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well. **The demons also believe—and they shudder.**

²⁰Foolish man! Are you willing to learn that faith without works is useless?

²¹Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

²²You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was perfected.

²³So the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, and he was called God’s friend.

²⁴You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

²⁵And in the same way, wasn’t Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by a different route?

²⁶For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- The Puritans say, “Tested then trusted.”
False premise: If you know the facts of the gospel, and you believe the facts of the gospel, you’re a Christian. [*Real question:* Do you know Him?]
- We are basing assurance of salvation on a bare inference, an untested profession, not confirmed by the Holy Spirit or by any testing.

The truth of assurance is the award of tested and proven faith. The Holy Spirit gives it, not a human counselor.²

Luke 8:13 (NIV84)

¹³**Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.**

- Some (including the Roman Catholic Church) believe that no one can have the assurance of salvation.
The Roman Catholic Church conceives of salvation as a joint effort by man and God and can only be maintained through the doing of good works. It says to the believer you can never be absolutely sure of your salvation.
If one’s assurance of salvation is based on one’s performance of good works, he or she can only speculate if they are saved or not. Why? Because if my salvation depends on God and me, I might mess up.

- So, you have the absence of security because man can fail. In historical biblical theology where salvation is all the work of God, you have the doctrine of security which leads to assurance.
- Are we saved by grace alone or does one’s salvation depend in part on his or her meritorious good works.
If by works, one can never be sure of salvation.
If by grace, as the Reformers taught, then one can be sure of salvation even though he or she may not always be in full possession of that assurance.
- Some people have assurance who have no right to it. Some people deny that anybody can have assurance.³

Lack of Assurance

- One major reason why some lack assurance of salvation is they’re not saved.
- Why do some Christians lack assurance?

Romans 7:7, 13 (NIV84)

⁷What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed **I would not have known what sin was except through the law.** For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

¹³Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But **in order that sin might be recognized as sin,** it produced death in me through what was good, so that **through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.**

- Scripture sets a high and holy standard for the saved. It brings a strong conviction of sin which can produce doubt, particularly in a sinning Christian.
- Fewer people today struggle with assurance because the teaching [they receive] lacks a strong call to holiness, and the preachers feel it’s their duty to make everybody feel good.

But convicting preaching can create doubt.⁴

- Listen to the contents of this letter: “Dear [Pastor], I’ve been attending [your church] for several years. As a result of a growing conviction in my heart, a result of your preaching and seeming to be powerless against the temptations which arise in my heart and constantly succumbing to them, in talks with pastors and godly men about my growing doubts has led me to believe I’m not saved. How sad it is for me to not be able to enter in because of the sin which clings to me and from which I long to be free. How bizarre for one who teaches in a Sunday School with heartfelt conviction, a trainer in Discipleship Evangelism, a seminarian, a

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

discipler, so many times I have determined in my heart to repent, to shake loose my want to sin, to forsake all for Jesus only to find myself doing the sin I don't want to do and not doing the good I want to do. After my fiancée and I broke up I memorized Ephesians as part of an all-out effort against sin only to find myself weaker and more painfully aware of my sinfulness, more prone to sin than ever before, grabbing cheap thrills to push back the pain of lost love. Mostly in the heart but that's where it counts and that's where you live. I sin because I'm a sinner. I'm like a soldier without my armor and running across a battle field getting shot up by fiery darts from the enemy. I couldn't leave the church if I wanted to, I love the people, I'm enthralled by the gospel of the beautiful Messiah. I'm a pile of manure on the white marble floor of Christ, a mongrel dog that snuck in the back door of the King's banquet to lick the crumbs off the floor and by being close to Christians who are rich in the blessings of Christ, I get some of the overflow and I ask you to pray for me as you think best."⁵

- Is this man a Christian? Most likely, he is.
 - An unbeliever would not have a desire to obey God and His Word.

2 Corinthians 7:6–11 (NIV84)

⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,

⁷and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.

⁸Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—

⁹yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.

¹⁰Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

¹¹See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

- *Worldly sorrow* consists in being sorry merely for the

The Holy Spirit: The Fruit of the Spirit – Assurance of Salvation consequences of a sin, and not being troubled about the sin itself. The sinner troubles himself very little about the sin itself. What he is afraid of is the punishment for it that is coming upon him by-and-by.

- He does not hate the sin—he is very fond of it; he would like to keep on practicing it, *only*, he knows in his heart, that after sin must come, some time or other, *death*; and after death must come judgment for sin; and after judgment will come the everlasting punishment of the impenitent sinner. And he is afraid of *hell*. That is the extent of his sorrow.

But as to being sorry for the *sin*, he clings to it and loves it, and is only sorry that unhappily he can't indulge in it without paying (so to speak) for his indulgence in the shape of punishment.⁶

- Sorrow in itself is not repentance; neither is remorse, nor self-condemnation, nor self-loathing, nor external reformation. These all are its attendants or consequences; but

repentance itself (μετάνοια) is a turning from sin to holiness,

from a state of sin to a holy state.

It is a real change of heart.

It is a change of views, feelings and purposes, resulting in a change of life.⁷

- We are not to confuse our feeling sorry with genuine repentance.

Many people make that mistake. To them, repentance is a matter of intense inward agony, a sense of deep sorrow.

- 'Why do we feel bad?'

Is it self-pity or self-disgust?

Are we upset with ourselves, or merely upset?

Are we troubled within, because we have been found out?

Has it come home to our hearts that we have let God down badly?

- Does our sense of sorrow lead to an amended life?

Are we sorry enough to quit our sinful behavior?⁸

- 'There was a nation in ancient times which attached no shame or disgrace to the crime of *stealing*. But if anyone was caught in the act of stealing, he was punished; not for the theft itself, but for being found out. Such a detected thief would no doubt be sorry. But his sorrow would refer not to the stealing itself, but to

⁶ *The Church Pulpit Commentary: 1 Corinthians–Ephesians* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1908), 282–283.

⁷ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891), 182–183.

⁸ J. Philip Arthur, *Strength in Weakness: 2 Corinthians Simply Explained*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004), 151–152.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

the being found out in it. This is an exact type of ‘the sorrow of the world.’”⁹

Psalm 32:1–5 (NIV84)

¹Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

²Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”— and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

- Some Christians lack assurance, because they can’t seem to accept God’s forgiveness.

Their sin is too bad for God to forgive.

1 Timothy 1:12–16 (NIV84)

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.

¹³Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

¹⁴The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom **I am the worst**.

¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, **the worst of sinners**, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

- Paul, *the worst of sinners*, was shown God’s mercy.

- What makes you think that you can’t be forgiven?

Romans 10:11–13 (NIV84)

¹¹As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and **richly blesses all who call on him**,

¹³for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord

Luke 17:3–5 (NIV84)

³So watch yourselves. “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.

⁴If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

Matthew 18:21–22 (NIV84)

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

²²Jesus answered, “**I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven)**.

- Some Christians don’t seek forgiveness for repeated sins, thinking that they are hypocrites.

- Jesus’ model of forgiveness is to forgive every time someone calls on His name.

1 John 1:9 (NIV84)

⁹If we confess our sins, **he is faithful and just and will forgive us** our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- *Perceived* unforgiven sins (sins Christians commit that they perceive in their minds as still not forgiven due to repetition or severity) produce a lack of assurance of salvation in the mind of a believer.

If you confessed your sins to God, then God *is faithful to forgive all* your sins and purify you from *all* unrighteousness, period.

God does not wait until you feel like you’ve been forgiven before He forgives you of your sins.

Your forgiveness is accomplished the moment you confessed your sins.

- Your feelings no matter how powerful they are, how vivid they are, are not safe storehouses to guard your assurance.

Your feelings cannot guard your assurance, your assurance has to be grounded in a proper understanding of the gospel and the saving work of Christ.¹⁰

- If our sins have been forgiven at the cross, why do we have to confess our sins?

- What happens if someone doesn’t confess their sins, because they believe they don’t have to since they’ve already been forgiven?

⁹ *The Church Pulpit Commentary: 1 Corinthians–Ephesians* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1908), 283.

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., *John MacArthur Sermon Archive* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2014).

- Next Week!!! (The Lord willing)