

# Assurance Is Attainable, but Not of the Essence of Faith

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[0:00] So, today we return to our study of the doctrine of assurance as it's presented in the 18th chapter! of the 1689 Baptist Confession. And we come now to the third paragraph of the chapter.

! So far, we've seen the dangers of false assurance. Then we turn to the positive teaching that true believers may certainly have assurance in this life that they are saved, that they are in a state of grace. And then we looked at the three grounds of assurance. Number one, the blood and righteousness of Christ. Number two, the inward evidence of the graces of the Spirit. And number three, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption. So, we've spent most of our time considering how a believer can have assurance and that it is not biblical to deny the doctrine of assurance. Well, as we come to the third paragraph, the confession basically guards us from the opposite extreme. There are those who deny that a believer can have assurance, but there's also those who teach that if you do not have full assurance of salvation, that proves you're not a believer at all. And if it's not being taught, sometimes that's just naturally how we think. But notice what the third paragraph of this chapter says. I'll read it in full.

For example, this infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith that it is always fully experienced alongside faith. But true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it. Yet, with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.

Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure. In this way, their hearts may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience.

These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance. Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent. So, really, this paragraph answers four questions. And I'll give you those questions along with the short answers right from the start. First, is full assurance identical with saving faith? And the short answer is no.

[2:42] This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith that it is always fully experienced alongside faith. Or, as the original wording of the confession says, this infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith.

The second question is, may true believers wait long and struggle before attaining assurance? And the answer to that question is yes.

True believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it. Third, does assurance require private or extraordinary revelation?

And the answer to this one is no. With the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means, appropriately, without any extraordinary revelation.

And last but not least, should believers pursue assurance diligently, through ordinary means? And as I just read, the answer is yes. But as the confession goes on to say, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure.

[3:59] So, if I were to summarize the teachings of this paragraph, here's what I would say. Full assurance is not identical with saving faith, but it is a grace every believer should diligently pursue through the Spirit-enabled use of ordinary means.

Now, what does the confession mean when it says assurance is not an essential part of faith? Well, if you haven't felt this way yourself, you can probably imagine someone who hears teachings about

the doctrine of assurance and thinks to themselves, I am a Christian, I believe, the Bible says the promises belong to me, and yet, I don't feel confident about my salvation.

I don't have assurance. Does that mean I'm not really saved? Does that mean my faith is not genuine? No. The point that the confession is making here is that a believer can have saving faith without assurance.

In fact, let me read from chapter 14 of the confession on saving faith. The second paragraph says, the principal acts of saving faith focus directly on Christ, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life by virtue of the covenant of grace.

More importantly, the statement in the confession is drawn directly from Scripture. And in John chapter 1, we read, He, that is Jesus, came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.

[5:43] But to all who did receive Him, who believed on His name, He gave them the right to become children of God. What gives them the right to become children of God?

They simply receive Christ. They believe in Him. In John chapter 6, verse 35, Jesus says, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst. So we come to Christ. We receive Him.

We believe in Him. Hebrews 6, verse 18, describes believers as those who have fled for refuge. The hope of Christ is set before us, and we simply open our unworthy, empty hands, and we receive Him.

We receive that hope in Christ. By faith, we run to Christ, and we take refuge in Him. We hear Jesus say, come to me. And recognizing the voice of our shepherd and Savior, we go to Him.

[6:55] And then He says to us, whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. So saving faith says, Jesus is able to save me. He is willing to receive sinners just like me.

I have no righteousness of my own, so I cast myself upon Him. He is my only refuge in salvation. So that's faith. What is assurance then?

Well, assurance, because of faith, can reflect upon that faith and say, I have come to Christ. I am resting upon Him. Therefore, according to His promises, I am His, and I will always be His.

Nothing can separate me from His love. He will never cast me out. In other words, faith receives Christ while assurance recognizes that I have received Him.

Faith rests upon the promises of God while assurance concludes that the promises belong to me. Faith says, Lord, save me, and assurance says, the Lord has saved me.

[8:07] Obviously, there's a vital relationship between saving faith and assurance, but they're not the same thing. They're not identical. One can have saving faith without full assurance.

Consider the Father in Mark chapter 9. You know, He brings His tormented Son to Jesus, and when Jesus tells Him that all things are possible for the one who believes, the man cries out, I believe, help my unbelief.

Now, that's an interesting confession, isn't it? He basically acknowledges both His faith and His lack of faith in the same sentence.

His faith may be weak, but it was still enough for Him to run to Christ for help. And yet, it's clearly incomplete. It's what we might call a trembling faith.

If nothing else, we can certainly sense His uncertainty in that moment, or perhaps, we'll call it, His lack of confidence. In other words, He has faith, but His assurance is a bit shaky.

[9:17] And we see this even in the Lord's disciples. In fact, we see it repeatedly. Think of Peter walking on the water. Think of the faith or the trust in Jesus that He must have needed to step out of the boat.

And yet, it proved to be a relatively weak faith. When He saw the wind and the waves, He became afraid and He began to sink. And when Jesus rescued Him, what did He say to Peter?

Oh, you of little faith. Why did you doubt? Little faith. The faith was real, but it was weak.

It was genuine, but obviously disturbed by fear in that moment. So again, we see something of the distinction between faith and assurance. Even as Peter was sinking, he still had faith to cry out to Jesus, Lord, save me.

Yet, his faith was little. So as real as it was, it was not accompanied in that moment by anything that could be described as confident assurance.

[10:24] I've always thought the Psalms were a good place to go to see this distinction. For example, consider Psalm 42 where the author repeatedly voices that question, why are you cast

down, O my soul?

And why are you in turmoil within me? That's not a question asked by a man who's moving through life with his head up. He's just confident, as confident can be that he is in a state of grace.

Evidently, he's really struggling to find the comfort he desires. However, what does he tell himself? How does he answer his own question? I can imagine him standing in front of the mirror repeating to himself, preaching to himself, and he says, hope in God.

So, even though he doesn't possess the comfort he desires, he's not abandoned the object of his faith. though he lacks a measure of assurance, his faith remains.

Despite how he feels in the moment, he will continue to trust and to hope in God. Concerning faith, we should understand that its saving power is not in the strength of that faith, but in Christ, whom that faith receives.

[11 : 44] Right? And concerning assurance, assurance, it's not the doorway into Christ. Christ is the doorway into assurance. So, just because a believer may doubt or lack faith does not mean he's unconverted.

Sometimes doubts are just the painful struggle of a genuine believer whose faith is weak or whose conscience is wounded or whose understanding could be immature.

Now, at the same time, it's not as though doubt is something to be praised. It's not a good thing.

Never does the Bible present uncertainty as humility or the normal Christian condition.

Yes, saving faith can exist without full assurance, but saving faith naturally seeks greater confidence in Christ and in his promises. In short, we don't want to crush the doubting believer, but we also don't want to teach him to settle down and be comfortable with his doubts or with his lack of faith.

So, that answers our first question. Is full assurance identical with saving faith? And the answer is no, it's not. Now, our second question is, may true believers wait long and struggle before attaining assurance?

[13 : 08] Again, the confession says, true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it. Of course, this is not pure speculation on the part of the authors of the confession.

It's drawn from the experiences of many believers recorded throughout the Bible. In fact, on this point, the confession cites Isaiah 50, verse 10, saying, and here's what it says, who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant?

Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

So, here we have a person who fears the Lord, who obeys the Lord, and yet the text says they're walking in darkness.

Now, in context, I don't believe the one walking in darkness refers to someone who is openly rejecting God. Rather, it describes a believer who fears the Lord and obeys the Lord, but lacks any sense of the Lord's favor.

We might say he lacks assurance. So, what should he do? Isaiah writes, let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God.

[14 : 30] Though he's currently waiting and struggling with many difficulties in the darkness, he is encouraged to press on in faith, trusting in the Lord to provide light once again.

Psalms 77 gives us another example. Asaph, he cries out to God in the night. He's groaning as he remembers God, and then he asks a series of heartbreaking questions such as, will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?

Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he, in anger, shut up his compassion?

Now, I don't necessarily read these questions as accusations. This is not a testimony of apostasy. this is a sincere believer whose circumstances and emotions seem to contradict what he knows about God.

In fact, it's not long before Asaph writes, I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. So, this is not a man who has abandoned the faith.

[15 : 48] Clearly, his sense of God's favor toward him is severely lacking in the moment, and that's why he asks, will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable? And yet, even without this assurance, Asaph remembers the mighty works of God.

He remembers the exodus, the redemption of God's people, and the power that God displayed at the sea. So, take note of that. When his assurance was lacking, what did he do in pursuit of greater assurance?

Well, he doesn't wallow in his distress for very long. Instead, he reminds himself of who God is and what he has done. This is what he does as he's waiting and struggling.

Now, Psalm 88. That's an even darker psalm in some respects. The psalmist begins by crying out, O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you.

Let my prayer come before you. Incline your ear to my cry. And the remainder of the psalm is just tragic. This almost feels like he's rejected, he's afflicted, he's abandoned.

[17 : 04] He writes, for my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to Sheol. In fact, the psalm literally ends with darkness. The last line says, you have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me.

My companions have become darkness. verse, the end. Do these words come from a man who doesn't know God? Do they come from a man who has no faith at all?

Well, no. The author does have faith and he knows the object of his faith. He says at the start of the psalm, O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you.

So despite his pitiful condition, these are the words of a man who knows God and trusts him for salvation. He is a believer and yet he clearly lacks assurance.

He's experiencing exactly what the confession says. True believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining assurance. That is, assurance of God's favor in salvation.

[18 : 11] Now we might ask, why does this happen? Why do true believers sometimes wait so long for assurance or struggle to obtain it?

Well, I don't have a definitive list but I'll give you a few possibilities. First of all, he may have been poorly taught. As I've mentioned before, many Christians have taught that assurance, that's too presumptuous.

You shouldn't have assurance. To them, it's prideful, it's sinful to assume you are saved. And because this teaching has been so ingrained in them, they lack assurance. Even if they were to have a sense of God's favor at any given moment, they've been taught to suppress it, to deny it because that's sinful.

And just briefly, let me respond to that kind of thinking. I've cited it many times already but in 1 John 5.13, the Apostle John says, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know you have eternal life.

And my response is simply this, God does not call us to be more humble than He commands in Scripture. I think it was, well, it was Charles Spurgeon who said, I do not believe that I have any right to make a law where God has not made one.

[19 : 37] And unless I'm misremembering, I believe there was another occasion when he said something to the effect of, God has given us enough commandments, I don't need to add more.

Well, in the case of telling someone it is sinful to presume they are saved, that is adding to God's word.

It's actually defying God's word. I write these things to you that you may know you have eternal life. That's what the inspired word of God says.

So it is not sinful, it is not presumptuous to know you have eternal life. Well, the second reason a believer may struggle with assurance is that they may misunderstand justification.

If he imagines that his acceptance with God rests, at least partly, on the quality of his own obedience, obedience, well, inevitably, assurance will rise and fall with every change of his performance.

On a good day, he may feel accepted by God. On a bad day, he may feel condemned. But what does Romans 5.1 say? Since we have been justified by God, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 56] That's a verdict that's already been rendered. we are saved or we are not and it has nothing to do with our obedience or good works. Third, excessive introspection may delay assurance.

Now, to be clear, self-examination is biblical. But when that self-examination is detached from Christ, I think it becomes quicksand. we ask ourselves, is my faith strong enough?

Is my repentance true enough? Is my love warm enough? And these are legitimate questions but taken too far. What we are actually doing is trying to find in ourselves what can only be found perfectly in Christ.

So we want to be careful. Fourth, remaining sin will cloud assurance. Hebrews 12 teaches that God disciplines those He loves.

So it's here that we can see how self-examination is good. It's necessary. Are we holding on to sin? Perhaps our lack of assurance is because of that lingering sin.

[22 : 12] For example, when David committed his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and he had Uriah, her husband, killed, this man, after God's own heart, he didn't lose his salvation, did he?

When he makes his confession and he pleads to God for mercy in Psalm 51, he prays in verse 12, restore to me the joy of your salvation.

His sin had clouded the light of God's face. His sin had ruined his assurance for a time. In short, where sin is cherished, assurance can hardly remain.

Fifth, temptation may assault our assurance. Revelation 12 calls Satan the accuser of our brothers. Now, he may point out real sins in us.

He may point out real failures, real inconsistencies, but he uses them to draw a false conclusion when he's making his accusations against us.

[23 : 21] He says, oh, you've sinned so many times, you've failed so many times, therefore, God will not receive you. You are beyond mercy, all that is left for you is despair.

So, how do we respond to that? Well, we respond in the way that Christ responded to the devil's temptations. Go to Scripture. Go to what God himself has said. Romans 8 is a great place to start. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And lastly, God's own providence may cloud our assurance.

This can be hard to accept. Bereavement, illness, loneliness, seemingly unanswered prayers, church troubles, prolonged afflictions of various kinds can make a believer feel forsaken, forgotten by God.

[24 : 38] The Psalms are filled with saints asking, how long O Lord? The prophets asked, how long O Lord? And I would say that a person's temperament may intensify the struggle.

One believer can very quickly take comfort from the smallest evidence of grace, while another immediately explains it away and goes right back to their despair. But the overarching point is this, a long struggle with assurance does not in and of itself prove that no saving faith exists.

Both the confession and more importantly the Bible make room for the bruised reed, for the faintly burning wick. Christ does not break the one and he doesn't extinguish the other.

While we cannot have true assurance without saving faith, we can have saving faith without full assurance. Now moving on to our third question, does assurance require private or extraordinary revelation?

The confession's answer is no. It says, with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.

[25 : 59] Listen to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2.12. He says, now we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

There, Paul is showing how the Spirit opens the believer's understanding to receive divine truth. We do not understand the things of God on our own or by human wisdom alone.

These things must be revealed in the Word of God through the Spirit's illumination of them. In other words, it's not as though the Spirit needs to reveal something to us outside or beyond the Word of God.

Sadly, though, this is how many people think. Years ago, I visited a charismatic church with a friend and had a pretty good discussion with their pastor after the service, and I asked him, do you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture?

And he was very quick to say, yes, I do. So I asked him, why then do you insist that a believer cannot be assured of salvation without an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit?

[27:13] And I was asking that because that's precisely what he preached on that morning. He very emphatically said, you cannot know you are saved unless you receive the Spirit, and that will be evidenced primarily by speaking in tongues.

So, you know, I asked my friend later, have you ever spoken in tongues? And she admitted that she hadn't, though when she was younger, she faked it a couple of times.

So I asked her whether she had assurance of her salvation, and sadly her answer was, how could I? God said, but even many Christians outside of charismatic circles seem to think that they cannot have assurance apart from extraordinary revelation of some kind.

I have often asked people, are you saved? And it's not unusual for their answer to include something along the lines of, God spoke to me, or I had a dream, or I prayed that God would send me a sign, and a blue jay landed on my porch railing.

That's actually one I heard just last week. 1 John 4.13 says, by this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his spirit.

[28:38] Now that may sound like the apostle John is pointing believers toward a secret revelation given by the spirit, but we have to pay attention to the context of his entire letter, which we touched on throughout this series.

This is not revelation detached from scripture. Throughout the epistle, John points to the spirit's evident work in believers' lives through confessing the true Christ, through believing God's word, through loving the brethren, through loving and keeping the commandments of God, through abiding in the truth.

truth. So the way the spirit assures believers is by creating the very life scripture identifies as the life of one of God's children.

So we don't need extraordinary revelation. We don't need a voice from heaven that says, you are one of God's elect. We don't need a dream or a private prophecy or a vision or an impression that can't even be tested by scripture.

scripture, the spirit simply illuminates what the Bible says, gives us understanding of it, and it moves us, he moves us I should say, so that we can see our lives aligning with what scripture teaches about those who are truly redeemed by Christ.

[30:02] So we can see our lives, we can see what scripture says, and we say, oh, I am one of God's. In short, the spirit takes the objective truth of Christ, applies it to the conscience, produces faith, reveals grace, and enables the believer to say, not merely Christ saved sinners, but Christ saved me.

I have received Christ. I see his work in me. I know God as Father, therefore, I belong to him. And all of these promises for his people are mine.

So now we come to our last question. Should believers pursue assurance diligently through ordinary means? And the answer is an emphatic yes. Again, the confession says they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately.

So, while we cannot simply manufacture assurance, we can nevertheless pursue it. we are called to pursue it. We are given the ordinary means to pursue it.

But what are these means? Well, I'll give you a list. It's not a complete list, but it's a good start. First, we have the Word of God. Through the Word, we learn the gospel promises, we learn about the finished work of Christ, we learn about the marks of grace that are seen in God's people.

[31:35] We are giving warnings against presumption, not to mention consolation, in times when our faith is weak, and so much more. Second, we have the preached Word.

Romans 10 asks, how are they to believe in Him whom they have never heard? God teaches and He strengthens His people through the public proclamation of His Word.

In preaching, Christ is set before the congregation. These promises of God are repeated to us and explained to us. The marks of grace are explained. If we neglect the preaching of the Word, we should not be surprised when our faith becomes weak and our assurance is diminished.

Keep in mind, these are God's means given to us. These are His design. Third, He has given us ordinances.

Baptism visibly declares union with Christ and His death and resurrection and the Lord's Supper points us time and time again to Christ's body and blood given for sinners. Fourth, we have Christian fellowship with one another.

[32:49] Hebrews chapter 3 commands believers to exhort one another every day, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 10 tells us not to neglect meeting together but to encourage one another.

Isolation is not good for the Christian and it's not good for the assurance of his salvation. Fifth, obedience is an ordinary means of obtaining assurance.

Chapter 16 of the confession says good works are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith and that by them believers strengthen their assurance.

parents. This is the point that John makes several times throughout his first epistle. First John 2.3 says by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments.

Six, I believe repentance belongs on this list. Chapter 15 of the confession calls repentance an evangelical grace. It is evidence of salvation when the believer sees sin as sin and grieves over it and confesses it and seeks pardon through Christ and turns from that sin toward God.

[34:15] And seventh, prayer is a wonderful means of obtaining assurance. Again, think of Psalm 77, Psalm 88. Many of these psalms are prayers to God in the midst of the author's lack of assurance.

And how many of them are rejoicing in God once again before the prayer is even finished? So pray. Now look again at the confession because I want you to notice that seeking assurance is not only a possibility but it's given to us as a duty.

Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure.

And of course, that is precisely what the apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 1.10.

Now in that chapter, Peter begins the letter by saying that God's divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, speaking to believers.

He then says believers have received precious and very great promises and have become partakers of the divine nature. grace comes first, God acts first, he calls, he gives the promises, he supplies everything for life and godliness.

[35:35] And then Peter says, for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and so on. So as a fruit and a response to God's grace, Peter implores us to be diligent in our Christian walk.

Grow, he says, produce even more fruit. Then he explains that if these qualities are ours, faith, virtue, and so on, and if these qualities are increasing, they prevent us from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.

He says, whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. And that's when he gives the command, therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.

For if you practice these qualities, you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You see, you and I, we can't peer into the Lamb's Book of Life and know whether our names are written in it. I've not seen it. Have you? But we don't need to.

[36:54] God has revealed enough. Has the gospel come to us with power? Have we been brought near to Christ? Do we believe in Him? Do we repent of our sin?

Is there a growing desire in us for holiness? Do we continue returning to Christ time and time again even after we've sinned? Or maybe I should say especially after we've sinned?

We don't need to know whether God elected us to be His people before the foundation of the world. Why not? Because He calls those He elects. And our calling then bears fruit.

We see the evidence of it. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, Paul says, we know, brothers, loved by God, that He has chosen you. Well, how does he know?

He hasn't seen the Lamb's Book of Life either. Well, he says, because our gospel came to you, not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

[37:55] And then he points to their reception of the word, their turning from idols, their service to the living God. God's election of them was evident through the visible effects of their calling.

And that's why diligence is necessary. We will not find greater assurance or full assurance by doing nothing or by neglecting the ordinary means God has given us.

Again, Hebrews 6.11 says, we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end. Notice how earnestness or diligence and full assurance, they belong together.

And then the writer immediately adds, so that you may not be sluggish. And why should we pursue assurance? The confession answers this.

In this way, their hearts may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience.

[39:02] These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance. Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent. So, quickly, assurance brings peace because the believer consciously enjoys what Christ has secured.

Again, Romans 5.1, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God. It also produces joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14.17 describes God's kingdom as righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Now, to be clear, this joy is not the absence of all sorrow or all fears, but the Spirit-given confidence that we have been reconciled to God and that we possess a living hope.

Assurance also deepens love and thankfulness. Jesus said, he who is forgiven little loves little. the more clearly believers grasp God's grace in Christ, the more their hearts overflow with gratitude and love.

And finally, assurance strengthens obedience. The believer no longer serves as a slave fearing condemnation, but as an adopted child of God.

[40:26] God. We've heard this recently. Psalm 119, verse 32 says, I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart. So, assurance doesn't remove our duty to obey.

Far from it. However, it changes the spirit in which that duty is performed. And last but not least, the confession concludes that these are the natural fruits of this assurance.

Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent. This is the very objection Paul answers in Romans 6. Grace does not encourage sin because those who have been united to Christ, they have died to sin and they now walk in newness of life.

Titus 2, likewise, teaches that saving grace trains believers to renounce ungodliness and to live holy lives. So, in effect, this distinguishes assurance from mere presumption.

Presumption might treat grace as permission to sin. Well, if I'm saved by grace, I can do whatever I want. Assurance, on the other hand, loves Christ and desires to honor Him.

[41:43] As 1 John 3 teaches, everyone who hopes in Christ purifies himself. True believers, we still battle sin, but we confess it. we fight it.

We return to Christ again and again in repentance. In short, genuine assurance produces humility and holiness and joyful obedience, not apathy, not spiritual carelessness.

And we'll stop right there. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that our hope does not rest on the strength of our faith, but on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you that weak faith is still saving faith when it rests in Him alone. Lord, we confess that we are often troubled by doubts and we're discouraged by our remaining sin and perhaps we're slow to lay hold of the comfort you freely offer in the gospel.

So we ask that you would help us to distinguish between faith and assurance, help us to keep from both presumption on the one hand and despair on the other. Grant that we would diligently use the ordinary means you have given that our assurance may grow.

[42:58] And we ask these things in the name of our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.