

Assurance of Grace & Salvation

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[0 : 0 0] As you'll be aware most of you we have been working through in these more recent weeks the biblical basis behind the next section of the chapters of our church is Confession of Faith.

And we come this week to the biblical basis behind chapter 18 in the Confession of Faith and that is entitled Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

of Assurance of Grace and Salvation. And we take as our text for this the verse that we read in Hebrews chapter 10 verses 21 and 22.

Having a high priest over the house of God let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The basis of that assurance as we can see in these verses is the high priest himself and what he himself has done. What the assurance of grace is we will come to in just a moment.

[1 : 0 5] What the assurance is not we must also establish because there is no doubt that there are plenty in this world that there are plenty described in scripture who falsely say oh yeah I'm fine with God yeah nothing's going to be a problem if there is a heaven I'll be going there and if not well I've got nothing to worry about God's not going to judge me too harshly because I do my best and you know I do what I think is right so what's the problem?

Plenty of such instances in scripture of people focusing upon themselves and thinking God should be glad or whatever crumbs they throw in.

Deuteronomy chapter 29 we read in verses 18 and 19 lest there should be among you man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood and it come to pass when he heeded the words of this curse that he blessed himself in his heart saying I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst.

Now leave aside whatever the particular token or aspect or symptom of that might be whether it's drunkenness or thirst or it's the gods of the nations the gods of the world the gods of these nations round about saying oh we'll turn away from the Lord and focus on these gods here.

What are the gods of our nation? Well they do ought to be the true God but the gods nowadays of our world whether they're fame or whether they're money or whether it's celebrity status or whether it's just having a fulfilled life ourselves all the focus in all these gods is on the world or the self or the desire to accumulate things it is in every instance that which takes the gaze the worship, the focus away from the living God.

[3 : 0 5] To go and serve the gods of these nations lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood and come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse he blessed himself in his heart saying I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart.

I can do what I like I'll still be fine with God and there are plenty of mysterious you think that there may be plenty even around him on the fringes of churches who believe that and think oh I'll be okay because I haven't been a bad person in my own eyes I think I'm alright.

Micah chapter 3 verse 11 it talks about Israel in those days of the prophet the heads thereof judge for reward and the priests thereof teach for hire and the prophets thereof divine for money yet will they lean upon the Lord and say is not the Lord among us none evil can come upon us in other words we are the church of God whatever we do it must be okay whatever we decide God must bless whatever decisions we take whatever we think whatever we choose to do we are God's people he can't do anything but bless us I don't know how people could still think that in the days of the prophets when they had seen Jerusalem fall once to the Babylonians because of its sin and in the New Testament times of course after the New Testament Jerusalem fell again to the Romans and the Lord is not squeamish about chastising those who outwardly should be his own people if they're wandering away from it Jesus himself says Matthew 7 verse 21 not everyone would say thou to me

Lord Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven many will say to me in that day Lord Lord have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name have done many wonderful works then will I profess unto them I never knew you depart from me ye that work iniquity now you see the focus there it's not that Jesus is saying ah you thought you were mine but you're not actually so nobody can actually be confident at all what was the focus of these people saying Lord Lord have we not done this have we not done that have we not done the next thing look at me Lord look how good I've been look how diligent how faithful how how well I've done in your service I should be getting patted on the head by you you see the focus again here it's as in Deuteronomy and as with the priests and the prophets in Micah the focus is upon the self

I will walk in the imagination of my heart I will do what I want Lord you should be pleased with me because of what I have done and all the focus is upon the self even as some you know commentators and Dr. Campbell and his problem and also and Mr. Robertson of course on various internet sites and drawn attention to with the passing of some famous pop stars and so on and then DJs and people have said oh well at least now there will be a good DJ in heaven to oversee all the great pop stars that have gone up there what are people thinking of what do they imagine heaven is like it's just oh we just carry on doing what we did down here it's whatever we choose to think it is what makes them even think there is an afterlife at all except that God and his word tells us that there is what is our reason for thinking what heaven is going to be like except God and his word tells us a little of what it is like and the focus in heaven as the focus ought to be in earth is upon the

[6 : 48] Lord the Lord himself that is the focus of those who love him that is the object of their devotion if we may describe the almighty in such terms with all due reverence such assurance cannot be based on just yeah I've done this I've done that I've done the next thing if the focus is upon me myself I that is just about the most unholy trinity you can get and such assurance will fail they will be disappointed in such false assurance because it is upon the self that it is based what does Jesus say as soon as he has dealt with these who say oh Lord Lord we've done this we've done that we've done the next thing he goes on immediately to say after he says I never knew you depart from me ye that work iniquity he immediately then in the very next verse goes on to say therefore whosoever heareth these things of mine and doeth them

I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock and everyone that heareth these things of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand and the rain came descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell and great was the fall of it came to pass when Jesus ended these sayings that people were astonished at his doctrine for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes now you see what Jesus spoke he says hear what I say he's saying take my teaching to heart if you do that then your house will stand secure notice everybody's got a house in that parable now we know it's a parable we love to teach the children little children sing about it in their songs and in their Sunday school presentations and things or concerts at the end of town you know how the wise man built his house upon the rock but we focus upon what Jesus is actually saying it's his teaching that is the rock it's the avoiding and ignoring of his teaching which is the sand but everybody's got a house everybody's got a building they live in their lives are carrying on as normal it's not the wise they've got a nice house the foolish they don't have a house at all everybody's got a house everybody's carrying on their lives everybody's living in it and as long as the sun shines and the weather's fine that's great but the weather never carries on like that forever life doesn't go on like that forever there is always going to come storms floods rain attacks of some kind then it's not a question of do you have a life do you have a house everybody's got a house but what is that house that life built upon what is the basis the foundation for any such assurance we go back again to our passage today let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience our bodies washed with pure water let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering for he is faithful that promised he is faithful that promised we have promises from god do we trust god's promises do we believe and put our hope in that first second peter chapter one verse four we read whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption there is in the world through lust do we believe the promises of god hebrews again it's talking about hold fast the profession of our faith what is your house built on is it built on faith in christ and the truth of what he said and the promises of god as peter said well i think i've been okay i've done this i've done that i've done the next thing even if i follow the gods of this world you know money and fame or or just accumulating and things or just focusing here on this world and my job and my life and my family these are perfectly worthy things but that's not going to save you that may be the nature the content of your house your life but it's not your foundation if your foundation continues to be sand then that house will be washed away this is what jesus teaches in the letter to the romans paul writes this therefore being justified by faith we have peace with god through our lord jesus christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace

wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God rejoice in hope not only so but we glory in tribulations also knowing that tribulation worketh patience how good glory in tribulation well your house is the one on the rock and the storms are battling against it the rain's coming you don't think oh goody goody rain but you do think I'm so glad I've got my strong walls and strong foundation of when the storms come I'm okay in the tribulation tribulation work with patience patience experience we know from experience God doesn't let us down because He hasn't in the past and He doesn't change and experience hope so we know for the future what we have experienced in the past gives us hope for the future because God does not change hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which has given unto us for when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly God loves everyone Christ died for the ungodly God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him who built his house on the rock should not perish but have everlasting life Christ died for the ungodly we go back to the Hebrews and we find a couple of chapters earlier from the one that we read in chapter six we read in verses 11 and then at verse 19 we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end we're hoping in the promises of God that they are true assurance of hope unto the end verse 19 which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that will and the will whether the forerunner is for us enter even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek now if you've got if you've got an anchor then what is the purpose of an anchor it's to stop the boat drifting you may be in perfectly calm harbor waters but if you don't put down your anchor your boat's going to start turning and then it's going to start drifting with every little wave or every wash of the time it's going to start drifting out to sea or onto rocks or whatever that's why you need the anchor and if you're out in stormy waters you need an anchor even more to keep you in one place to stop you being battered backwards and forwards you need to be anchored because of the drift and the tide and the storms and the waves this hope is an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast as it's said and enter it into that within the veil into the unknown the veil of death beyond which we cannot see but that hope goes before us because

Christ the forerunner is gone before us we are confident not because of anything in us but because of Him that is our assurance it's not the quality of the house it's the quality of the foundation it may be a veritable palace that is built on sand but it will come down as soon as the storms begin therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace when we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God verse 5 or Romans 5 hope make us not ashamed because the love of God is shed a brawn in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us for when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly the ungodly the sinners that's who we are that's what it's really for that's what it's about in many ways the guy who has got a little shack built on a rock is in a better condition than the guy who has a palace built on the sand because when the storms come and the rains fall and the winds blow the one is going to fall but the other is going to stand firm which really brings us to focus on when we think of assurance of grace and salvation it's not clearly about what you have done it's not about how good you are how bad you are what is the kind of house you have built it is rather who it is about what you have done or I have done it is who it is about and it has to be focused upon His grace His promises His work His sacrifice going back to Romans return to chapter 8 there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit our assurance will be true assurance depending on who it is based upon if it is based upon Christ and His work His merits His sacrifice His perfection then we can rest assured in what He has done and the reason that we can focus on Him as the source of our hope and assurance is because the Lord has given us grace through to so by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God's the hope that we have in what Christ has done His grace His promises His work and sacrifice now if we have such assurance what are the effects of such assurance well to make us think oh that's fine now I know I'm saved because of what Christ has done that's fine I can just relax

I can take it easy I can send my little life away now and I can just do nothing I can just take things easy drink and be merry because Christ has done it all is that the effect of such assurance it doesn't create slothful indifference and ease but rather if we turn to Titus chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 it is teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly righteously godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope there's that word again and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ there's that focus again back to 2nd Peter and we can again in chapter 1 we talked about this exceeding great and precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption of the world that is in the world through lust and beside this giving all diligence add to your faith virtue unto virtue knowledge unto knowledge temperance unto temperance patience unto patience godliness unto godliness brotherly kindness and the brotherly kindness charity but if these things be in you and abound they make you that you shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our

[18 : 58] Lord Jesus Christ and they go oh gosh well that's me done for I don't have any of these things I mean we're done layer upon layer emerges there oh no that's hopeless to me I'm just a sinner I don't have these things okay add to your faith first of all faith substance of things hope for the evidence of things not seen in whom is your faith if your faith is in Christ that is your rock your foundation and if you are holding fast to that you add to your faith virtue what do we mean by virtue now we we tend to associate the word virtue with purity chastity righteousness that sort of thing but when Jesus uses the word virtue certainly in the authorized version he's talking with spiritual strength when he heals the woman inadvertently who has the issue of blood he says he senses that virtue has gone out of it that inner strength add to your faith virtue strength increase your faith make it stronger and how is it stronger because it becomes more certain of the one in whom you believe when you have stronger faith it is not because you're more sure of yourself it's because you become more sure of Christ how certain you are in him this is adding to your faith virtue like a layer of strength just as I should have mentioned in the past that when you exercise let's say you're lifting heavy weights or dumbbells or or stretching or or pulling something as you're working the muscles what is actually happening biologically is that the strain that the muscle is being put under is causing the tissue of the muscle to tear and because it is tearing the body then begins to heal itself so it puts a sort of layer like putting a plaster on top or a bandage or something it puts an extra layer of muscle or tissue on top and it hardens it and as we then tear and strain again it puts more layers on top that's how muscle builds up as it is strained as it is exercised it is the body healing itself each time so this is what is happening when you add to your faith virtues your faith is tested strengthened and put under strain you might say it is increased in strength virtue and to virtue knowledge now how do we increase our knowledge we increase our knowledge the more we read of God's word the more we take it in drink it in memorize bits of it the greater our knowledge of God's word the greater will be our knowledge about God at least whether or not we know personally deeply intimately we can never go wrong the more knowledge we have about God through his word rather than obvious oh just meditate my candle for a while or go have a deep spiritual experience when you walk in the hills no you'll find your knowledge of

God in that which he himself has revealed so that your faith virtue strength by exercising that faith putting it under strain increase your faith in Jesus and to virtue knowledge to knowledge temperance self-control the more we know of God the less we desire the things of sin so we become more control about these things it's part of following him to temperance patience self-explanatory to patience godliness because the more we begin to walk with God the more we want of him and to godliness brotherly kind and love for the brothers and sisters in Christ these become our first and foremost family these are the people that we will see in heaven there may be many of our blood relations we won't see in heaven perhaps many of our nearest and dearest we won't see in heaven but these are brothers and sisters in Christ we shall see there Lord willing brotherly kind and the brotherly kind is charity love for all God loves everyone it's it's a glowing thing it's like planting a little shoot in a little seed in the earth and say I don't see anything nothing's happening but he's got a great big tree why have I got nothing here and they've got that sapling the shoots all it why have I got nothing there give it time your faith needs time to be worked but you do have to work it add your faith virtue the virtue knowledge the knowledge temperance patience layer upon layer season by season summer and winter let it grow work at it because this is a reality for those who trust in

Christ and then verse 9 but he that lack of these things is blind and cannot see afar off in other words he can't see beyond this earthly life you think well I can't see God so he can't be real well I haven't got any more money in my back I'm gonna better job because of this I haven't got I haven't got on in the world because this so it's not real what's real to me what I can touch what I can physically see what my hands can handle that's real to me but I can't see God I can't see beyond this world so so I don't believe it that is blindness he that lack of these things is blind and can't see afar off he can't see with the eye of faith beyond this passing world this temporal earthly life he cannot see afar hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins if he knew anything of the grace of Christ before if he doesn't add his layer upon layer if he doesn't work at his faith what happens to your physical muscles if they never get used let's say somebody goes into a coma and they're there in the hospital bed they're getting fed through tubes and everything so still getting the nutrients the body needs and all the functions or even take the caretom but they're not getting up on an exercise and they're not using their arms and legs what happens to the muscles the muscles which are not stretched tested used the act of it they wither they just become less and less they don't wither away almost to nothing the whole bodily muscular system begins to just wither and perish atrophies if it is not used and this is what it what it's talking about if somebody maybe knew something of

Christ but they don't work they don't exercise they don't lay at virtue and virtue knowledge and so it just atrophies you've forgotten that he was purged from his old sins wherefore the rather brethren give diligence work at it to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things you shall never fall you see the point here if we have this assurance of grace and salvation if we know something of Christ then our incentive is to go on our incentive is to increase we turn a couple of pages to 1st John chapter 2 where it says chapter 3 I beg your pardon verses 2 and 3 beloved now are we the sons of God and it did not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is and every man that hath this opening purified himself even as he is pure you think well that's no use because I can't purify myself I can't I can't make myself more pure than I am but no what it says every man who has this hope in himself purifies himself if he has this he desires more he desires it if you you know what what what other people that for example say a sports coach is gonna is gonna put his put his focus and his time in deep no I used to when I was a young boy go to these uh football training things at school or whatever and there's sometimes there'd be scouts or whatever about of course you you do your best and everything you try to look really impressive this guy but they're watching the whole time the boys that they are gonna take and maybe give extra training at their their local club facilities or whatever are the ones that show natural talents unlike me you didn't have any but some that have natural talent if they had that that spark of time the scouts saw me he's not looking for a Ronaldo or something right away he's looking for a spark he's looking for a little him that there's talent there talent that then can be honed and worked at and increased or if you're looking for a musician you listen who's got the who's got the ear that can hear distinguish the different sounds who's got the the good tone good hearing who's got the talent if that's somebody's got a good voice they can be coached and they can bring out the best in it somebody's tone deaf to start with it doesn't matter the best coach in the world isn't gonna be able to make them sing like a nightingale but if it's there then you work at it and this is what it means here in um in first john where it says that if anyone has this hope in them any man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure if he's got this love for christ he wants to work at it if he hasn't got any of it at all he's not gonna be bothered but you take that which is there just as the singing teacher will take the child that that's got the something of the voice and hold it work at it really make the most of it the coach or the scout will take the boy that's got talent and he'll take him he'll coach him he'll work and practice away because he's got something to be worked at now if we've got that love for christ then we can work at it purify himself even as he is pure that's the effect of assurance of grace it makes you want to be more diligent it makes you thirsty for more you've got a taste for something you want to bring out the best of it if you know you've got a just as the footballing star boy if he's got if he's got some ability he wants to make the best the musician or the violinist they want to practice and practice and practice to be the best that they can be and the soul who knows they have a love for christ desires to be the most faithful best child of god that they could possibly be we can't be somebody else we would often oh all of us i'm sure look at somebody else like oh i wish i was a christian i wish i was as spiritual as they are wish i was like him wish i was

like her but you're not you're not that you're you i'm me we can only be the best that we can be but the lord has given us that he's given us that love for him that desire for him that can be worked at that can be strained and stretched and increased what is the evidence that this is happening in us is there changes happening as romans 8 again verse 15 and 16 you've not received the spirit of bondage again to fear but you've received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry abba father the spirit itself bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of god now the word abba is not used often in scripture it's used three times in the new testament it's used in mark it's used in romans and it's used in galatians only three times it's an expression of intimacy as i've probably mentioned in the past it's the aramaic term the language that jesus spoke and it translates most readily into the word daddy as we would say nowadays in english now if you have that intimate personal love for the lord that doesn't come by itself if the lord is our father our personal loving daddy in the lord that's that's who we want to be with like a little child being met at the school gate and runs to a daddy hugs its legs or whatever you know that's not because you say oh that dad's better than mine i think i'll go to heaven they've got a bigger car i think i'll go to heaven no they see the one that is theirs and they run to that one and they love that one and they hug his legs because this is their daddy now when you know the lord is your father that's what you want that's who you want more than all the glittering baubles of the world more than all the bigger cars or more houses or more money whatever you see your father that's who you run to that's who you want because your desire is changed the spirit of the lord has been put into your heart the spirit of adoption and grace your desire is changed your focus has changed your priority is changed so if you think oh well i don't know i've got any issues well what are your priorities now what are your priorities in your life is it the lord first and foremost a desire to belong to christ no matter what that whether you end up rich or poor about a long life or a short life that christ the focus of your life christ the means of your salvation that god is your abo your daddy father this is what you desire more than anything i was like well you know all in good time but first of all i've got to the focus on this i've got to get this something out of my job get this focus to my career i can't afford to be concerned with these things they're all well and good in a place nothing against them but you know this is more important if something is more important than the lord jesus christ then that thing has become your god it is the gods of the nations you turn to away from the lord who alone can save your assurance will only be in christ if you have it at all it will not be in self it will not be in the achievements of this world it will only be in him now your assurance may well be shaken at times it may well be tested and tried you know peter talks about the the test the trial of your faith being more precious than a fine goal that perisheth and isaiah says you know in chapter 50 at verse 10 he talks about who is among you that fear of the lord that obeyeth the voice of his servant that walketh in darkness and hath no light now we all know what that's like to walk in darkness and have no light let him trust in the name of the lord and stay upon his god because your assurance will be tested at times and there'll be times when the lord does withdraw himself withdraw the light to his countenance to

[33 : 19] test to try our love you know some of solomon talks about that i sleep but my heart waketh it is the voice of my beloved not that say open to me my sister my love my dove my undefiled my head is filled with dew my locks with the drops of the night and he says i'll have to put off my coat how can i put it on again oh and wash my feet don't want to make them dirty lord not just now i'm busy i'm i'm tired i don't really want to be concerned with these things my beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door my bouts will move from i rose up to open to my beloved change my mind my hands dropped with my my fingers with sweet smelling my up on the handles of the lock i opened to my beloved that my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone my soul failed when he spake i saw to him but i could not find him i called him but he gave me no answer my spirit will not always lie with man says the lord he comes he calls he knocks he puts in his handle by the hole of the door and if we do not rise instantly said i don't want to wash my feet i put off my coat i've got this to do lord i've got that to do i'm busy lord i'm tired i've got so much else on either this is your beloved or it isn't think not oh do i want to do this just now think rather what will you feel like if the beloved withdraws himself i saw to me i could not find him i called him but i gave him the answer my soul spake there when he spake when these things happen when we feel ourselves far from the lord you don't need a flash of light you don't need damascus road you don't need extraordinary means the lord says that assurance can be restored by the right use of ordinary means jesus says to his uh those who listen to him he says search the scriptures for in them you think that you are like these are they that testify of me paul writes to the thessalonians pray without ceasing in isaiah going back to him again and we're told in chapter 45 at verses 19 and 23 i have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth i said not under the seat of jacob seeking me in vain i the lord speak righteousness i declare things that are right assemble yourselves and come draw together ye that are escaped of the nations and have no knowledge that set up the wood of their grave and image and pray to a god that cannot see assemble yourselves together hebrews we ready chapter 10 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of song is assemble together for strength or worship like we are like we should seek the lord search the scriptures pray without ceasing the right use of ordinary means god says he will honor that is his promise that we believe his promise we have exceeding great and precious promises our assurance will depend not upon what we have done but upon whom we trust who is who must is what we must focus on the lord himself what he has done what he has promised and then believe in those promises and focus upon that person and you will have the assurance of grace and salvation it is possible for ordinary sinners to have that assurance of grace and salvation if we focus upon christ and do not let our mind our heart our thought wander from heaven not on self but on him on his promise on his truth it is possible to have the assurance of grace and salvation it is possible for ordinary sinners it is possible for you let us pray thank you thank you thank you

thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you