

Assurance 101

Lesson 1 Virtue

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The first priority for a professing Christian is to make their “calling and election sure”. Jesus declared very plainly that not all that profess salvation will receive eternal life. Many will be deceived as to the true condition of their heart. It is essential to have biblical evidence of a genuine conversion. There is no greater calamity than for a person to be deceived about the state of their eternal soul.

One reason for this false sense of security, is that too often the Christian life is viewed solely as a conversion experience. A better way to describe the Christian life is a journey. Salvation is a new birth, not a finished race, and we are expected to give diligence to add to our faith, in order to ensure the validity of our faith. In II Peter 1, the Bible explains how to make our calling and election certain. This chapter lays out a path of spiritual growth that will give a scriptural support to authenticate an individual’s experience.

This chapter gives us in order, seven steps to focus upon in our spiritual journey. It promises that if these seven fruits are present in our life, they serve to validate our profession and that if we do these things “we shall never fall”. But, if they are lacking, it warns that such negligence leads to spiritual blindness, doubt, and uncertainty regarding our profession. We are going to study in detail each of these seven steps to ensure a biblically based assurance of salvation.

The first item to be added to our faith is virtue. Virtue is moral excellence or having a godly character. A true Christian should be instantly identifiable to those around them because of a complete change of life known as conversion. A genuine conversion will produce significant change in the heart and mind of a person. God states that when a person is converted that He writes His Law on their mind and on their heart and puts His Spirit within them.

The result of God writing His Law upon our minds is that we think differently concerning right and wrong. Things that we used to say and do are now understood to be offensive to a holy God. The result of writing His Law upon our hearts is that it changes our desires. Things that we used to love are now seen to be sinful and spiritual exercises that were once despised are now loved. The Bible expresses this as “*the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.*”

Though each individual is born under the bondage of sin, it manifests itself in different ways. When converted, different personalities and temperaments will have different vices or behaviors that are not consistent with the Christian life. These areas need to be diligently identified and overcome to ensure healthy growth and progress in our spiritual journey. Failure to add virtue to our faith is an indication that maybe the individual has not been genuinely converted. That is why great diligence needs to be exercised to prevent spiritual deformity and personal unhappiness in the lives of God’s people.

The Bible nowhere promises that the Christian life is to be a path of ease and relaxation, it is rather compared to a war and a fight. The three primary enemies to the Christian are the world, the flesh, and the devil. A failure to identify and attack these forces results in consistent spiritual failure in the lives of Christians. While it is possible for a saved person to still carry vestiges of the old life with them, the Bible offers no comfort and assurance to them. The first step to assurance is to diligently add to your faith virtue.

The Seven Virtues: Chastity, Abstinence, Liberality, Diligence, Patience, Kindness, Humility

Definitions: *For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Assurance** -

Virtue -

Diligence -

Greek: (703) **arete** *ar-et'-ay*

Quotation:

“Assurance is the fruit that grows out of the root of faith.” Stephen Charnock

“A man's assurance may be as good, as true, when he lies on the earth with a sense of sin, as when he is carried up to the third heaven with a sense of love and foretaste of glory.” John Owen

“He that wants assurance of the truth of his grace, and the comfort of assurance, must not stand still and say, “ I am so doubtful and uncomfortable that I have no mind to duty,” but ply his duty, and exercise his grace, till he find his doubts and discomforts to vanish.” Richard Baxter

“To make sense and feeling the judges of our spiritual conditions, what is it but to make ourselves happy and miserable, righteous and unrighteous, saved and damned in one day, ay, in one hour... What is this but toss the soul to and fro, and to expose it to a labyrinth of fears and scruples? What is this but to cast a reproach upon Christ, to gratify Satan, and to keep yourselves upon the rack? Well, doubting souls, the counsel that I shall give you is this, be much in believing, and make only the Scripture the judge of your condition; maintain the judgment of the Word against the judgment of sense and feeling... If you resolve to make sense and feeling the

judge of your conditions, you must resolve to live in fears, and lie down in tears.” Thomas Brooks

“If a physician feels not what you feel, shall yet, upon your speeches and other evidences, tell you that he is confident your disease is not mortal, nor containeth any cause of fear, you may rationally be much encouraged by his judgment... (your faithful pastor) is able to pass a far sounder judgment of your life or death than yourselves can do, for all your feeling; for he knows better what those symptoms signify.” Richard Baxter

“Whenever God pardons sin, He subdues it. Micah 7:19. Then is the condemning power of sin taken away, when the commanding power of it is taken away. If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince hath pardoned him? If a jailor come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he may know he is pardoned; so, how shall we know God hath pardoned us? If the fetters of sin be broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God, this is a blessed sign we are pardoned.” Thomas Watson

“The assured Christian is more motion than notion more work than word, more life than lip, more hand than tongue.” Thomas Brooks

Confessions: (Look up and read these articles)

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 18 Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation - paragraphs 1-4

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is the first priority of a Christian?
2. What does it mean to make your calling and election sure?
3. What promise is made for those who add these seven fruits to their faith?
4. What warning is given to those who do not add these fruits to their faith?
5. Why should a true Christian be easily identified?
6. What is the effect of God writing His laws upon the mind of a person?
7. What is the effect of God writing His laws upon the heart of a person?

8. What is the first step to biblical assurance?
9. What are the seven virtues?
10. What is the failure to add virtue to their faith an indication of?

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 7:15-23 In this passage we are warned against _____ prophets. We are told that the way to identify them is by their _____. We are also warned by Christ that not every person that professes Christ will _____ the kingdom of heaven; but he that _____ the will of My Father. _____ will be surprised by their final rejection making reference to their supposed good works. However, Christ will tell them to _____, ye that work _____.

I John 1:5-7 Because God is _____, we cannot have fellowship with Him and walk in _____ at the same time. If we say that we do, we _____ and _____ the truth. But _____ we walk in light the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from _____ sin.

I John 2:3-5 We can know that we are saved if we _____ His _____. He that claims to be saved and do not keep them is a _____. Keeping His _____ reveals that we are genuinely saved.

I John 2:9-11 He that claims to be saved and _____ his brother is in _____. But he that _____ his brother abideth in the _____. He that hates his brother walketh in _____ and hath _____ his eyes.

I John 2:15 If a man _____ the _____ he is not saved.

I John 2:19 Those who departed _____ that they were not saved.

I John 2:29 Every one that _____ righteousness is _____ of Him.

I John 3:2-3 Everyone that has the hope of receiving a glorified body _____.

I John 3:8-10 He that committeth _____ is of the _____. Whosoever is born of God does not live in habitual sin. A person's lifestyle manifests whether they are children of _____ or children of the _____.

I John 5:4 Whoever is born of God _____ the _____.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

I John 1-2

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: II Peter 1:3

Personal Definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Virtue -

Diligence -

Personal Application: What is one virtue that you have not been diligent to add to your faith?

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*) Why is the failure to add virtue a possible indication that there has not been a genuine conversion?

Extra Credit: Give five examples of virtue that you have added to your faith since being converted.