

Assurance of Salvation

There is such a thing as a well grounded assurance of salvation and there is also such a thing as ill founded presumption. One of the primary goals of the Apostle John in the letter of 1John is to instill confidence in genuine believers that they are right with God and need not fear His judgment. Consider some of the signs of life given to us in 1John that help answer the question of “Where do I stand with God?”

The first sign of life is that we are **walking in the light** – 1 Jn 1:6-7. Light & Darkness are typically used in scripture with reference to moral uprightness or perverseness respectively. The faithful *walk* (their general manner of life) *in light*. They habitually prefer the pure to the impure; clean to dirty. The presumptuous may speak of a commitment, but they love the darkness. You regularly find them skulking about in dark alleys.

Second, is an **awareness of sin** – 1 Jn1:8,10. The more time spent communing with God, the more glaring our sin becomes to us. The real believer knows that if sin were blue, everything he did, thought or said would be in some way shaded blue. By contrast the falsely assured become increasingly convinced that their *sins* are actually *virtues*. “I’m not gossiping, I’m just concern about how sister molly is doing with her alcohol problem.”

Third is **obedience** – 1Jn 2:3-5; 3:7-8,10. True assurance knows that salvation is by grace through faith, but that it is a faith that is revealed in specific acts of obedience. False assurance says that it is legalistic to worry about obedience. *Obedience* grows in the faithful. *Excuses* grow in the presumptuous.

Next is a **genuine longing to see the Lord** – 1Jn 3:2-3 Do you love theology and the discussion of issues? Nothing wrong with this, but it is possible to imagine we love the Lord, when we are actually in love with ideas and doctrines. Do you ache to *see* His **face**, *hear* His **voice**, *touch* His **hand**? Do you long for the day when you will be *perfected* and never have another sinful thought or action? If so you will be striving in the present to become what you are destined to be in eternity.

Last is **love for the brethren** – 1Jn 3:14; 4:12-5:3 This is the proof John is most adamant about. The problem with the test of love is that, everyone thinks they are a loving person, but John reminds us that love is not “whatever I define it to be,” but love is seen in God’s sending His Son to take away our sins. In other words, love is actively seeking the best interests of others. Love is not just a pleasant attitude or empty words, but involves emptying ourselves in order to fill others. Love calls for the sacrifice of time, energy and money. In order for our love to give us confidence and assurance in the most frightening place imaginable - before the judgment seat of God - our love must parallel His love. So the question is clear. Do you love others? Are you sure? What deeds and actions are there to prove it?

This kind of evaluation always reveals shortcomings to the genuine soul searcher. Interestingly, the more you are troubled over your lack of holiness, the greater your assurance will be. This is because the one who finds himself regularly in need of the blood of Christ is the one who is daily pursuing Christ. If you find nothing in this article that convicts you or if your shortcomings do not bother you,

then you have a deadly serious problem. The characteristic of the falsely assured are three: they are smugly confident that they are lacking in nothing, or they are angry that someone has pointed out their fault, or worst of all they see their errors, but don't care.

So, let me exhort you to be a confident Christian. As the Apostle said, *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God* (1 John 5:13). Do you believe in the name of the Son of God? Are you trusting in Him alone to save you from your sins? Have you been joined to Him in Baptism? Are you striving to show your love for Him by the obedience of your faith? Then stop doubting and rejoice that your sins are forgiven, and your name is written in His book.