

Week Thirty

Grace Flows from Election and Believers Cannot be Certain they are Elect

The absence of doubt is not certainty; you can have no doubt about something and be wrong. God wants you uncertain. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”¹

I am sure you have heard people ask: “Can a person lose his salvation?” You may enjoy debating this issue, but it has no practical value, for none can know (in the sense of being certain) they are saved. Of course you can know in the sense of having assurance, as the Beloved Apostle says: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”² But in the sense of knowing the future, you cannot be certain; you must walk by faith.

When you attempt to use “know” in reference to “things hoped for” and “things not seen,”³ you realize that knowing and walking by faith are mutually exclusive. What you know doesn’t require faith, and if you have faith it is because you do not know. Therefore you do not know that when you die you will go to heaven; by faith you believe you will.

You now come to the question that has practical value: “Can you lose your assurance of salvation?” Obviously you can. Some, assured of their salvation, will be rejected by God, as Jesus pointed out in His Sermon on the Mount: “Not every one that saith unto 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 done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”⁴ It may also be that some doubting their salvation may be saved. God wants you to be assured of your salvation, but only if you remain “stedfast unto the end.”

You noted John’s wonderful promise of assurance in his first epistle. He also said, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”⁵ If you live in willful violation of God’s commandments, you should lose your assurance of salvation, for you have no biblical right to believe you are saved. God offers His assurance only to those who walk in submission to His will.

If your salvation depends upon the hold you have on God, then your future is bleak indeed. For the storms of life cause the strongest of men to lose their grip. But if your salvation depends upon God’s grip on you, the storms of life cannot threaten you. When God wished to assure His people Israel, He said, “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the

¹ Hebrews 3:14, KJV

² 1John 5:13, KJV

³ Cf. Hebrews 11:1

⁴ Cf. Matthew 7:21-23, KJV

⁵ 1John 2:3-4, KJV

waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”⁶

God likened His inviolable commitment to Israel to His promise to Noah that never again would He flood the earth. The Sovereign God who has authority to determine the course of nature vows to maintain His gracious covenant with His people. You may allow your grasp on Him to lose hold, but it is not in His character to let go of you: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”⁷

In Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” He says to His Father, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.”⁸ The Father chose people out of His creation to be a gift from Him to His Son, which of course means that the Father selected you as a special gift for His Son. I can think of no higher privilege than to be chosen as a gift from God the Father to God the Son.

Earlier we noted that all are God’s slaves.⁹ You can see the connection between election and being His slave: if you reject being a slave, you reject election. You can have assurance that you are His elect if you want to be His slave. If you reject being God’s slave it is because you would rather be a slave of sin than a slave of God. The worst kind of slavery is wanting autonomy and not being able to have it. You cannot control the most important decisions in life – e.g., your race, parents, intelligence, era of history in which you live. However, if you eagerly accept God’s offer to be His slave, He promises that you will live with Him in eternity rather than taking your insatiable lust for autonomy into an eternity without God.

You are a royal child of God.¹⁰ In the temporal, children anticipate a time when they will cease being children and thus be able to do as they please. If you are elect you will always be His child, obligated to obey His every word.

The salient points:

1 – None can know/be certain they are saved. Assurance of salvation is a product of election, and none can know they are elect. We walk by faith.

2 – Assurance of salvation implies that you cannot know/be certain; you only need assurance for what you don’t know. A heart for obedience is the only sure test of regeneration.

⁶ Isaiah 54:9-10, KJV

⁷ Isaiah 43:2-3, KJV

⁸ John 17:6, KJV

⁹ Cf. Weeks Two and Three

¹⁰ Cf. e.g., 1Peter 2:9

3 – Salvation is by grace; rewards are by works. There will be eternal accountability for temporal behavior (cf. Weeks Twenty-six and Twenty-seven).

4 – The quality of your heaven or hell will be both apparent and appreciable (cf. Weeks Seven and Eleven).

5 – People should be motivated by eternal gain, for hope is the principle motivator in life. If you are not motivated by eternal consequences, you will consider truth relative and you will place your hope in the temporal (cf. Weeks Seven and Twenty-one).

6 – If, at anytime, you interpret a verse in a controversial way, or argue that a command is cultural, be prepared to defend your position before the One who knows every thought and intent of the heart. God help you if your interpretation was driven by your will (cf. Weeks Eighteen and Thirty-eight).

Questions for Reflection

1 – Biblically, of what can you be certain vis-à-vis uncertain?

2 – Why does God want you walking by faith? How is this tied to election?

3 – Does God want you secure or insecure in your relationship with Him? On what do you base your answer?

4 – What do you learn from God viewing you as a gift to His Son, His slave, as well as His royal child? How do you marry these three thoughts in your mind?