



**Assurance, Law,
Liberty &
Conscience**

Assurance of Grace
and Salvation
WCF Chapter 18

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

1. Is being assured that one has been graciously saved in Christ by faith edifying to the believer or dangerous to the believer?

Answers:

Roman Catholic: It's dangerous to the believer. Justification requires cooperating with God's grace by faith working in love. Doubt motivates working in love. Assurance does just the opposite.

WCF: Those who truly believe may "be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. . ." WCF 18.1

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

2. Can believers have more than a probable assurance – more than a mere probability of being saved?

Answer:

WCF: Yes. Believers can have an “infallible assurance of faith. . .”
WCF 18.2

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

3. How can it be that Christians can have an “infallible” assurance of salvation?

Answer:

WCF: Christians can have this “infallible” assurance of salvation because that assurance is grounded in (1) the “divine truth of the promises of salvation,” (2) the inward evidences of evangelical graces (faith, repentance, adoption, sanctification), (3) the Holy Spirit’s testimony to our spirit that we are adopted, and (4) the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself – the pledge of a consummated redemption. - 18.2

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

4. Is this infallible assurance an essential element of true, saving faith in Christ? If I have moments (or long periods) of doubt, wondering whether I belong to Christ by faith, can I still be a Christian?

Answer:

WCF: This infallible assurance is not of the essence of Christian faith. A true Christian believer may have even long periods of doubt and may experience genuine conflict in the soul. - 18.3

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

5. How can doubts arise?

Answer:

WCF: There could be several reasons: (1) by not working to preserve our assurance (see next question); (2) by sin that wounds the conscience and grieves the Holy Spirit; (3) by the onset of a “sudden and vehement temptation;” and (4) by God providentially “withdrawing the light of His countenance.” – 18.4

NOTE: Each of these relate to our experience of Assurance, not to the sufficiency of Christ as Savior. He is always sufficient.

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

6. Should the Christian passively wait to have this assurance or to have it restored?

Answer:

WCF: No. The Christian should make his/her calling and election sure by the “right use of ordinary means” - those means by which the Father, in the Son, and by the Spirit communicates His love to us.

NOTE: The Confession directs us out of ourselves as we make our calling and election sure, not into ourselves.

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

7. Can one deceive oneself into believing that he/she is a saved?

Answer:

WCF: Yes. Hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and the estate of salvation. 18.1

Assurance of Grace and Salvation - Key Questions:

8. How do I know whether I'm saved in Christ or just a self-deceived "professor?"

That can be one of two different questions:

- (1) Do I doubt the sufficiency of Christ? Am I doubting whether I am saved, because I believe that I need more than Christ? If that's the question, then go back to Chapter 11 – Justification.
- (2) Do I lack assurance that Christ has died for me? Do I believe that I **am not joined** to Christ by true faith? If that's the question, it's often a sign of a sensitive conscience and the best pastoral advice is, "for every look at self, take ten looks at Christ." R.M. McCheyne.

The Law of God

WCF Chapter 19

The Law of God (WCF Chapter 19)

Moral Law	Ceremonial /Judicial Law
<p>Eternal, unchangeable law that displays the character of God and is to rule all humanity (believers and unbelievers) as they execute the office of image bearer.</p>	<p>The laws given to the people of Israel for their unique position in redemptive-history.</p> <p>The ceremonial law, generally given to direct their worship, foreshadowed the work of Christ and is no longer applicable because Christ has come.</p> <p>Judicial laws were given to govern Israel as a political body. These laws no longer apply specifically, but are useful with regard to the principles of general equity that they represent.</p>

The Law of God (WCF Chapter 19)

Covenant of Works	Covenant of Grace
<p>The Covenant made with Adam and all humanity. Under this Covenant, all humanity, who are not in Christ, are obliged to keep all of the moral law perfectly to secure life.</p>	<p>Because of the fall, God makes a second covenant: He freely offers to sinners life and salvation to all those who are joined to Jesus Christ by faith and giving to them the Holy Spirit, who shall make them willing and able to believe.</p>

Law of God (WCF Chapter 19) - Key Questions:

1. Does the Moral Law operate as the rule to be obeyed by the Christian under the Covenant of Works – the keeping of which brings life, the breaking of which brings death?

No. Believers in Christ are **NOT** under the moral law as *a Covenant of Works*.

Law of God (WCF Chapter 19) - Key Questions:

2. Is the moral law then of any use to the Christian? WCF 19.6

Yes.

- (1) It is useful as a rule of life, informing us of the will of God.
- (2) It shows us the sinful pollutions of our nature, hearts, and lives – working in us conviction and hatred of sin and showing us even more clearly our need for Christ.
- (3) It restrains corruptions by forbidding sin. By its threatenings, it shows what sin deserves. The promises of good gifts from the Father encourage us to pursue that which is most worthwhile – the Father’s pleasure – rather than the cheap imitations promised by sin. - **WCF 19.7**

Law of God (WCF Chapter 19) - Key Questions:

3. Is keeping the moral law in anyway contrary to resting in Christ alone for salvation?

No. The keeping of the moral law “sweetly compl[ies] with [the gospel].” In the gospel, we have Christ and all of His benefits, including the Spirit of Christ who subdues and enables us to freely and cheerfully do the will of God which is revealed in the law. 19.7

Christian Liberty, and
Liberty of Conscience
WCF Chapter 20

Christian Liberty & Liberty of Conscience

This Chapter Treats Two Related But Distinct Topics:

- Christian Liberty (Liberation) – That from which the Christian has been set free in Christ. WCF 20.1
- Liberty of the Believer's Conscience. WCF 20.2 – 20.4.

Christian Liberty – WCF 20.1

The Essential Point is that Christ, by His life, death, resurrection, ascension, and ongoing intercession has

- (1) *freed us from*** various realities that resulted from the fall, and
- (2) *freed us to*** the realities of newness of life in the Son.

Christian Liberty – WCF 20.1

Freed From in Christ:

1. The guilt of sin
2. The condemning wrath of God
3. The curse of the law
4. This present evil world
5. Bondage to Satan
6. The dominion (enslaving power) of sin.
7. The evils of afflictions
8. The sting of death
9. The victory by the grave
10. Everlasting damnation

Christian Liberty – WCF 20.1

Freed TO:

1. Freely access the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit
2. Willingly obey God, not out of slavish fear, but as a loving child

Note: This is the life of the Eternal Son (free access, lovingly doing the Father's will)

Note Also: That while all of these realities were also true of OT believers, there are also additional benefits to the those who believe after Christ has come: (1) no longer have the yoke of the ceremonial law – no need to go back to the sign when we have come to the city; (2) bolder access to the throne of grace – we know with certainty that we are the children of the most high; (3) the Spirit in all of His fullness.

Liberty of Conscience – WCF 20.2 – 20.4

Basic Principle: God Alone is Lord of the Conscience

Our final allegiance (and, therefore, our final obedience) is to God as He is revealed in His word. The believer is not obligated to keep any commandment or believe any doctrine regarding matters of faith and worship that is contrary or in addition to (“beside”) God’s Word.

This Principle Overlaps with Chapter 1 – Holy Scripture

1.6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

Liberty of Conscience – WCF 20.2 – 20.4

If we put together law, Christian liberty, and liberty of conscience, what does that mean for the Christian?

1. If the Word of God instructs us, we are to do what it instructs as an expression of our love and gratitude to our Triune God. Practicing sin, cherishing lusts “destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” WCF 20.3
2. If the Word does not instruct us (expressly or by good and necessary consequence), we are at liberty to express our love and gratitude to our Triune God as we see fit in accord with the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the good of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Liberty of Conscience – WCF 20.2 – 20.4

Relating to Authorities:

Christian Liberty cannot be used to oppose the lawful (in accord with the Word or the “light of nature”) exercise of God-ordained power, whether civil or ecclesiastical.

“ . . because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. . . .”

WCF 20.4

Note Also in 20.4: Unlawful exercise of power may be lawfully called to account and proceeded against by the church.