

Resource: Understanding True vs. False Assurance

obedientheartsministry.org

Overview: Assurance of salvation is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian faith, but it must rest on a solid scriptural foundation. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God's Word establishes that true redemption requires a severe cost—specifically, the shedding of blood to address the reality of sin. When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again three days later, He fulfilled the sacrificial system once and for all, conquering death and providing complete cleansing for all who place their trust in Him. False assurance occurs when an individual relies on human effort, surface-level rituals, or self-righteousness rather than the finished work of Jesus Christ and a transformed life.

1. The Foundation of True Salvation

To recognize false assurance, we must first understand what God requires for genuine salvation as revealed in Scripture:

- **The Necessity of Blood Atonement:** The Old Testament establishes that sin separates humanity from God and carries a fatal penalty. Leviticus 17:11 states, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."* Hebrews 9:22 reinforces this eternal truth: *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission."*
- **The Finished Work of Christ:** Animal sacrifices were a temporary shadow pointing toward the ultimate, perfect sacrifice. Jesus Christ shed His sinless blood on the cross, taking the penalty for our sins, and rose bodily three days later, breaking the power of death forever (Hebrews 10:10–14).
- **The Basis of Trust:** Salvation is received purely through grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by works (Ephesians 2:8–9). True assurance rests on God's promise to save everyone who trusts in His Son.

2. Common Pillars of False Assurance

Many people believe they are in a right relationship with God based on criteria that Scripture explicitly warns against:

Pillar of False Assurance	The Misconception	What Scripture Teaches
Moral Heritage & Good Works	"I am a good person, and my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds."	Isaiah 64:6 reminds us that our righteousness is as filthy rags; no one is saved by self-generated goodness.
Religious Rituals	"I was baptized, joined a church, or recited a prayer years ago."	Outward participation without an inward heart change through faith in Christ cannot save (Matthew 7:21–23).
Intellectual Consent	"I believe God exists and that Jesus lived."	Even demons believe in God's existence (James 2:19). Saving faith involves personal trust and surrender to Christ as Savior and Lord.

3. Marks of True Scriptural Assurance

Scripture gives clear tests by which believers can examine their faith (2 Corinthians 13:5, 1 John). Genuine assurance is validated by:

- **Reliance on Christ Alone:** Your total dependence for acceptance before God is Jesus' shed blood and resurrection, not your own merits or performance.
- **The Indwelling Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:16), bringing true conviction, comfort, and heart transformation.
- **A Desire for Obedience:** While Christians are not sinless, genuine faith produces a desire to live an obedient life surrendered to God's Word (1 John 2:3–4).
- **Love for God and Others:** Saving faith demonstrates itself through genuine, self-sacrificing love for God and fellow believers (1 John 3:14).

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified."

— 2 Corinthians 13:5