
Chapter 5 Grace, Assurance, and New Life

A new believer may wonder, “What happened when I trusted Christ?” and “How can I know I truly belong to Him?” Scripture answers with several connected truths. God forgives, justifies, gives new birth, adopts, joins the believer to Christ, gives the Holy Spirit, and begins a life-long work of making the believer holy (John 1:12-13; Romans 5:1; 8:9-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

These words do not describe competing versions of salvation or a list of achievements the believer must complete. They describe what God’s one saving work accomplishes from several angles. In the courtroom, justification answers our guilt. In the language of birth, regeneration answers our spiritual death. In the family, adoption answers our alienation. In a life set apart to God, sanctification answers sin’s continuing influence. Each truth helps us understand a different part of the same gracious rescue.

Saved by Grace

Grace means God acts favorably toward people who cannot earn His rescue. We were dead in trespasses and sins, “but God,” rich in mercy and love, made believers alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). Salvation is by grace through faith, not from ourselves and not from works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace does not excuse continued rebellion; it trains believers to reject ungodliness and live for God (Titus 2:11-14).

Forgiven and Justified

Forgiveness means God releases the believer from the debt of sin because of Christ’s blood (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13-14). Justification means God declares the believer righteous on the basis of Christ, received through faith (Romans 3:24-28; 5:1). Justification changes our standing before God; it is not God pretending that we never sinned but God crediting righteousness apart from works because Christ has dealt with our guilt (Romans 4:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

This distinction matters when conscience accuses us. Justification does not mean that our past suddenly becomes imaginary. It means the Judge has dealt with our guilt through Christ and has issued a new verdict over the believer. We do not

keep returning to the courtroom to earn another acquittal through better performance. We return to Christ in confession and faith, resting in the sufficiency of His sacrifice (Romans 5:9; 8:31-34; 1 John 1:9-2:2).

Born Again and Made New

Regeneration, or the new birth, is the Holy Spirit's work of giving spiritual life (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). The person who was dead in trespasses is made alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5). A believer is a new creation, although growth in thought, character, and habits continues over time (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:20-24).

Regeneration is not self-reinvention. The Holy Spirit does what human effort cannot do: He awakens the sinner to life, enables a genuine response to the Gospel, and begins a new work within the believer (John 3:5-8; 6:63; Titus 3:5). This new life produces new desires, although old habits and temptations may still need to be resisted and unlearned (Romans 6:11-14; Galatians 5:16-17).

Adopted into God's Family

God does more than cancel guilt. He adopts believers as His children and gives the Spirit of adoption, by whom they cry,

“Abba, Father” (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7). Adoption gives belonging, access, inheritance, and loving discipline (Ephesians 2:18-19; Hebrews 12:5-11).

Every true believer belongs to Christ and has the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Spirit assures believers of their adoption, helps them pray, produces Christlike fruit, gives power to resist sin, and equips the church for service (Romans 8:13-16, 26-27; Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Later chapters will distinguish the Spirit’s indwelling work in salvation from the Pentecostal teaching concerning baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4).

Sanctified and Being Sanctified

Sanctification means being set apart for God and increasingly shaped into Christ’s likeness (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 8:29). In one sense believers have been sanctified in Christ; in another, they are called to pursue holiness through the Spirit’s power (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:14). Growth is not instant perfection, but grace establishes a new direction (Philippians 1:6; 3:12-14).

Sanctification involves God’s work and our responsive obedience. God works in His people “both to will and to do for His

good pleasure,” and believers are therefore called to obey, put sin to death, renew their minds, and practice what Scripture teaches (Romans 8:13; 12:1-2; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:22-25). Depending on grace is not passive. It means obeying with confidence that God supplies what He commands.

How Can I Have Assurance?

Assurance begins outside our changing emotions—with God’s promise and Christ’s finished work. Whoever hears Christ’s word and believes the Father who sent Him has eternal life and has passed from death into life (John 5:24). God has given eternal life in His Son, and those who have the Son have life (1 John 5:11-13). The Spirit also bears witness that believers are God’s children (Romans 8:15-16).

Scripture also points to confirming evidence: continuing trust in the true Christ, growing obedience, love for other believers, confession rather than concealment of sin, and perseverance (John 8:31; 1 John 1:6-2:6; 3:14; 4:13-15). These fruits are not the foundation of acceptance, but they help confirm that faith is living.

Believers may stumble, but Christ is their Advocate, and God promises cleansing to those who confess their sins (1 John

1:9-2:2). Scripture does not teach sinless perfection at conversion, nor does it give comfort to a person determined to remain in unrepentant rebellion (1 John 1:8; 3:6-10). The normal Christian life includes both real struggle and real growth (Galatians 5:16-25).

KNOW THE WORDS

WORD	PLAIN MEANING
Forgiveness	God releases the believer from sin's debt because of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13-14).
Justification	God's gracious declaration that the believer is righteous in Christ through faith (Romans 3:24-28; 5:1).
Regeneration	The Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life—the new birth (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5).
Adoption	God receives believers as His children and heirs (Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:4-7).
Sanctification	God sets believers apart and progressively forms Christlike holiness in them (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
Assurance	Spirit-given confidence, grounded in God's

WORD	PLAIN MEANING
	promise and confirmed by living faith, that one belongs to Christ (Romans 8:15-16; 1 John 5:11-13).

THINK IT THROUGH

Q What If I Still Struggle with Sin?

Struggle does not automatically prove that conversion was false. The Spirit opposes the desires of the flesh, so conflict is part of Christian growth (Galatians 5:16-17). The right response is not denial or despair but confession, dependence on the Spirit, renewed obedience, and help from the church (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:12-14; Galatians 6:1-2).

Q Can I Base Assurance on a Past Prayer?

A past prayer may mark the moment you trusted Christ, but the prayer itself is not the Savior. Assurance rests on Christ, His promise, and present faith in Him (John 6:35-40; 10:27-30; 1 John 5:11-13). Scripture calls believers to examine themselves without becoming trapped in endless fear or self-analysis (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

WATCH FOR COUNTERFEITS

One counterfeit turns grace into permission to live without repentance; another makes acceptance depend on constant

performance. Scripture rejects both. Grace saves apart from works and then trains believers in godliness (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14). Our confidence is in Christ, while our lives increasingly display His work (Philippians 2:12-13; 1 John 2:3-6).

DECLARATION OF FAITH CONNECTION

This chapter supports these Church of God convictions:

- Justification, regeneration, and the new birth come through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24-26; Titus 3:5-7).
- Sanctification follows the new birth through faith in Christ, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (John 17:17; Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11).
- Holiness is God's standard of living for His people (1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14).

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Read 1 John 5:11-13 and write the promise in your own words. Then read 1 John 2:3-6 and name one area in which Christ is calling you to growing obedience.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. What is the difference between forgiveness and justification?

2. What happens in regeneration?
3. What privileges come with adoption?
4. How can sanctification be both already true and still in progress?
5. What is the foundation of assurance, and what fruit confirms living faith?

FIVE DAYS IN THE BIBLE

Day 1: But God — Ephesians 2:1-10

Contrast what we were, what God did, and what believers are created to do.

Day 2: Peace with God — Romans 5:1-11

List the blessings that follow justification.

Day 3: Born of the Spirit — John 3:1-21

Write what Jesus says is necessary and what God's love provides.

Day 4: Children and Heirs — Romans 8:1-17

Notice the Spirit's work and the privileges of adoption.

Day 5: That You May Know — 1 John 1:5-2:6; 5:11-13

Write the basis of assurance and the marks of walking in the light.