

The Whole Christ

By Sinclair Ferguson

Lesson 11: Hinderances Strew All the Way

Life is hard. Not only does our own flesh and conscience battle against us but we have an enemy that desires nothing more than to see that we walk without the _____ of our salvation.

Hinderance 1: Our assurance does not rest on our self-examination but on looking _____ ourselves to Christ.

“The foundation of our assurance does not lie in us, but in Him.”

Speaking about this theme Ferguson references Abraham and says:

“He anchored his assurance on the promise of God, and thus he grew strong in faith as he gave glory to God...there is no assurance derived simply by examining our sanctification. We must never confuse the heart of assurance in faith with its confirmation in a life of service.”

Hinderance 2: As mentioned in the last chapter, we are reminded that when we are living in active _____ this will have an impact on our feeling of assurance.

“Where there is no actual obedience to Christ, there will be no evidence of present love for Him as Savior. Where salvation is not actualized, and a person has no consciousness of Christ’s saving mercy, assurance will inevitably be hindered. Thus the Christian who has developed a pattern of disobedience in his or her life will lose assurance.”

Hinderance 3: Not only will our lack of obedience have an impact on our assurance but our wrong _____ of divine providence will also play into this.

“It is not an uncommon instinct among contemporary Christians to encounter difficulties and immediately conclude that they have fallen into divine disfavor...We are not the best interpreters of divine providence.”

“From the crucified Christ, now risen, ascended, and reigning, we must never allow our eyes to be diverted nor view providence except through cross-shaped lenses.”

Seeing the works of divine providence through the gospel is _____ to do. We see and feel our suffering and naturally conclude that God is angry with us and wonder if God is truly good. However, here three biblical reasons for our experience of suffering are given.

1. Suffering can be _____-The Lord may want to teach us of the errors of sin (Psalm 119:71)
2. Suffering builds _____-it is through suffering that we grow in those Christian virtues (Rom. 5:3-4)
3. Suffering teaches us of our divine need of _____ (2 Cor. 12:9)

“Ultimately, of course, afflictions make us long for and prepare us for glory. Only when we have a sense of that glory’s ‘eternal weight’ do we see our afflictions in proper perspective as ‘light and momentary.’ What is vital is that we understand that these afflictions are controlled by the hand of our sovereign Father. Otherwise we do not see them in their true perspective, and our assurance of God’s love will sink underneath them.”

Hinderance 4: Sometimes the problem may come from our lack of understanding as to the Christians relationship to _____. The continued presence of sin and strong temptations may lead some to conclude that maybe they are not really Christian at all.

“In union with Him in His death and resurrection we have been set free from the reign of sin. Yet we remain sinners in ourselves. Sin continues to indwell us; only when our regeneration comes to further

flowering beyond this life will we be free from sin's presence. These distinctions are vital. While guilt is gone and the reign of sin has ended, sin continues to indwell us and to beset us. It still has the potential to deceive us and to allure us. Once we understand this, we will not confuse the ongoing presence of sin with the absence of new life in us. Without that stability in our understanding our assurance will be liable to ebb and flow."

Hinderance 5: Some people's _____ temperament can impact their feelings of assurance.

"An individual may have quite strong faith, much grace, and rich evidence of fruitful service yet lack full assurance because of natural temperament...A melancholic disposition de facto creates obstacles to the enjoyment of assurance-partly because it creates obstacles to the enjoyment of everything."

Hinderance 6: The reality of forces of _____ also attribute to the believers struggle with assurance.

"Attacks of the Devil are also hinderances to assurance and often have this as their specific aim. Satan knows he cannot ultimately destroy those whom Christ saves. He is therefore determined to destroy our enjoyment of our new relationship to the Lord."

Hinderance 7: Our own _____ can hinder our assurance.

"If conscience condemns us when God does not, we may so align conscience with God that we impute to Him the restrictions that our own conscience has unbiblically placed upon our lives. When conscience draws lines of restriction around our life, permitting a narrower radius and smaller circumference in life that God Word does, inevitably this distorts our view of God."

Hinderance 8: Our neglect of the _____ of _____ will hinder our feelings of assurance.

"Misuse or neglect of these ordinances of God may strangle assurance...It is one of the wiles of the Devil to discourage the doubting believer from seeking fellowship, sitting under the Word, and coming to enjoy the gifts Christ has given to assure us of His love for us."

In spite of all these hinderances the Christian can still know the _____ of assurance but we must remember:

Christian assurance is not self-assurance and self-confidence. It is the reverse: confidence in our Father, trust in Christ as our Savior, and joy in the Spirit as the Spirit of sonship, seal of grace, and earnest of our inheritance as sons and daughters of God."

Chapter 3-The Law of Christ

Continuing to teach these three men about the truths of Christian _____ Evangelist continues by saying:

Evan. Thus, you see, that both of these laws (law of works and law of faith) agree in saying, 'Do this.' But here is the difference; the one saith, 'Do this and live;' and the other saith, 'Live, and do this;' the one saith, Do this for life; and the other saith, Do this from life.

Yea, according to the measure of any man's faith, in his love to Christ, and so to man for Christ's sake; and so, consequently, his readiness and willingness to forgive an injury, yea, to forgive an enemy, and to do good to them that hate him; and the more faith any man has, the less love he has to the world or the things that are in the world. To conclude, the greater any man's faith is, the more fit he is to die, and the more willing he is to die."

Before you have reformed your life that you might believe, why, now believe that you may reform your life; and do not any longer work to get an interest in Christ, but believe your interest in Christ, that so you may work.

Quoting Luther, Evangelista says, If we could perfectly apprehend Christ, then should we be free from sin: but alas! Whilst we are here, we know but in part, and so believe but in part, and so receive Christ but in part, and so, consequently, are holy but in part.