

I. *Can we be certain that we are born of God.*—It seems late in the day to raise such a question; and the reading of the text ought to be a sufficient answer; but there are among us professedly good men who speak of assurance as presumption, and think that uncertainty is all that can be looked for here. Now John was very decided about his own salvation and that of his correspondents. *We know* it. As no member of this congregation would hesitate to say, "I am a Protestant," so John does not hesitate to say, "I am of God." And so you find God's people in all ages. Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Moses and Job had testimony that they pleased God. Here how confidently David speaks. His usual strain is,—*"The Lord is my Shepherd;"* "I am thy servant;" "O God, thou art my God;" "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Even in his most penitential psalms, while his *communion* is interrupted and his *joy* gone, he manifests no misgivings about his *salvation*. And what does Paul say? "Whose I am and whom I serve;" or again "I know whom I have believed and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." And so it is with tens of thousands of God's people to-day; they know that they are of God, and their friends know it too. There are among your acquaintances men and women of whose piety you have no doubt. Now while it is true that we may be certain about our own salvation and about that of some others also; yet we need to notice two things:—

*First*, that some professors have a *false* assurance,—they feel confident that they are of God when they are not. Sometimes you will meet a man who is very loud in his professions; he talks much about his conversion and piety; and at every meeting announces himself as saved; when almost every good man who hears him knows that he is saying what is not true. There are obtrusive cases like that; but there may be many a self-deceiver of a more retiring disposition. He would think it presumption to *say* that he is a child of God, yet you can find out that he believes he is on his way to heaven, and would resent statements to the contrary; when God knows that he too is a self-deceiver. Oh it is a sad thing for a man to be thus deceived. Let us beware of a false assurance, a false hope. Remember the five foolish virgins. They expected to enjoy the feast, and to outward appearances they were as likely to do so as the wise. But they had no oil in their vessels, and their lamps went out, and the door was shut upon them forever, and the answer