1 John 5:13 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - 1 John - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		**BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP**	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

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1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life:

Greek - Tauta egrapha (AAI) humin hina eidete (2PRAS) hoti zoen echete (2PPAI) aionion tois pisteuousin (PAP) eis to onoma tou huiou tou theou:

ESV I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Wuest - These things I write to you in order that you may know with an absolute knowledge that life you are

having, eternal (life), to you who believe on the name of the Son of God. (Note that Wuest follows the original Greek text closer than the NAS or ESV).

- **have I**: 1Jn 1:4 2:1,13,14,21,26 Joh 20:31 21:24 1Pe 5:12
- **believe**: 1Jn 3:23 Joh 1:12 2:23 3:18 Ac 3:16 4:12 1Ti 1:15,16
- **may know**: 1Jn 5:10 1:1,2 Ro 8:15-17 2Co 5:1 Ga 4:6 2Pe 1:10,11
- 1 John 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOHN'S PURPOSE FOR HIS LETTER

These things - **What things?** This is not an easy answer as you can discern from Vincent and Robertson's differing interpretations.

Steven Cole feels - "These things" refer to the entire letter John has written this letter so that his little children will not be unsettled by the false teachers. (1 John 5:5-13 Is Christianity Merely Psychological?)

NET Note on to what **these things** refers - Theoretically the pronoun (tauta = "**these things**") could refer (1) to what precedes or (2) to what follows. Since it is followed by (hina) clause which gives the **purpose** for the writing, and a new subject is introduced in 1Jn 5:14 (confidence), it seems almost certain that the (**these things**) in 1Jn 5:13 refers to preceding material. Even at this, some would limit the referent of tauta (**these things**) (1) only to 1Jn 5:1–12 [As does A T Robertson] or even 1Jn 5:12, but more likely tauta (**these things**) in 1Jn 5:13 refers (2) to the entirety of the letter, for two reasons: (a) based on the structural analogy with the Gospel of John, where the conclusion refers to all that has preceded (Ed: Presumably they refer to Jn 20:31), it is probable that the conclusion to 1 John refers likewise to all that has preceded; and (b) the statement **These things I have written to you** in 1Jn 5:13 forms an inclusion with the statement **these things we write** (kai tauta graphomen hēmeis) at the end of the prologue (1Jn 1:4) and encompasses the entire body of the letter. (**NET Note**)

MacArthur favors **these things** as encompassing the entire letter noting that "there is a strong parallel between 1Jn 5:13 and John 20:31 ("these have been written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have **life** in His Name"). Since that verse unquestionably refers back to the entire Gospel of John, the parallel expression in 1Jn 5:13 most likely refers back to the entire epistle. John wrote his Gospel so that people might believe and be saved; he wrote his first epistle so that those who believe would know they are saved. (1-3 John- MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

Marvin Vincent on **I have written** - John speaks as looking back over his Epistle and recalling the aim with which he wrote.

A T Robertson explains that have written is "Not epistolary aorist, but refers to verses 1 to 12 (1Jn 5:1-12) of this Epistle as in 1Jn 2:26 to the preceding verses."

Wuest disagrees with **Robertson** writing that "**I have written**" is an epistolary aorist, a courtesy extended the reader by the writer of a letter in which the latter puts himself at the viewpoint of the reader when he receives the letter, looking at the letter which he is writing as a past event, although it is a present one with him. John refers here, therefore, not to a previous letter, but to the one he is writing." (**Word Studies from the Greek New Testament**)

David Smith - the purpose of the Epistle is not merely that we may have Eternal Life by believing but that we may know that we have it. The Gospel exhibits the Son of God, the Epistle commends Him. It is a supplement to the Gospel, a personal application and appeal. (Expositor's Greek)

I have written (1125)(**grapho** from root **graph**- = primarily means to scratch on or engrave as on an ornament, reports, letters, etc; English = graph, graphic, etc) means to engrave or inscribe with a pen or stylus characters or letters on a surface which can be wood, wax, metal, leather, stone, parchment, dirt (John), paper, etc.

Who believe (4100)(**pisteuo**) means to entrust oneself to an entity (in this case Jesus) in complete confidence. To believe in with the implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted (Jesus). This is not just intellectual assent, but a that is not associated in a change in one's heart and thus in one's behavior or actions. Belief in the New Testament sense that effects the new birth denotes more than a "demonic" like, intellectual assent to a set of facts or truths. The demons believe but they are clearly not saved. Genuine belief does involve an intellectual assent and consent of one's mind, but also includes an act of one's heart and will. Biblical saving faith is not passive assent but an active staking of one's life on the claims of God. The respected Greek lexicon author W E Vine defines belief as consisting of (1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Th 2:11 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not believe [pisteuo] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."); (2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe [pisteuo] in His name") and (3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender.

Pisteuo is in the **present tense** which speaks of continual belief. While our faith may fluctuate like the stock market (I hope not!), it does not drop to zero (although there are times when it feels that way). God has given us His sure word that our faith might be firmly grounded on Biblical truth. As Paul writes in Romans " faith [comes] from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Ro 10:17-**note**).

David Smith - The purpose for which St. John wrote his Gospel was that we might believe in the Incarnation, and so have Eternal Life (Jn 20:31); the purpose of the Epistle is not merely that we may have Eternal Life by believing but that we may know that we have it. The Gospel exhibits the Son of God, the Epistle commends Him. It is a supplement to the Gospel, a personal application and appeal. (Expositor's Greek Testament)

W A Criswell - The author begins this final section by restating his purpose for writing. While John's Gospel is primarily evangelistic and especially directed to unbelievers (John 20:31), 1 John is written to Christians. Since the author's readers are being harassed by false teaching, he wants them to recognize that they possess eternal life. Two words for "**know**" (oida, ginosko) occur a total of seven times in this passage. In light of their spiritual status, these believers ought to have confidence in their relationship with God. 1Jn 5:14-17 relate this confidence to prayer; 1Jn 5:18-20 recount several important spiritual truths.

THE PURPOSE EXPOUNDED

So that (**hina**) is a **term of purpose** which should always cause us to pause and ponder ***What is the purpose***?

NET Note - This **hina** (**so that**) introduces a clause giving the author's purpose for writing "**these things**" (tauta), which refers to the entirety of the preceding material (**Ed**: See discussion above on **these things**). The two other Johannine statements about writing, 1John 1:4 and John 20:31, are both followed by purpose clauses introduced by hina as here. (**NET Note**)

Steven Cole - "If they **believe** in the Name (= person) of the Son of God, then they may **know** that they have eternal life. John doesn't want us to ***hope so***, but to ***know so***. You can **know** because God's testimony about His Son is trustworthy. Your faith must rest in Jesus Christ alone, not in anything or anyone else. If your faith is in Christ, then you have the **inner witness of His Spirit**, that you are a child of God (cp 1Jn 4:13-**note**, Ro 8:14-16-**note**). You have the evidence in your life that He has changed your heart. You now believe the truth about Jesus. You obey God's commandments (). You love God and others (1Jn 5:2-**note**). John's Gospel (John 20:31) was "written so **that you might believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." His first epistle was written so **that you who already believe in the name of the Son of God would not be shaken** by false teaching, but rather, "so that you may know that you have eternal life." If you don't know whether or not you have eternal life, nothing is more important than to make sure. Go back and read again God's testimony to His Son in the Gospels. See the witness of the Spirit throughout the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. God's testimony to Jesus is the foundation of our faith. Christianity is not just a psychological experience. It rests on this solid witness. But, then, you must believe God's testimony about His Son. If you're neutral or ambivalent about it, you are not believing it. Worse, you're calling God a liar. John Stott writes (p. 182), "*Unbelief is not a misfortune to be pitied; it is a sin to be deplored. Its sinfulness lies in the fact that it contradicts the word of the one true God and thus attributes falsehood to Him*." Repent of your unbelief, of the audacity of calling the God of truth a liar. Accept His testimony to His Son and receive as a gift the eternal life that only the living God can impart. (1 John 5:5-13 Is Christianity Merely Psychological?)

John MacArthur - In 1654 the Puritan **Thomas Brooks** wrote, "Assurance is the believer's ark where he sits, Noah-like, quiet and still in the midst of all distractions and destructions, commotions and confusions… [However] most Christians live between fears and hopes, and hang, as it were, between heaven and hell. Sometimes they hope that their state is good, at other times they fear that their state is bad: now they hope that all is well, and that it shall go well with them for ever; [then] they fear that they shall perish by the hand of such a corruption, or by the prevalency of such or such a temptation … They are like a ship in a storm, tossed here and there" (HEAVEN ON EARTH). (A Believer's Assurance- A Practical Guide to Victory over Doubt)

MacArthur adds "Assurance is an inextricable part of saving faith. The apostle John said, "I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1John 5:13, emphasis added). The Christian faith is a secure faith. As one hymn triumphantly declares, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word." (**Ibid**)

Herbert Lockyer - The assurance of salvation is plainly written over the pages of the New Testament. Christ and His apostles lived in the air of certainty… The epistles glow with the truth that we may know we possess salvation.

May know (1492)(**eido/oida**) means speaks not of experiential knowledge, but of absolute, beyond a shadow of a doubt knowledge. The **perfect tense** speaks of a permanent knowledge. "To know with settled intuitive knowledge." (A T Robertson)

Vincent on **may know** - Not perceive (ginosko), but know with settled and absolute knowledge.

Henry Morris - The most definitive basis for our assurance of salvation is true faith in "the name of the Son of God," with whatever that entails. John has also given a number of tests for knowing that our faith in Him is true faith, not just mental assent to a tenet of faith. Such tests are noted in 1 John 2:3; 2:5; 2:6; 2:29; 1Jn 3:2,3; 3:14; 3:18,19; 3:24; 1Jn 4:13; 1Jn 5:2 (compare John 20:31).

A T Robertson on **that you may know** - He wishes them to have eternal life in Christ (John 20:31) and to know that they have it, but not with flippant superficiality (1Jn 2:3-6-**note**).

When Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform, was on his deathbed, a friend asked him, “Sir, what are your speculations?” Simpson replied: “Speculations! I have no speculations! ‘For I **know** whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” (2Ti 1:12-**note**)

Earlier John had described how his readers could be **confident** that they were genuine believers - "We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall **assure** (**peitho** - be persuaded or confident in) our heart before Him." (1Jn 3:19-**note**)

Related Resources:

- Assurance of Salvation - multiple articles, etc on one page
- A Believer's Assurance - John MacArthur
- Assurance by Hampton Keathley - topics
    - 1. Preface to The Assured Life
    - 1.1. Introduction to the Truth of Assurance
    - 1.2. Assurance Regarding the Gospel
    - 1.3. Assurance of Salvation
    - 1.4. Assurance of Eternal Security
    - 1.5. Assurance of God’s Daily Provision
    - 1.6. Assurance of God’s Provision for Sin
    - 1.7. Assurance of God’s Guidance
    - 1.8. Assurance of Eternal Rewards
- 1 John 3:19-24 Blessed Assurance - sermon by Steven Cole
- Full Assurance - Sermon by C H Spurgeon
- Assurance of Salvation… How Can We Have Assurance? from Spurgeongems webstie
- Heaven On Earth-A Serious Discourse Concerning a Well-Grounded Assurance-Thomas Brooks (1667) (See also Genuine assurance)
- Assurance of Salvation from John Newtons Letters
- Assurance by J C Ryle
- How can I have assurance of my salvation?
- How can a believer have assurance of salvation?
- What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?
- If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved?
- What if I don't feel saved?
- Doubt vs. The Assurance of Salvation
- The Assurance of Conversion - Octavius Winslow
- Spurgeon's pastoral wisdom in dealing with a woman lacking assurance
- A Test of Assurance - How We Know Whether We Love God - Thomas Watson
- Assurance of Grace and Salvation - What It Is - William S Plumer
- The Assurance of Hope - John Angell James, 1859
- Obedience to Christ Gives Assurance of the Truth of His Doctrines Archibald Alexander
- Nave Topical Bible Assurance
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary Assurance
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary Assurance
- Charles Buck Dictionary Assurance
- CARM Theological Dictionary Assurance
- Easton's Bible Dictionary Assurance
- Holman Bible Dictionary Assurance
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible Assurance
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT Assurance Assurance (2)

- Watson's Theological Dictionary Assurance
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Assurance
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia Assurance

You have (2192)(**echo**) basically means to have or to possess eternal life.**Echo** is in the **present tense** which signifies this is not a transient, on and off possession but a continual possession. The Spirit inspired John to write an epistle that would give us assurance that eternal life is our present, permanent possession!

Vincent comments on the unusual Greek sentence - The Greek order is peculiar, "ye may know that life ye have eternal." The adjective eternal is added as an after-thought. So Westcott: "that ye have life—yes, eternal life."

Eternal life - To know that your spirit is born again and you will live forever with God in heaven. Eternal life is "a person's new and redeemed existence in Jesus Christ that is granted by God as a gift to all believers. Eternal life refers to the quality or character of our new existence in Christ as well as the unending character of that life."

Robert W. Yarbrough on **eternal life** - The divinely bestowed gift of blessedness in God's presence that endures without end. This relates especially to the quality of life in this age, and to both the quality and duration of life in the age to come. (See lengthy article on Eternal Life - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology)

As alluded to above while **eternal life** "does not refer primarily to duration of life, but to quality of life. Eternal life is to know Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3), Who Himself is eternal life (1Jn 5:20), and to share in His life. It is a present possession, not merely a future hope (Jn 3:36; 5:24; 6:47, 54; 10:28; 1Jn 3:15), though it is not fully manifested in this life."

> **Eternal life** - used 41x in 41v with over 50% of uses by John - Matt 19:16, 29; 25:46; Mark 10:17, 30; Luke 10:25; 18:18, 30; John 3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:50; 17:2-3; Acts 13:46, 48; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22f; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16; 6:12; Titus 1:2; 3:7; 1John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20; Jude 1:21

Resources on Eternal Life

- Eternal Life - Holman Bible Dictionary
- Eternal Life - The Topical Concordance
- Eternal Life - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament
- Eternal Life - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature

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QUESTION - How can I have assurance of my salvation? Watch associated video

ANSWER - The assurance of salvation is, simply put, knowing for sure that you are saved. Many Christians throughout history have written about their struggles in being assured of their salvation. The problem is that many followers of Jesus Christ look for the assurance of salvation in the wrong places.

We tend to seek assurance of salvation in the things God is doing in our lives, in our spiritual growth, in the good works and obedience to God's Word that is evident in our Christian walk. While these things can be evidence of salvation, they are not what we should base the assurance of our salvation on. Rather, we should find the assurance of our salvation in the objective truth of God's Word. We should have confident trust that we are saved based on the promises God has declared, not because of our subjective experiences.

How can you have assurance of salvation? Consider 1 John 5:11–13: "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God *so that you may know that you have eternal life*" (emphasis added). Who is it that has the Son? It is those who have believed in Him (John 1:12). If you have Jesus, you have life. Not temporary life, but eternal. And, according to 1 John 5:13, you can *know* that you have this eternal life.

God wants us to have assurance of our salvation. We should not live our Christian lives wondering and worrying each day whether we are truly saved. That is why the Bible makes the plan of salvation so clear. Believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Acts 16:31). Do you believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sins and rose again from the dead (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21)? Do you trust Him alone for salvation? If your answer to these questions is "yes," you are saved! Assurance means freedom from doubt. By taking God's Word to heart, you can have no doubt about the reality of your eternal salvation.

Jesus Himself assures those who believe in Him: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28–29). Eternal life is just that—eternal. There is no one, not even yourself, who can take Christ's God-given gift of salvation

away from you.

Take joy in what God's Word is saying to you: instead of doubting, we can live with confidence! We can have the assurance from Christ's own Word that our salvation will never be in question. Our assurance of salvation is based on the perfect and complete salvation God has provided for us through Jesus Christ. Are you trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? If the answer is "yes," rest assured, you are saved. GotQuestions.org

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QUESTION - What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?

ANSWER- This is one of the most important questions in the Christian life. Many believers doubt their salvation because they don't see signs of genuine faith in their lives. There are those who say we should never doubt our decision to follow Christ, but the Bible encourages us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Thankfully, God has given us ample instruction for how we can know for sure that we have eternal life. The first epistle of John was actually written for that purpose, as it states in 1 John 5:13,

"**I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God**
so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There is a series of tests in 1 John that we can use to examine ourselves and our faith. As we look at them, remember that no one will perfectly fulfill all of them all the time, but they should reveal a consistent trend that characterizes our lives as we grow in grace.

1. Do you enjoy having fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? (1 John 1:3)
2. Would people say you walk in the light, or walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)
3. Do you admit and confess your sin? (1 John 1:8)
4. Are you obedient to God's Word? (1 John 2:3-5)
5. Does your life indicate you love God rather than the world? (1 John 2:15)
6. Is your life characterized by "doing what is right"? (1 John 2:29)
7. Do you seek to maintain a pure life? (1 John 3:3)
8. Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (1 John 3:5-6) [Note: this refers to not continuing in sin as a way of life, not a total absence of sin.]
9. Do you demonstrate love for other Christians? (1 John 3:14)
10. Do you "walk the walk," versus just "talking the talk"? (1 John 3:18-19)
11. Do you maintain a clear conscience? (1 John 3:21)
12. Do you experience victory in your Christian walk? (1 John 5:4)

If you are able to truthfully answer "Yes" to these questions (or a majority of them, and are working on the others), then your life is bearing the fruit of true salvation. Jesus said that it is by our fruits that we are known as His disciples (Matthew 7:20). Fruitless branches—professing believers who do not display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:6). A genuine faith is one that not only believes in God (the demons themselves do that - James 2:19), but leads to open confession of sin and obedience to Christ's commands. Remember, we are saved by grace through faith, not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our works should display the reality of our salvation (James 2:17-18). Genuine saving faith will always produce works; a faith that is perpetually without works is no faith at all and saves no one.

In addition to these confirmations, we need to remember God's promises and the reality of the war we are in. Satan is just as real as Jesus Christ, and he is a formidable enemy of our souls. When we turn to Christ, Satan will look for every opportunity to deceive and defeat us. He will try to convince us that we are unworthy failures or that God has given up on us. When we are in Christ, we have the assurance that we are kept by Him. Jesus Himself prayed for us in John 17:11 that the Father would "protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one." Again in verse 15, He prayed, "keep them from the evil one."

In John 10:27-29, Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." If you hear and obey the voice of Jesus, then you are one of His sheep, and He will never let you go. Jesus gave a wonderful word picture here of Christians securely held within His loving hands and the Father's almighty hands wrapping themselves around His, giving us a double assurance of eternal security. GotQuestions.org

Other Resources from Gotquestions.org:

- If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved?

- What if I don't feel saved?
- How can I detect a false conversion?

HELPING PEOPLE HAVE THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION
John Piper

FULL ASSURANCE IS GOD'S WILL FOR US.

"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end." Hebrews 6:11

ASSURANCE IS PARTIALLY SUSTAINED BY OBJECTIVE EVIDENCES FOR CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

"To [his apostles] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days." Acts 1:3

ASSURANCE CANNOT NEGLECT THE PAINFUL WORK OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you - unless indeed you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

ASSURANCE WILL DIMINISH IN THE PRESENCE OF CONCEALED SIN.

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long." Psalm 32:3

ASSURANCE COMES FROM HEARING THE WORD OF CHRIST.

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Romans 10:17

"These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31

REPEATED FOCUSING ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS CRUCIAL FOR ASSURANCE.

"Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." Hebrews 10:21-22

WE MUST PRAY FOR EYES TO SEE THE TRUTHS THAT SUSTAIN ASSURANCE.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." Ephesians 1:18-19

ASSURANCE IS NOT EASILY MAINTAINED IN PERSONAL ISOLATION.

"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" 1 Corinthians 12:21

ASSURANCE IS NOT DESTROYED BY GOD'S DISPLEASURE AND DISCIPLINE.

"Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, and I will see His righteousness." Micah 7:8-9

WE MUST OFTEN WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE RETURN OF ASSURANCE.

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD." Psalm 40:1-3

ASSURANCE IS A FIGHT TO THE DAY WE DIE.

"Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life." 1 Timothy 6:12

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

ASSURANCE IS FINALLY A GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

> "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." Romans 8:16
>
> "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself... And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:10-11

Longing for your assurance,

Pastor John (Source)

Assurance - Gerald L. Borchert

In the midst of a world filled with uneasiness and insecurity, assurance of a person's security in God is one of the hallmarks of the authentic Christian life. Such assurance is not based on human resources, abilities, or ingenuity, but on confidence in the caring power of God for believers.

Such divine concern in the life of an individual or a community of faith is not to be likened to some superficial good luck charm or magical incantation that protects a person against the traumas and tragedies of human existence. Instead, assurance in God provides an anchor of confidence and hope (Hebrews 6:18) in the midst of pain and sorrow, because the believer has learned the secret of casting all worries and cares on God, who is genuinely concerned for people (1 Peter 5:7).

Assurance can be linked to faith and faithfulness (Hebrews 10:22), because it is one of the ways that the biblical writers describe an authentic relationship with God. While reliance on God is accompanied by the confidence that God is intimately involved in the lives of believers (1 John 5:14), faith in God does not earn a sense of security or assurance. Moreover, it cannot be achieved by attendance at church, by works of kindness, or by ecclesiastical pardon. The foundation for the assurance of one's salvation or well-being with God is rooted in a divine gift. God is the provider of salvation in Jesus Christ (John 3:16 ; 2Col 5:18-19). Moreover, it is God who will bring to completion this divine gift (Philippians 1:6). It is this assurance that God continues to work in the lives of believers that is the basis for the Christian doctrine of perseverance—endurance or continuing response to God's leading (Ephesians 6:18 ; Hebrews 12:1 ; James 1:25). Assurance and perseverance are two sides of the same message.

Assurance of a relationship with God in Christ is the way believers express the mysterious connection between the infinite nature of God and the fallible nature of humanity. Life with God (whether in ancient Israel or in Christianity) is a dynamic reality, not some chess game in which God moves all the pawns and kings without reference to human response (note the amazing conditional statement in Jeremiah 18:7-10). Resisting temptation (with divine help cf. Matthew 6:13 ; 1 John 5:14) is a key to sense of security in God (cf. 1Col 10:13; James 4:7). Evil and the devil are not some toys with which believers can play (1 Peter 5:8-9).

But believers are not left to their own resources. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers is a guarantee or assurance that God is at work in believers' lives (2Col 1:22; 5:5). It is through the Spirit that believers know the reality of God's presence in their lives (1 John 4:13). Forces external to them will never be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39); no power (symbolized by robber or wolf) is able to steal believers (symbolized by sheep) out of the loving arms of God's Son (John 10:28).

This sense of assurance for believers is not merely limited to the present era on earth, but the resurrection of Jesus assures Christians that they are not deluded in their expectation of a future hope with their Lord (1 Corinthians 15:17-20). The resurrection of Jesus is the powerful guarantee that Christian preaching and faith are not in vain (v. 14). The Holy Spirit's presence provides assurance that Christians will receive their promised inheritance with God (Ephesians 1:14). (BED)

Taking God At His Word - Many true believers in Christ are plagued with doubt about their salvation. Even though they have come in repentance and faith to Jesus as their Savior, they still wonder, “Will I really go to heaven?”

My late husband Bill often told about something that happened to him when he was 2 years old. One day he disobediently wandered from home and got lost. When his parents realized that he was missing, they went out searching for him. Finally, to everyone’s immense relief, they spotted their tearful boy and carried him safely home.

Days later, Billy overheard his mother relate this incident to a visitor. When she reached the part where they went out searching for him, Billy began to relive the story. “Mommy, Mommy!” he sobbed. “Did you ever find me?” Surprised and deeply touched by his doubt, she embraced him and said, “Of course, my child! Don’t you remember that happy moment? See, you’re with us now, and we’ll make sure that you always are.” That comforted Billy, because he took her at her word.

The New Testament letter of 1 John was written to give believers the assurance of salvation. That assurance can be yours as you take God at His word. (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

For Further Study
Is it possible to be sure your sins are forgiven?
Read The Assurance Of Salvation

Christ's work makes us safe; God's Word makes us sure.

That You May Know

One day, while Wim was in the marketplace in the Netherlands, he struck up a conversation with a woman who remarked that you can get to heaven by doing good works.

His attempt to explain that it is by God's grace that we are "saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8) brought a smile as the woman repeated confidently: "and … by doing good works." Then another woman volunteered, "You can hope you'll go to heaven, but you can't be sure." Wim's assertion that he did know for sure was met with a muttered, "Nobody knows for sure."

Wim then showed the woman what 1 John 5:11-13 says. He explained: "See, it doesn't say hope there, it says know." Unconvinced, she said, "Like you, my pastor says that we have to have faith, but you really never know whether you've been good enough. You may think you have, but who can be sure?"

To some, Wim's confidence may seem incredible. But he based his words on this statement: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works" (Eph. 2:8-9).

It's true. We can't be good enough. We can never do enough good things. But we can be sure of heaven if we simply believe on the Lord (Acts 16:31). (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

We cannot earn our way to heaven
By word or work or worth;
But if we trust in Christ to save us,
Then we'll enjoy new birth.
—Branon

We are saved by God's mercy, not by our merit—by Christ's dying, not by our doing.

Taking God At His Word

These things I have written to you who believe … , that you may know that you have eternal life. —1 John 5:13
Sadly, many true Christians are plagued with doubt about their salvation. Even though they have come in repentance and faith to Jesus as their Savior, they still wonder, "Am I really saved?"

My late husband Bill often told about something that happened to him when he was 2 years old. One day he disobediently strayed from home and got lost. When his parents realized that he was missing, they went out searching for him. Finally, to everyone's immense relief, they spotted their tearful boy and carried him safely home.

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The New Testament letter of 1 John was written to give believers the assurance of salvation. That assurance can be yours as you take God at His word. (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

He who gave Himself to save me,
Now will keep me to the end;

In His care securely resting,
On His promise I depend.
-- H G Bosch

Christ's work makes us safe; God's Word makes us sure.

A Know-So Salvation

I have written to you who believe in … the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. —1 John 5:13
Many Christians lack the joy and assurance of their salvation because they will not take God at His word. They do not accept at face value what He says, but rely on their personal feelings instead of on the Scriptures.

Bible teacher H. A. Ironside related a personal experience that helps us understand the importance of believing the Word of God. After he had read to a woman some passages about trusting Christ, she said, "Well, I am trying to believe."

"Trying to believe whom?" asked Ironside. "It is God who has spoken in His Word. Are you saying you're trying to believe Him?"

Immediately she saw the light and exclaimed, "Oh, I didn't realize what I was saying. Yes, I do believe what God has declared." At last her heart found rest.

If you have placed your trust in the Lord Jesus, stop worrying about your salvation. God has done His part. Believe what the Bible says, and claim as your very own the new life that has been given you through faith in Christ. John 1:12 promises, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Take God at His word. Then you too will have a know-so salvation.(Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
--Crosby

The blood of Christ makes us safe; the Word of God makes us sure.

Already Settled

I love watching soccer, and I am a fan of the Liverpool Football Club in England's Premier League. When the Reds are playing, it is an anxiety-filled experience for me. Because one goal or one misplay can change the game's outcome, I feel a constant tension as I watch. That is part of what makes the games enjoyable. Recently, though, I saw a tape-delayed replay of one of Liverpool's games. I was surprised how much calmer I felt seeing the replay. Why? Because I already knew the outcome, and as a result I was able to relax and enjoy the action.

Life is often like observing live sporting events. There are shocks and surprises, frustrations and fears, because we are unsure of the outcome. Followers of Christ can draw comfort, however, from the fact that though many of life's situations are uncertain, our eternal outcome is settled by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The apostle John wrote, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Life may present us with surprises along the way, but because of Christ's work we can have peace. He has already settled our eternal outcome. (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Faith looks beyond this transient life
With hope for all eternity—
Not with some vague and wistful hope,
But with firm trust and certainty.
—D. DeHaan

Peace rules the day when Christ rules the heart.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION - After John Wesley had been preaching for some time, some one said to him, "Are you sure, Mr. Wesley, of your salvation?" "Well," he answered, "Jesus Christ died for the whole world." "Yes, we all believe that; but are you sure that you are saved?" Wesley replied that he was sure that provision had been made for his salvation.

"But are you sure, Wesley, that you are saved?" It went like an arrow to his heart, and he had no rest or power until that question was settled. Many men and many women go on month after month, and year after year, without power, because they do not know their standing in Christ; they are not sure of their own footing for eternity. Latimer wrote Ridley once that when he was settled and steadfast about his own salvation he was as bold as a lion, but if that hope became eclipsed he was fearful and afraid and was disqualified for service. Many are disqualified for service because they are continually doubting their own salvation. - Moody's Anecdotes, pp. 101-102.

There are four basic categories:

1) Those who think they are saved, but aren't. Mt 7:21-3
2) Those we think are saved, but aren't. 1Jn 2:18-19
3) Those who are saved, but don't act like it: Corinthians.
4) Those who are saved, and they act like it.

Bill Hybels - Sometime when you're in an airport, observe the difference between passengers who hold confirmed tickets and those who are on standby. The ones with confirmed tickets read newspapers, chat with their friends or sleep. The ones on standby hang around the ticket counter, pace and smoke, smoke and pace. The difference is caused by the confidence factor. If you knew that in fifteen minutes you would have to stand in judgment before the Holy God and learn your eternal destiny, what would your reaction be? Would you smoke and pace? Would you say to yourself, "I don't know what God's going to say--will it be 'Welcome home, child,' or will it be 'Depart from me; I never knew you'? - Too Busy Not To Pray, IVP, p. 113.

H. A. Ironside - An elderly man said to H. A. Ironside, "I will not go on unless I know I'm saved, or else know it's hopeless to seek to be sure of it. I want a definite witness, something I can't be mistaken about!" Ironside replied, "Suppose you had a vision of an angel who told you your sins were forgiven. Would that be enough to rest on?" "Yes, I think it would. An angel should be right." Ironside continued, "But suppose on your deathbed Satan came and said, 'I was that angel, transformed to deceive you.' What would you say?" The man was speechless. Ironside then told him that God has given us something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given His Son, who died for our sins, and He has testified in His own Word that if we trust Him all our sins are gone. Ironside read 1John 5:13, "You may know that you have eternal life." Then he said, "Is that not enough to rest on? It is a letter from heaven expressly to you." God's Spirit used that to bring assurance to the man's heart.

Source Unknown - Regarding salvation and assurance, there are three groups of people: (1) those who are secure but not sure; (2) those who are "sure" but not secure; and (3) those who are secure and sure. Category one are conscientious believers in Christ who are saved but lack assurance. In category two are professing Christians who say, "Even though I'm living in sin, I'll make it. After all, 'once saved, always saved!'" The third group are born-again believers who enjoy a warm, secure relationship with Christ each day. The objective basis of our salvation is the finished work of God's Son on the cross. The subjective basis for our assurance is our believing the truth about Christ (I John 2:2,4; 2:15; 5:1), loving the brethren (I John 3:14, 18, 19, 4:7-8), and obeying Christ's commandments (I John 2:3-5).

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1 John 5 The Assurance of Eternal Life - Hailey's Bible Handbook

"**Know**" is one of the key words of this letter.

- "We know that we have come to know" God (1 Jn 2:3).
- "We know we are in him" (1 Jn 2:5).
- "We know that when he appears, we shall be like him" (1 Jn 3:2).
- "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers" (1 Jn 3:14).
- "We know that we belong to the truth" (1 Jn 3:19).
- "We know that [God] lives in us" (1 Jn 3:24).
- "We know that we live in" God (1 Jn 4:13).
- "I write these things to you... so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13).
- "We know that [God] hears us" (1 Jn 5:15).
- "We know that we are children of God" (1 Jn 5:19).

Many Christians are discouraged because they do not feel sure that they are saved. Sometimes we hear it said that if we do not know that we are saved, it is a sign that we are not saved. But it is a mistake to identify assurance with salvation. A newborn babe scarcely knows it has been born, but it has. Assurance comes with growth. We believe it is possible for a Christian's faith to get stronger and stronger, until it reaches the full assurance of knowledge.

Eternal life (1 Jn 5:13) begins when a person becomes a Christian, and it never ends. It is a life of divine quality and endless duration. Assurance of this eternal life is the object of this letter.

THE KNOWING LIFE -1 JOHN 5:13 - James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose

“These things have I written unto you that believe … that ye may know” “Know” is one of the key-words of this Epistle. Let us examine some of them.

1. How can we be sure that “we know Him?” “If we keep His commandments” (1 Jn 2:3, 5).
2. A constantly growing knowledge of God, His ways, and Word, is one sign of spiritual maturity (1 Jn 2:13).
3. The Holy Spirit so teaches us that “ye know all things” (1 Jn 2:20).
4. “We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him” (1 Jn 3:2).
5. We are certain “we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 Jn 3:14).
6. The Holy Spirit with us advises us as to abiding in Him (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13).
7. One infallible test of knowledge (41 Jn :1–3).
8. The consciousness that we have eternal life comes through belief in God’s Word 1 Jn (5:13).

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION
D L Moody

> “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13.)

THERE are two classes who ought not to have Assurance. First: those who are in the Church, but who are not converted, having never been born of the Spirit. Second; those are not willing to do God’s will; who are not ready to take the place that God has mapped out for them, but want to fill some other place.

Some one will ask “Have all God’s people Assurance?” No; I think a good many of God’s dear people have no Assurance; but it is the privilege of every child of God to have beyond doubt a knowledge of his own salvation. No man is fit for God’s service who is filled with doubts. If a man is not sure of his own salvation, how can he help any one else into the kingdom of God? If I seem in danger of drowning and do not know whether I shall ever reach the shore, I cannot assist another. I must first get on the solid rock myself; and then I can lend my brother a helping hand. If being myself blind I were to tell another blind man how to get sight, he might reply, “First get healed yourself; and then you can tell me.” I recently met with a young man who was a Christian; but he had not attained to victory over sin. He was in terrible darkness. Such an one is not fit to work for God, because he has besetting sins; and he has not the victory over his doubts, because he has not the victory over his sins.

None will have time or heart to work for God, who are not assured as to their own salvation. They have as much as they can attend to; and being themselves burdened with doubts, they cannot help others to carry their burdens. There is no rest, joy, or peace—no liberty, nor power—where doubts and uncertainty exist.

Now it seems as if there are three wiles of Satan against which we ought to be on our guard. In the first place he moves all his kingdom to keep us away from Christ; then he devotes himself to get us into “Doubting Castle:” but if we have, in spite of him, a clear ringing witness for the Son of God, he will do all he can to blacken our characters and belie our testimony.

Some seem to think that it is presumption not to have doubts: but doubt is very dishonoring to God. If any one were to say that they had known a person for thirty years and yet doubted him, it would not be very creditable: and when we have known God for ten, twenty or thirty years does it not reflect on His veracity to doubt Him.

Could Paul and the early Christians and martyrs have gone through what they did if they had been filled with doubts, and had not known whether they were going to heaven or to perdition after they had been burned at the stake? They must have had ASSURANCE.

Mr. Spurgeon says:

> "I never heard of a stork that when it met with a fir tree demurred as to its right to build its nest there; and I never heard of a coney yet that questioned whether it had a permit to run into the rock. Why, these creatures would soon perish if they were always doubting and fearing as to whether they had a right to use providential provisions.
>
> "The stork says to himself, 'Ah, here is a fir tree:' he consults with his mate, 'Will this do for the nest in which we may rear our young?' 'Aye,' says she; and they gather the materials, and arrange them. There is never any deliberation, 'May we build here?' but they bring their sticks and make their nest.
> "The wild goat on the crag does not say, 'Have I a right here?' No, he must be somewhere: and there is a crag which exactly suits him; and he springs upon it.
>
> "Yet, though these dumb creatures know the provision of their God, the sinner does not recognize the provision of his Saviour. He quibbles and questions, 'May I?' and 'I am afraid it is not for me;' and 'I think it cannot be meant for me;' and 'I am afraid it is too good to be true.'
>
> "And yet nobody ever said to the stork, 'Whosoever buildeth on this fir tree shall never have his nest pulled down.' No inspired word has ever said to the coney, 'Whosoever runs into this rock cleft shall never be driven out of it." If it had been so it would make assurance doubly sure.
>
> "And yet here is Christ provided for sinners, just the sort of a Saviour sinners need; and the encouragement is added, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out;' 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' "

Now let us come to the Word. John tells us in his Gospel what Christ did for us on earth. In his Epistle He tells us what He is doing for us in heaven as our Advocate. In his Gospel there are only two chapters in which the word "believe" does not occur. With these two exceptions, every chapter in John is "Believe! Believe!! BELIEVE!!!" He tells us in Jn 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name. That is the purpose for which he wrote the Gospel—"that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that, believing, we might have life through His name" (John 20:31).

Turn to 1 John 5:13, he there tells us why he wrote this Epistle: "**These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.**" Notice to whom he writes it: "**You that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**" There are only five short chapters in this first Epistle, and the word "**know**" occurs over forty times. It is "Know! KNOW!! KNOW!!!" The Key to it is KNOW! and all through the Epistle there rings out the refrain—"that we might know that we have eternal life."

> (Know in KJV of 1 John - 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 2:4; 1 Jn. 2:5; 1 Jn. 2:18; 1 Jn. 2:20; 1 Jn. 2:21; 1 Jn. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:15; 1 Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 3:24; 1 Jn. 4:2; 1 Jn. 4:6; 1 Jn. 4:13; 1 Jn. 5:2; 1 Jn. 5:13; 1 Jn. 5:15; 1 Jn. 5:18; 1 Jn. 5:19; 1 Jn. 5:20)

I went twelve hundred miles down the Mississippi in the spring some years ago; and every evening, just as the sun went down, you might have seen men, and sometimes women, riding up to the banks of the river on either side on mules or horses, and sometimes coming on foot, for the purpose of lighting up the Government lights; and all down that mighty river there were landmarks which guided the pilots in their dangerous navigation. Now God has given us lights or landmarks to tell us whether we are His children or not; and what we need to do is to examine the tokens He has given us.

In the third chapter of John's first Epistle there are five things worth knowing.

> (1) In the fifth verse we read the first: "**And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin**." (1 Jn 3:5+) Not what I have done, but what HE has done. Has He failed in His mission? Is He not able to do what He came for? Did ever any heaven-sent man fail yet? and could God's own Son fail? HE WAS MANIFESTED TO TAKE AWAY OUR SINS.
>
> (2) Again, in the nineteenth verse, the second thing worth knowing: "**And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him**." (1 Jn 3:19+) WE KNOW that we are of the truth. And if the truth make us free, we shall be free indeed. "**If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed**." (John 8:36.)
>
> (3) The third thing worth knowing is in the fourteenth verse, "**We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren**." (1 Jn 3:14+) The natural man does not like godly people, nor does he care to be in their company. "**He that loveth not his brother abideth in death**" He has no spiritual life.
>
> (4) The fourth thing worth knowing we find in verse twenty-four: "**And he that keepeth His commandments**

dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us. (1 Jn 3:24+) We can tell what kind of Spirit we have if we possess the Spirit of Christ—a Christ-like spirit—not the same in degree, but the same in kind. If I am meek, gentle, and forgiving; if I have a spirit filled with peace and joy; if I am long-suffering and gentle, like the Son of God—that is a test: and in that way we are to tell whether we have eternal life or not.

- **ED**: SEE RELATED STUDY - The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!

(5) The fifth thing worth knowing, and the best of all, is "**Beloved, now**." Notice the word "**Now**." It does not say when you come to die. "**Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is**" (1 Jn 3:2+).

But some will say, "Well, I believe all that; but then I have sinned since I became a Christian." Is there a man or a woman on the face of the earth who has not sinned since becoming a Christian? Not one! There never has been, and never will be, a soul on this earth who has not sinned, or who will not sin, at some time of their Christian experience. But God has made provision for believers' sins. We are not to make provision for them; but God has. Bear that in mind.

Turn to 1 John 2:1+: "**My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous**." He is here writing to the righteous. "If any man sin, we"—John put himself in—"we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "What an Advocate! He attends to our interests at the very best place—the throne of God. He said, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away" (John 16:7). He went away to become our High Priest, and also our Advocate. He has had some hard cases to plead; but he has never lost one: and if you entrust your immortal interests to Him, He will "present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24+).

The past sins of Christians are all forgiven as soon as they are confessed; and they are never to be mentioned. That is a question which is not to be opened up again. If our sins have been put away, that is the end of them. They are not to be remembered; and God will not mention them any more. This is very plain. Suppose I have a son who, while I am from home, does wrong. When I go home he throws his arms around my neck and says, "Papa, I did what you told me not to do. I am very sorry. Do forgive me." I say: "Yes, my son," and kiss him. He wipes away his tears, and goes off rejoicing.

But the next day he says: "Papa, I wish you would forgive me for the wrong I did yesterday." I should say: "Why, my son, that thing is settled; and I don't want it mentioned again." "But I wish you would forgive me: it would help me to hear you say, 'I forgive you.' "Would that be honoring me? Would it not grieve me to have my boy doubt me? But to gratify him I say again, "I forgive you, my son."

And if, the next day, he were again to bring up that old sin, and ask forgiveness, would not that grieve me to the heart? And so, my dear reader, if God has forgiven us, never let us mention the past. Let us forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let the sins of the past go; for "**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (1 John 1:9+).

And let me say that this principle is recognized in courts of justice. A case came up in the courts of a country—I won't say where—in which a man had had trouble with his wife; but he forgave her, and then afterwards brought her into court. And, when it was known that he had forgiven her, the judge said that the thing was settled. The judge recognized the soundness of the principle, that if a sin were once forgiven there was an end of it. And do you think the Judge of all the earth will forgive you and me, and open the question again? Our sins are gone for time and eternity, if God forgives; and what we have to do is to confess and forsake our sins.

Again in 2 Corinthians 13:5+: "**Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?**" Now examine yourselves. Try your religion. Put it to the test. Can you forgive an enemy? That is a good way to know if you are a child of God. Can you forgive an injury, or take an affront, as Christ did? Can you be censured for doing well, and not murmur? Can you be misjudged and misrepresented, and yet keep a Christ-like spirit?

Another good test is to read Galatians 5:22-23+, and notice the fruits of the Spirit; and see if you have them. **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**" If I have the fruits of the Spirit I must have the Spirit. I could not have the fruits without the Spirit any more than there could be an orange without the tree. And Christ says "**Ye shall know them by their fruits;**" (Mt 7:16+) "**for the tree is known by his fruits**" (Mt 12:33+) Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. The only way to get the fruit is to have the Spirit. That is the way to examine ourselves whether we are the children of God.

Then there is another very striking passage. In Romans 8:9+, Paul says: "**Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His**." That ought to settle the question, even though one may have gone through all the external forms that are considered necessary by some to constitute a member of a Church. Read Paul's life, and put yours alongside of it. If your life resembles his, it is a proof that you are born again—that you are a new creature in Christ Jesus.

But although you may be born again, it will require time to become a full-grown Christian. Justification is instantaneous; but sanctification is a life-work. We are to grow in wisdom. Peter says: "**Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"** (2 Pet. 3:18+); and in the first chapter of his Second Epistle, "**Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**." (2 Pe 1:5-8+) So that we are to add grace to grace. A tree may be perfect in its first year of growth; but it does not attain its maturity. So with the Christian: he may be a true child of God, but not a matured Christian. The eighth of Romans is very important, and we should be very familiar with it. In the fourteenth verse the apostle says: "**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God**" (Ro 8:14+) Just as the soldier is led by his captain, the pupil by his teacher, or the traveler by his guide; so the Holy Spirit will be the guide of every true child of God.

Then let me call your attention to another fact. All Paul's teaching in nearly every Epistle rings out the doctrine of assurance. He says in 2 Corinthians 5:1+: "**For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens**." He had a title to the mansions above, and he says—I know it. He was not living in uncertainty. He said: **"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ**" (Phil 1:23+); and if he had been uncertain he would not have said that. Then in Colossians 3:4+, he says: "**When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory**." I am told that Dr. Watts' tombstone bears this same passage of Scripture. There is no doubt there.

Then turn to Colossians 1:12+; "**Giving thanks unto the Father, which HATH made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son**."

Three haths: "HATH made us meet;" "HATH delivered us;" and "HATH translated us." It does not say that He is going to make us meet; that He is going to deliver; that He is going to translate.

Then again in verse 14th: "**In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins**" (Col 1:14+) We are either forgiven or we are not, we should not give ourselves any rest until we get into the kingdom of God; nor until we can each look up and say, "**I know that if my earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens**" (2 Cor. 5:1+).

Look at Romans 8:32+: "**He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**" If He gave us His Son, will He not give us the certainty that He is ours. I have heard this illustration. There was a man who owed $10,000, and would have been made a bankrupt, but a friend came forward and paid the sum. It was found afterwards that he owed a few dollars more; but he did not for a moment entertain a doubt that, as his friend had paid the larger amount, he would also pay the smaller. And we have high warrant for saying that if God has given us His Son He will with Him also freely give us all things; and if we want to realize our salvation beyond controversy He will not leave us in darkness.

Again in the 33d verse: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 8:33-39+)

That has the right ring in it. There is Assurance for you. "I KNOW." Do you think that the God who has justified me will condemn me? That is quite an absurdity. God is going to save us so that neither men, angels, nor devils, can bring any charge against us or Him. He will have the work complete.
Job lived in a darker day than we do; but we read in Job 19:25: "**I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth.**"

The same confidence breathes through Paul's last words to Timothy: "**For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day**." (2 Ti 1:12+) It is not a matter of doubt, but of knowledge. "I know." "I am persuaded." The word "Hope," is not used in the Scripture to express doubt. It is used in regard to the second coming of Christ, or to the

resurrection of the body. We do not say that we "hope" we are Christians. I do not say that I "hope" I am an American, or that I "hope" I am a married man. These are settled things. I may say that I "hope" to go back to my home, or I hope to attend such a meeting. I do not say that I "hope" to come to this country, for I am here. And so, if we are born of God we know it; and He will not leave us in darkness if we search the Scriptures.

Christ taught this doctrine to His seventy disciples when they returned elated with their success, saying, "**Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name**." (Lk 10:17+) The Lord seemed to check them, and said that He would give them something to rejoice in. "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20+.)

It is the privilege of every one of us to know, beyond a a doubt, that our salvation is sure. Then we can work for others. But if we are doubtful of our own salvation, we are not fit for the service of God.

Another passage is John 5:24+: "**Verily, verily I say unto you: He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into 'judgment,**' " (the new translation has it so), "**but is passed from death unto life**."

Some people say that you never can tell till you are before the **great white throne of Judgment** whether you are saved or not. Why, my dear friend, if your life is hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3+), you are not coming into judgment for your sins. We may come into judgment for reward (2 Cor 5:10+). This is clearly taught where the lord reckoned with the servant to whom five talents had been given, and who brought other five talents saying, "**Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord**." (Mt. 25:20, 21.) We shall be judged for our stewardship (cf 2 Jn 1:8, Rev 22:12+, Mt 6:19-21+, Jn 15:8). That is one thing; but salvation—eternal life—is another.

Will God demand payment twice of the debt which Christ has paid for us? If Christ bear my sins in His own body on the tree, am I to answer for them as well?

Isaiah tells us that, "**He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed**." (Isaiah 53:5+) In Romans 4:25+, we read: He "**was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**" Let us believe, and get the benefit of His finished work.

Then again in John 10:9: "**I am the door: by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**" That is the promise. Then the 27th verse, "**My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father which gave them is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**" (Jn 10:27) Think of that! The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are pledged to keep us. You see that it is not only the Father, not only the Son, but the three persons of the **Triune God**.

Now, a great many people want some token outside of God's word. That habit always brings doubt. If I made a promise to meet a man at a certain hour and place to-morrow, and he were to ask me for my watch as a token of my sincerity, it would be a slur on my truthfulness. We must not question what God has said: He has made statement after statement, and multiplied figure upon figure. Christ says: "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (Jn 8:12) "I am the truth;" (Jn 14:6) receive Me, and you will have the truth; for I am the embodiment of truth. Do you want to know the way? "I am the way:" (Jn 14:6) follow Me, and I will lead you into the kingdom. Are you hungering after righteousnes? "I am the Bread of life:" (Jn 6:35, 48) if you eat of Me you shall never hunger. "I am the Water of life:" (Rev 22:17+) if you drink of this water it shall be within you "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." (Jn 7:38) "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26.)

Let me remind you where our doubts come from.

A good many of God's dear people never get beyond knowing themselves servants. He calls us "friends." If you go into a house you will soon see the difference between the servant and the son. The son walks at perfect liberty all over the house; he is at home. But the servant takes a subordinate place. What we want is to get beyond servants. We ought to realize our standing with God as sons and daughters. He will not "un-child" His children. God has not only adopted us, but we are His by birth: we have been born into His kingdom. My little boy was as much mine when he was a day old as now that he is fourteen. He was my son; although it did not appear what he would be when he attained manhood. He is mine; although he may have to undergo probation under tutors and governors. The children of God are not perfect; but we are perfectly His children.

Another origin of doubts is looking at ourselves. If you want to be wretched and miserable, filled with doubts from morning till night, look at yourselves. "**Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee**." (Isa. 26:3) Many of God's dear

children are robbed of joy because they keep looking at themselves.

Some one has said:"There are three ways to look. If you want to be wretched, look within; if you wish to be distracted, look around; but if you would have peace, look up." Peter looked away from Christ, and he immediately began to sink. The Master said to him: "**O thou of little faith! Wherefore didst thou doubt?**" (Mt. 14:31.) He had God's eternal word, which was sure footing, and better than either marble, granite or iron; but the moment he took his eyes off Christ down he went. Those who look around cannot see how unstable and dishonoring is their walk. We want to look straight at the "**Author and Finisher of our faith**." (Heb 12:2+)

When I was a boy I could only make a straight track in the snow, by keeping my eyes fixed upon a tree or some object before me. The moment I took my eye off the mark set in front of me, I walked crooked. It is only when we look fixedly on Christ that we find perfect peace. After He rose from the dead He showed His disciples His hands and His feet. (Luke 24:40+.) That was the ground of their peace.

If you want to scatter your doubts, look at the blood; and if you want to increase your doubts, look at yourself.
You will get doubts enough for years by being occupied with yourself for a few days.

Then again: look at what He is, and at what He has done; not at what you are, and what you have done. That is the way to get peace and rest.

Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring the emancipation of three millions of slaves. On a certain day their chains were to fall off, and they were to be free. The proclamation was put up on the trees and fences wherever the Northern Army marched. A good many slaves could not read: but others read the proclamation, and most of them believed it; and on a certain day a glad shout went up, "We are free!" Some did not believe it, and stayed with their old masters; but it did not alter the fact that they were free. Christ, **the Captain of our salvation** (Heb 2:10KJV+), has proclaimed freedom to all who have faith in Him. Let us take Him at His word. Their feelings would not have made the slaves free. The power must come from the outside. Looking at ourselves will not make us free, but it is looking to Christ with the eye of faith.

Bishop Ryle has strikingly said: "Faith is the root, and Assurance the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root, and not the flower.

> "Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press, and touched the hem of His garment. (Mark 5:27+.) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, 'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God' (Acts 7:56+).
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> "Faith is the penitent thief, crying, 'Lord, remember me' (Luke 23:42). Assurance is Job sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth;' 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him' (Job 19:25; Job 13:15).
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> "Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink, 'Lord, save me!' (Mt. 24:30). Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council, in after-times, 'This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:11, 12+).
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> "Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!' (Mark 9:24). Assurance is the confident challenge, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?' (Ro 8:33, 34).
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> Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Acts 9:11.) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking camly into the grave, and saying, 'I know whom I have believed.' 'There is a crown laid up for me' (2 Ti 1:12; 2 Ti 4:8).
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> "Faith is LIFE. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless, to the very end.
>
> "Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigor, activity, energy, manliness, beauty."

A minister once pronounced the benediction in this way: "The heart of God to make us welcome; the blood of Christ to make us clean, and the Holy Spirit to make us certain." The security of the believer is the result of the operation of the Spirit of God.

Another writer says: "I have seen shrubs and trees grow out of the rocks, and overhang fearful precipices, roaring cataracts, and deep running waters; but they maintained their position, and threw out their foliage and branches as much as if they had been in the midst of a dense forest." It was their hold on the rock that made them secure; and the influences of nature that sustained their life. So believers are oftentimes exposed to the most horrible dangers in their journey to heaven; but, so long as they are "rooted and grounded" in the Rock of Ages, they are perfectly secure. Their hold of Him is their guarantee; and the blessings of His grace give

them life and sustain them in life. And as the tree must die, or the rock fall, before a dissolution can be effected between them so either the believer must lose his spiritual life, or the Rock must crumble, ere their union can be dissolved.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus, Isaiah says: '**I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place; and He shall be for a glorious throne to His Father's house: and they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons**" (Isaiah 22:23, 24).

There is ONE NAIL, fastened in a sure place; and on it hang all the flagons and all the cups. "Oh," says one little cup, "I am so small and so black, suppose I were to drop!" "Oh," says a flagon, "there is no fear of you; but I am so heavy, so very weighty, suppose I were to drop!" And a little cup says, "Oh, if I were only like the gold cup there, I should never fear falling." But the gold cup answers, "It is not because I am a gold cup that I keep up; but because I hang upon the nail." If the nail gives way we all come down, gold cups, china cups, pewter cups, and all; but as long as the nail keeps up, all that hang on Him hang safely.

"Born, died, kept

I once read these words on a tombstone: **"Born, died, kept**." Let us pray God to keep us in perfect peace, and assured of salvation.

ASSURANCE
J. C. Ryle

"Grace with assurance is no less than heaven let down into the soul."
- BISHOP HOPKINS. 1680.

"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Ti 4:6-8+)

In the words of Scripture, which head this page, you see the Apostle Paul looking three ways: downward, backward, forward. Downward to the grave,-backward to his own ministry,-forward to that great day, the day of judgment.

I invite you this day to stand by the Apostle's side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke!

He looks downward to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says.

"I am ready to be offered." I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head, according to the custom. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

"The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I shall then set sail and begin my voyage.

Reader, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, "I see it all, and am not afraid."

Let us listen to him again. He looks backward to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says.

"I have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

"I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me: I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in sight of the goal.

"I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. "As a soldier,-a runner,-a steward," he seems to say, "I am not ashamed."

Reader, that Christian is happy who, as he quits this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man,-wash away no sin,-not lift us one hair's breadth toward heaven. Yet, a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bed-side in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in "Pilgrim's Progress" which describes Old Honest's passages across the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest, in his life-time, had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there: the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks forward to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Ti 4:8) A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me: even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all beside me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

Reader, observe that the Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing: as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne,-the assembled world,-the open books,-the revealing of all secrets,-the listening angels,-the awful sentence,-the eternal separation of the lost and saved,-all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His strong faith overleaped them all, and only saw Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," he says, "is laid up for me." "The Lord Himself shall give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak, for space would not allow me. I shall only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is "the assured hope" with which the Apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I shall do this the more readily, because of the great importance which I feel attaches to the subject of assurance, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Reader, there are four things I wish to bring before you in speaking of the subject of assurance, and it may clear our way if I name them to you at once.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession,-that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in the verses which head this tract, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ ought to aim at and seek after.

The Word of God appears to me to teach that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul,-shall seldom be troubled with doubts,-seldom be distracted with hesitation,-seldom be distressed by anxious questionings,-and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.1

Such is my account of assurance. I will ask you to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have here

laid down.

Now, such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see the truth of it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent declares roundly, that a “believer’s assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;” and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it “a prime error of heretics.”

The vast majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That they cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God’s election,-man’s impotence,-salvation by grace,-all are alike abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance is a real, sober, and true thing; and God’s children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.2

My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance is simply this,-What saith the Scripture? If assurance be not there, I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God”? (Job xix. 25, 26.)

Does not David say, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me”? (Psalm 23:4.)

Does not Isaiah say, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee”? (Isaiah 26:3.)

And again, “The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” (Isaiah 32"17.)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, “I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, not height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”? (Ro 8:38, 39.)

Does he not say to the Corinthians, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”? (2 Cor. 5:1.)

And again, “We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” (2 Cor. v. 6.)

Does he not say to Timothy, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him”? (2 Ti 1:12.)

And does he not speak to the Colossians of “the full assurance of understanding” (Coloss. ii. 2), and to the Hebrews of the “full assurance of faith,” and the “full assurance of hope”? (Heb. 6"11; 10:22.)

Does not Peter say expressly, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”? (2 Peter 1:10.)

Does not John say, “We know that we have passed from death unto life”? (1 John 3:14.)

And again, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” (1 John 5"13.)

And again, “We know that we are of God.” (1 John 5:19.)

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say, that in the passages I have just quoted I see something far higher than the mere “hopes” and “trusts” with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge,-nay, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel,

for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in their plain, obvious meaning, the doctrine of assurance is true.

But my answer, furthermore, to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this: it can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of Job and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is not any necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.3

My answer, furthermore, is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern times. I will not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the Apostolic day. There have been, in our own land, many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son,-who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if space permitted. The thing has been, and is,-and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is, it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally,-to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly,-to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His Word. Assurance, after all, is no more than a fall-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands,-a faith that argues like the good centurion, if the Lord "speak the word only," I am healed. Wherefore, then, should I doubt? (Mt. 8:8.)4

Reader, you may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down "chief of sinners" (1 Tim.1:15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption. But then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him.-He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. vii. 24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then he had a still clearer view of that other Fountain which can remove "all sin and uncleanness." -He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephes. iii. 8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "My sheep shall never perish" (John x. 28), could not be broken-Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both "sure and steadfast." He remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me"; and to conclude so surely, "The Lord will preserve me: I shall never be confounded."5

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think you will allow I have shown ground for the assertion I made,-that assurance is a true thing.

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said, a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith; not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that many excellent ministers of the Gospel, at whose feet I would gladly sit, do not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as any one the idea of healing the wounds of conscience slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.6

I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really

to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him,-really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

“A letter,” says an old writer, “may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it.”

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches; live childish,-die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ’s family; think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Reader, do not mistake my meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except such as could say with Paul, “I know and am persuaded,-there is a crown laid up for me.” I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,-must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,-must rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. “Him that cometh unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37.)7

Yes, reader: though a man’s faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved,-saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail: “Whosoever believeth on Him,”-not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,-“Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” (Ro 10:11.)

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety,-many a struggle, and many a misgiving,-clouds and darkness,-storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbour; but I will not engage he shall enter that harbour in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment. (Mark 5"27.) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:56.)

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, “Lord, remember me.” (Luke 23:42.) Assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” (Job 19:25.) “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” (Job 13:15.)

Faith is Peter’s drowning cry, as he began to sink “Lord, save me.” (Matt. 15:30.) Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council in after-times, “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11, 12.)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, “Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24.) Assurance is the confident challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemneth?” (Ro 8:33, 34.) Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Acts 9:11.) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, “I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me.” (2 Ti 1:12; 4:8.)

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege.-It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace.-It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is one that belongs only to the school;-it is between the first form and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be, if I thought all readers of this tract had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ’s hand.

But be that has assurance does far better,-sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy: even “the days of heaven upon the earth.” (Dt. 11:21.)8

III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It will ill become me to speak in a slighting way of “hopes” and “trusts.” But I fear many of us sit down content with them, and go no farther. I should like to see fewer “peradventurers” in the Lord’s family, and more who could say, “I know and am persuaded.” Oh, that all believers would covet the best gifts, and not be content with less! Many miss the full tide of blessedness the Gospel was meant to convey. Many keep themselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while their Lord is saying, “Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” (Cant. v. 1. John xvi. 24.)

1. Let us remember, then, for one thing, that assurance is to be desired, because of the present comfort and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have power to spoil much of the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition,-in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings,-but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond “I hope” and “I trust,” he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, “I hope,” because he dares not say, “I know.”

Now assurance goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and thus ministers mightily to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings; in every condition content, for it gives him a FIXEDNESS of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places over which he travels, and it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet, and something firm under his hands,-a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.9

Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, “I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and flee away. Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” (Habak. iii. 17, 18.)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to feel “It is well.” An assured soul will say, “Though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive for

evermore. Though my house be not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Kings iv. 26; Heb. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in a prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night, and joy when all things seem going against him. (Job ii. 10; Psalm xlii. 8.)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of death on the morrow, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. It will teach him to say, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." (Psalm iv. 8.)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the Apostles did. It will remind him that he may "rejoice and be exceeding glad " (Matt. v. 12), and that there is in heaven an exceeding weight of glory that shall make amends for all. (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ's Church, and as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke xii. 4.) "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59.)10

Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house fail, I have a building of God." (2 Cor. v. 1.) "I desire to depart and be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.) "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."11 (Psalm lxxiii. 26.)

Reader, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a point of great importance. Believe me, you will never think assurance so precious as when your turn comes to die.

In that awful hour, there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of an "assured hope," whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General "hopes" and "trusts" are all very well to live upon, while the sun shines, and the body is strong: but when you come to die, you will want to be able to say, "I know" and "I feel."

Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. No earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the Visitation of the Sick: "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The compilers of that service showed great wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be knowing and feeling what Christ has done for us, or else there cannot be perfect peace.12

2. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active working Christian.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find he is so taken up with this internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer, who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Saviour, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so in the long run to do more.14

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them

be the same both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs for ever; let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labour at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own,-whether there is not some mistake,-whether, after all, there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one shall never doubt his title, but just work diligently on.

The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney, or Melbourne, or Auckland with needless inquiries about it.

Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous?

Reader, you know as well as I do. I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

It is much the same in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought him as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving hesitations. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways." (Psalm 51:12.)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labour. Christ's work was truly their meat and drink. They counted not their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, and worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who could say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John 4:19.)

3. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God's sight is a grievous one, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many, of whom we feel hopes that they are God's children, and have true grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. "Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go into that company? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and our entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to touch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?" These are a kind of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is, that they do not feel assured they are themselves children of God. They have not yet settled the point, which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel, but the grand question is, "Are they children of God themselves?" If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward, and take a decided line. But not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a dead lock. The devil whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite: what right have you to take a decided course? Wait till you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world.

Reader, I believe you have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. Depend on it, one secret cause of halting between two opinions is want of assurance. When people can say decidedly, "The Lord He is the God," their course becomes very clear. (1 Kings xviii. 39.)

4. Let us remember, finally, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This, too, sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common sense, and yet it to a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, “Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth.” He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ’s glory, and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in 1 John iii. 3: “He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.” A hope that does not purify is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.15

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels will be a cautious traveller. He will look well to his roads, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God’s reconciled countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I commend these four points to your serious consideration. Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing nigh to your soul, and saying, “I am thy salvation”?-Would you like to be a useful labourer in the vineyard in your day and generation?-Would you be known of all men as a bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising follower of Christ?-Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy?-I doubt not some readers will say, “These are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them: but they seem far from us.”

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all you failures,-that the low measure of faith which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of peace? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are faint and languishing, when faith, the root and mother of them all, is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul’s. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God’s promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed: I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His.”

You have very likely tried other ways and methods and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord’s arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.16

IV. I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out to you some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained. I will do it very shortly.

This is a very serious question, and ought to raise in all great searchings of heart. Few, certainly, of Christ’s people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many comparatively believe, but few are persuaded. Many comparatively have saving faith, but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in the language of St. Paul. That such is the case, I think we must all allow.

Now, why is this so?-Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us to seek after, a thing of which few believers have any experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point, with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven. Perhaps the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps, in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One most common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are insensibly confused together in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth,-that there must be something done IN US, as well as something done FOR US, if we are true members of Christ; and so far they are right. But, then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea that their justification is, in some degree, affected by something within

themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work,-either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly,-is the alone ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith,-and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest.17

Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah. Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be,-but sinners, sinners, sinners, always to the very last. They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and admits of no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days,-oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

Reader, consider this point well. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not got it, let him ask himself, first of all, if he is quite sure he is sound in the faith, if his loins are thoroughly "girt about with truth," and his eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it is simply to believe before he can expect to feel assured.

Believe me, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. Seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for you. Happy is the man who really understands justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

Related Resources:

- Why is justification by faith such an important doctrine?
- Justification vs sanctification—what are the differences?
- What is justification? What does it mean to be justified?

2. Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point: I do not of course mean intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to me to think that once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given them that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given, like a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions "to increase,-to grow,-to abound more and more,-to add to our faith," and the like; and in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to go forward; and our watchword at the beginning of every year should be, "More and more" (1 Th 4:1): more knowledge,-more faith,-more obedience,-more love. If we have brought forth thirty-fold, we should seek to bring forth sixty, and if we have brought forth sixty, we should strive to bring forth a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Mt. 13:23; 1 Th 4:3.)

One thing, at all events, we may depend upon,-there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter 1:10.) "We desire," says Paul, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. 6:11.) "The soul of the diligent," says Solomon, "shall be made fat." (Pr 13:4.) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans: "Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

Reader, mark my words. Are you one of those who desires assurance, but have not got it? You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." (Pr 8:4.) 18

3. Another common cause of a want of assurance is, an inconsistent walk in life.

With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity is far wider than it formerly was, and I am

afraid we must admit, at the same time, it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and they will not go together. If you will have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up; if you will shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye, when occasion requires it, I will engage you will have no assurance.

A vacillating walk,-a backwardness to take a bold and decided line,-a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ,-a lingering tone of religion,-all these make up a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small. (Psalm 119:128.) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands, and lay your consolations low in the dust. You must be daily sowing to the Spirit, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will not find and feel that all the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labour in all your ways to please the Lord.19

I bless God our salvation in no wise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved,-not by works of righteousness,-through faith,-without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our SENSE of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes, and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

"The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 24:14.)

"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23.)

"Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165.)

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John 1:7).

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John 3:18, 19.)

"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3.)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. (Acts xxiv. 16.) He could say with boldness, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, "Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day."

Reader, if any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not got it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, "There is a cause why I have no assured hope."

I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth examining. May you examine them honestly. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

1. And now, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those readers who have not given themselves to the Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

I ask you, then, to learn from this subject the privileges and comforts of a true Christian.

I would not have you judge of the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master. Neither would I have you judge of the privileges of His kingdom by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas, we are most of us poor creatures! We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But, depend upon it, there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste, even in their life-time. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation there, which it has not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master's charge: it is all our own.

And, after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and tossings of the surface of his heart, but you see not the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a hope, however faint, but you have none at all. He has a portion that will never be taken from him, a Saviour that will never forsake him, a treasure that fadeth not away, however little he may realize it all at present. But, as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you understood these things! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side the grave. Yes: when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundation,-when I see, as we all saw a few years ago, kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men fleeing for their lives, and scarce knowing where to hide their heads,-when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value,-when I see these things I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom that cannot be removed.20

Take advice of a minister of Christ this very day. Seek durable riches,-a treasure that cannot be taken from you,-a city which hath lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will bite like a serpent if you cling to it, at last. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us, and sit down by our side.

Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this,-if you have not got an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it. Labour for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you “know whom you have believed.”

I feel, indeed, that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned God’s children, is a shame and a reproach. “It is a thing to be heavily bewailed,” says old Traill, “that many Christians have lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet doubting in their life.” Let us call to mind the earnest “desire” Paul expresses, that “every one” of the Hebrews should seek after full assurance and let us endeavour, by God’s blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Heb. 6:11.)

Believing reader, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for confidence, trust for persuasion, uncertainty for knowledge? Because weak faith will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it upon earth? Alas, this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day! Arise at once, and go forward. Stick not at the foundations of religion: go on to perfection. Be not content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourselves.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the book of life, and yet Paul says, “I know, and am persuaded.”

Make it, then, your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God’s blessing, you may hope to have the flower, You may not, perhaps, attain to full assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

There is one thing, however, of which I would not have you ignorant:-You must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts after you have got assurance. You must not forget you are on earth, and not yet in heaven. You are still in the body, and have indwelling sin: the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death takes it down. And there is a devil, too, and a strong devil: a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall; and he will take care you know it.

Some doubts there always will be. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. But be not discouraged: you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.21

Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost for a season, even by the brightest Christians, unless they take care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. As Rutherford says, “Make much of assurance.” Be always upon your guard. When Christian slept, in Pilgrim’s Progress, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind.

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when he denied his Lord. Each found it again, undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run down hill. It is hard work to climb up. So remember my caution,-when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, grieve not the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

The man who walks with God in Christ most closely will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

Footnotes (Revision and footnotes from Tony Capoccia - Bible Bulletin Board)

1 “Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, may and doth consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin”-Rutherford’s Triumph of Faith. 1645.

2 “We do not vindicate every vain pretender to ‘the Witness of the Spirit;’ we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences."-Robinson's Christian System.

“True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis: presumption hath no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void in law. Presumption wants both the witness of the Word and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who hath this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility.”-Watson’s Body of Divinity. 1650.

“Presumption is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience: this dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption will sin, because grace cloth abound. Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither as they that are afraid of going to hell.”-Adams on Second Epistle of Peter. 1633.

3“They are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted.”-Traill.

4 “To be assured of our salvation,” Augustine saith, “is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God’s promise.”-Bishop Jewell’s Defence of the Apology. 1570.

“If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but the Lord and the power of His might being the ground thereof, they either know not what is the might of His power, or else too lightly esteem it, who account assured confidence thereon presumption.”-Gouge’s Whole Armour of God. 1647.

“Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause of fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we shall find cause enough for assurance.”-Hildersam on John iv. 1632.

“Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, “I imagine so,” or “It is likely;” but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity. Our salvation is fastened with God’s own hand, and Christ’s own strength, to the strong stake of God’s unchangeable nature.”-Rutherford’s Letters. 1637.

5 “Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on mount Zion. Christ loseth none of them; yea, nothing of them. (John vi. 39.) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them.” (Rom. viii. 37.)-Traill.

6 Extracts from English divines, showing that there is a difference between faith and assurance,-that a believer may be justified and accepted with God, and yet not enjoy a comfortable knowledge and persuasion of his own safety,-and that the weakest faith in Christ, if it be true, will save a man as surely as the strongest.

1. “Is it not necessary to justification to be assured that my sins are pardoned, and that I am justified? No: that is no act of faith as it justifieth, but an effect and fruit that followeth after justification.

“It is one thing for a man to have his salvation certain, another thing to be certain that it is certain.

“Even as a man fallen into a river, and like to be drowned, as he is carried down with the flood, espies the bough of a tree hanging over the river, which he catcheth at, and clings unto with all his might to save him, and seeing no other way of succour but that, ventures his life upon it. This man, so soon as he has fastened on this bough, is in a safe condition, though all troubles, fears, and terrors are not presently out of his mind, until he comes to himself, and sees himself quite out of danger. Then he is sure he is safe, but he was safe before he was sure. Even so it is with a believer. Faith is but the espying of Christ as the only means to save, and the reaching out of the heart to lay hold upon Him. God hath spoke the word, and made the promise to His Son: I believe Him to be the only Saviour, and remit my soul to Him to be saved by His mediation. So soon as the soul can do this, God imputeth the righteousness of His Son unto it, and it is actually justified in the court of heaven, though it is not presently quieted and pacified in the court of conscience. That is done afterwards: in some sooner, in some later, and by the fruits and effects of justification.”-Archbishop Usher’s “Body of Divinity.” 1670.

2. “There are those who doubt, because they doubt and multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith, because they find so much and so frequent doubting within them. But this is a great mistake. Some doubtings there may be, where there is even much faith; and a little faith there may be, where there is much doubting.

“Our Saviour requires, and delights in a strong, firm believing on Him, though the least and weakest He rejects not.”-Archbishop Leighton’s Lectures on the first nine chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel. 1670.

3. “The mercy of God is greater than all the sins in the world. But we sometimes are in such a case, that we think we have no faith at all; or if we have any, it is very feeble and weak. And, therefore, these are two things; to have faith, and to have the feeling of faith. For some men would fain have the feeling of faith, but they cannot attain unto it; and yet they must not despair, but go forward in calling upon God, and it will come at the length: God will open their hearts, and let them feel His goodness.”-Bishop Latimer’s Sermons. 1552.

4. “I know, thou sayest, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: and that ‘Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.’ (John iii. 15.) Neither can I know but that, in a sense of my own ‘sinful condition, I do cast myself in some measure upon my Saviour, and lay some hold upon His all-sufficient redemption: but, alas, my apprehensions of Him are so feeble, as that they can afford no sound comfort to my soul!

“Courage, my son. Were it that thou lookest to be justified, and saved by the power of the very act of thy faith, thou hadst reason to be disheartened with the conscience of the weakness thereof; but now that the virtue and efficacy of this happy work is in the object apprehended by thee, which is the infinite merits and mercy of thy God and Saviour, which cannot be abated by thine infirmities, thou hast cause to take heart to thyself, and cheerfully to expect His salvation.

“Understand thy case aright. Here is a double hand, that helps us up toward heaven. Our hand of faith lays hold upon our Saviour; our Saviour’s hand of mercy and plenteous redemption lays hold on us. Our hold of Him is feeble and easily loosed; His hold of us is strong and irresistible.

“If work were stood upon, a strength of hand were necessary; but now that only taking and receiving of a

precious gift is required, why may not a weak hand do that as well as a strong? As well, though not as forcibly.”-Bishop Hall’s “Balm of Gilead.” 1650.

5. “Many formerly, and those of the highest remark and eminency, have placed true faith in no lower degree than assurance, or the secure persuasion of the pardon of their sins, the acceptation of their persons, and their future salvation.

“But this, as it is very sad and uncomfortable for thousands of doubting and deserted souls, concluding all those to fall short of grace who fall short of certainty, so hath it given the Papists too great advantage.

“Faith is not assurance. But this doth sometimes crown and reward a strong, vigorous, and heroic faith; the Spirit of God breaking in upon the soul with an evidencing light, and scattering all that darkness, and those fears and doubts which before beclouded it.”-Bishop Hopkins on the Covenants. 1680.

6. “If any persons abroad have thought that a special and full persuasion of the pardon of their sin was of the essence of faith, let them answer for it. Our divines at home generally are of another judgment. Bishop Davenant and Bishop Prideaux, and others, have shown the great difference between recumbence and assurance, and they all do account and call assurance a daughter, fruit, and consequent of faith. And the late learned Arrowsmith tells us, that God seldom bestows assurance upon believers till they are grown in grace: for, says he, there is the same difference between faith of recumbence and faith of assurance, as is between reason and learning. Reason is the foundation of learning; so, as there can be no learning if reason be wanting (as in beasts), in like manner there can be no assurance where there is no faith of adherence. Again: as reason well exercised in the study of arts and sciences arises to learning, so faith, being well exercised on its proper object and by its proper fruits, arises to assurance. Further, as by negligence, non-attendance, or some violent disease, learning may be lost, while reason doth abide; so, by temptation, or by spiritual sloth, assurance may be lost, while saving faith may abide. Lastly, as all men have reason, but all men are not learned; so all regenerate persons have faith to comply savingly with the gospel method of salvation, but all true believers have not assurance.”-Sermon by B. Fairclough, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in the Morning Exercises, preached at Southwark. 1660.

7. “Weak faith may fail in the applying, or in the apprehension and appropriating of Christ’s benefits to a man’s own self. This is to be seen in ordinary experience. For many a man there is of humble and contrite heart, that serveth God in spirit and truth, yet is not able to say, without great doubtings and waverings, I know and am fully assured that my sins are pardoned. Now shall we say that all such are without faith? God forbid.

“This weak faith will as truly apprehend God’s merciful promises for the pardon of sin as strong faith, though not so soundly. Even as a man with a palsied hand can stretch it out as well to receive a gift at the hand of a king as he that is more sound, though it may be not so firmly and steadfastly.”-Exposition of the Creed, by William Perkins, Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge. 1612.

8. “A want of assurance is not unbelief. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith,-between believing to eternal life and knowing we have eternal life. There is a difference between a child’s having a right to an estate and his full knowledge of the title.

“The character of faith may be written in the heart, as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished. The dust hinders the reading of the letters, yet doth not raze them out.”-Discourses by Stephen Charnock, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. 1680.

9. “This certainty of our salvation, spoken of by Paul, rehearsed by Peter, and mentioned by David (Psalm iv. 7), is that special fruit of faith which breedeth spiritual joy, and inward peace which passeth all understanding. True it is, all God’s children have it not. One thing is the tree, and another thing is the fruit of the tree: one thing is faith, and another thing is the fruit of faith. And that remnant of God’s elect which feel the want of this faith have, notwithstanding, faith.”-Sermons by Richard Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God. 1612.

10. “You that can clear this to your own hearts that you have faith, though it be weak, be not discouraged, be not troubled. Consider that the smallest degree of faith is true, is saving faith as well as the greatest. A spark of fire is as true fire as any is in the element of fire. A drop of water is as true water as any is in the ocean. So the least grain of faith is as true faith, and as saving as the greatest faith in the world.

“The least bud draws sap from the root as well as the greatest bough. So the weakest measure of faith doth as truly ingraft thee into Christ, and by that draw life from Christ, as well as the strongest. The weakest faith hath

communion with the merits and blood of Christ as well as the strongest.

“The least faith marries the soul to Christ. The weakest faith hath as equal a share in God’s love as the strongest. We are beloved in Christ, and the least measure of faith makes us members of Christ. The least faith hath equal right to the promises as the strongest. And, therefore, let not our souls be discouraged for weakness.”-Nature and Royalties of Faith, by Samuel Bolton, D.D., of Christ’s College, Cambridge. 1657

11. “A man may be in the favour of God, in the state of grace, a justified man before God, and yet want the sensible assurance of his salvation, and of the favour of God in Christ.

“A man may have saving grace in him, and not perceive it himself; a man may have true justifying faith in him, and not have the use and operation of it, so far as to work in him a comfortable assurance of his reconciliation with God. Nay, I will say more: a man may be in the state of grace, and have true justifying faith in him, and yet be so far from sensible assurance of it in himself, as in his own sense and feeling he may seem to be assured of the contrary. Job was certainly in this case when he cried unto God, ‘Wherefore bidest Thou Thy face, and boldest me for Thine enemy?’ (Job xiii. 24.)

“The weakest faith will justify. If thou canst receive Christ and rest upon Rim, even with the weakest faith, it will serve thy turn.-Take heed thou think not it is the strength of thy faith that justifieth thee. No, no: it is Christ and His perfect righteousness which thy faith receiveth and resteth upon that doth it. He that hath the feeblest and weakest hand may receive an alms, and apply a sovereign plaster to his wound, as well as he that hath the strongest, and receive as much good by it too.”-Lectures upon the fifty-first Psalm, preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, by Arthur Hildersam, Minister of Jesus Christ. 1642.

12. “There are some who are true believers and yet weak in faith. They do indeed receive Christ and free grace, but it is with a shaking hand. They have, as divines say, the faith of adherence: they will stick to Christ, as theirs; but they want the faith of evidence,-they cannot see themselves as His. They are believers, but of little faith. They hope that Christ will not cast them off, but are not sure that He will take them up.”-Sips of Sweetness, or Consolation for Weak Believers, by John Durant, Preacher in Canterbury Cathedral. 1649.

13. “The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and this the weakest faith can do as well as the strongest, if it be true. A child can hold a staff as well, though not so strongly, as a man. The prisoner through a hole sees the sun, though not so perfectly as they in the open air. They that saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, yet were healed.

“The least faith is as precious to the believer’s soul as Peter’s or Paul’s faith was to themselves, for it lays hold upon Christ and brings eternal salvation.”-An Exposition of the Second Epistle General of Peter, by the Rev Thomas Adams, Rector of St. Gregory’s, London. 1633.

14. “Many of God’s dear children for a long time may remain very doubtful as to their present and eternal condition, and know not what to conclude, whether they shall be damned, or whether they shall be saved. There are believers of several growths in the Church of God,-fathers, young men, children, and babes; and as in most families there are more babes and children than grown men, so in the Church of God there are more weak, doubting Christians than strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. A babe may be born, and yet not know it; so a man may be born again, and yet not be sure of it.

“We make a difference betwixt saving faith, as such, and a full persuasion of the heart. Some of those that shall be saved may not be certain that they shall be saved; for the promise is made to the grace of faith, and not to the evidence of it, to faith as true, and not to faith as strong. They may be sure of heaven, and yet in their own sense not assured of heaven.”-Sermons by Rev. Thomas Doolittle, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and sometime Rector of St. Alphage, London, in the Morning Exercises, at Cripplegate. 1661.

15. “I find not salvation put upon the strength of faith, but the truth of faith; not upon the brightest degree, but upon any degree of faith. It is not said, If you have such a degree of faith you shall be justified and saved; but simply believing is required. The lowest degree of true faith wilt do it; as Romans x. 9: ‘If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.’ The thief upon the cross had not attained to such high degrees of faith: he by one act, and that of a weak faith, was justified and saved. (Luke xxiii. 42.)”-Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel, by William Greenhill, Rector of Stepney, London, and Chaplain to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. 1650.

16. “Weak faith is true faith,-as precious, though not so great, as strong faith,-the same Holy Ghost the Author, the same Gospel the instrument.

“If it never proves great, yet weak faith shall save, for it interests us in Christ, and makes Him and all His benefits ours. For it is not the strength of our faith that saves, but truth of our faith; nor weakness of our faith that condemns, but the want of faith,-for the least faith layeth ‘hold on Christ, and so will save us. Neither are we saved by the worth or quantity of our faith, but by Christ, who is laid hold on by a weak faith as well as a strong. Just as a weak hand that can put meat into the mouth, shall feed and nourish the body as well as if it were a strong hand; seeing the body is not nourished by the strength of the hand, but by the goodness of the meat.”-The Doctrine of Faith, by John Rogers, Preacher of God’s Word at Dedham, in Essex. 1634.

17. “Though your grace be never so weak, yet if ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share in the righteousness of Christ for your justification as the strong Christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you as any other.”-Sermons by William Bridge, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Pastor of the Church of Christ, in Great Yarmouth. 1648.

18. “It is confessed weak faith hath as much peace with God, through Christ, as another hath by strong faith, but not so much bosom peace.

“Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith, for it is impossible the least dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed; but the weak, doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea-sick hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful.”-The Christian in complete Armour, by William Gurnall, sometime Minister at Lavenham, Suffolk. 1680.

19. “A man may have true grace that hath not the assurance of the love and favour of God, or the remission of his sins, and salvation of his soul. A man may be God’s, and yet he not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he not see it; he may be in a safe condition, when he is not in a comfortable position. All may be well with him in the court of glory, when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of conscience.

“Assurance is requisite to the well-being of a Christian, but not to the being; it is requisite to the consolation of a Christian, but not to the salvation of a Christian; it is requisite to the well-being of grace, but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot be saved without faith, yet he may be saved without assurance. God hath in sunny places of the Scripture declared that without faith there is no salvation; but God hath not in any one place of Scripture declared that without assurance there is no salvation.”-Heaven on Earth, by Thomas Brooks, Preacher of the Gospel at St. Margaret’s, Fish Street Hill, London. 1654

20. “We must distinguish between weakness of faith and nullity. A weak faith is true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is such as Christ will not break. Though thy faith be but weak, yet be not discouraged. A weak faith may receive a strong Christ: a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong; a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise doth not say, Whosoever hath a giant faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but whosoever believes, be his faith never so small.

“You may have the water of the Spirit poured on you in sanctification, though not the oil of gladness in assurance; there may be faith of adherence, and not of evidence; there may be life in the root where there is no fruit in the branches, and faith in the heart where no fruit of assurance.”-A Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson, formerly Minister of St. Stephen’s, Walbrook, London. 1660.

21. “There is a weak faith, which yet is true; and although it be weak, yet, because it is true, it shall not be rejected of Christ.

“Faith is not created perfect at the first, as Adam was, but is like a man in the ordinary course of nature, who is first an infant, then a child, then a youth, then a man.

“Some utterly reject all weak ones, and tax all weakness in faith with hypocrisy. Certainly these are either proud or cruel men.

“Some comfort and establish those who are weak, saying, ‘Be quiet: thou hast faith and grace enough and art good enough; thou needest no more, neither must thou be too righteous.’ (Eccles. vii. 16.) These are soft, but not safe, cushions; these are fawning flatterers, and not faithful friends.

“Some comfort and exhort, saying, ‘Be of good cheer: He who hath begun a good work will also finish it in you; therefore pray that His grace may abound in you; yea, do not sit still, but go forward, and march on in the way of the Lord.’ (Heb. vi. 1.) Now this is the safest and best course.”-Questions, Observations, etc., upon the

Gospel according to St. Matthew, by Richard Ward, sometime Student at Cambridge, and Preacher of the Gospel in London. 1640.

22. “Be not discouraged if it doth not yet appear to you that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may be, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not for a long time know it; yea, I see no great danger in saying that not a few of the given to the Son may be in darkness, and doubts and fears about it, till the last and brightest day declares it, and till the last sentence proclaims it.

“If therefore any of you be in the dark about your own election, be not discouraged; it may be, though you do not know it.”-Sermon on the Lord’s Prayer, by Robert Traill, Minister of the Gospel in London, and sometime at Cranbrook Kent. 1690.

23. “Some rob themselves of their own comfort by placing saving faith in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies; you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it. Some there be that say, ‘Thou art our God,’ of whom God never said, You are my people; these have no authority to be called the sons of God: others there are, of whom God saith, ‘These are my people,’ yet they dare not call God ‘their God;’ these have authority to be called the Sons of God, yet know it not. They have received Christ, that is their safety; but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it, that is their trouble.…The father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to he his father.”-Method of grace, by John Flavel, Minister of the Gospel at Dartmouth, Devon. 1680.

24. “The faith necessary and sufficient for our salvation is not assurance. Its tendency, doubtless, is to produce that lively expectation of the Divine favour which will issue in a full confidence. But the confidence is not itself the faith of which we speak, nor is it necessarily included in it: nay, it is a totally distinct thing.

“Assurance will generally accompany a high degree of faith. But there are sincere persons who are endued with only small measures of grace, or in whom the exercise of that grace may be greatly obstructed. When such defects or hindrances prevail, many fears and distresses may be expected to arise.”-The Christian System, by the Rev. Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary’s, Leicester. 1795.

25. “Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith; but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard seed. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind.”-Sermons, by the Rev. John Newton, sometime Vicar of Olney, and Rector of St. Mary’s. Woolnoth, London. 1767.

26. “There is no reason why weak believers should conclude against themselves. Weak faith unites as really with Christ as strong faith,-as the least bud in the vine is drawing sap and life from the root, no less than the strongest branch. Weak believers therefore have abundant cause to be thankful; and while they reach after growth in grace, ought not to overlook what they have already received.”-Letter of Rev. Henry Venn. 1784.

27. “Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous; the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience.

“A sick man may be under a process of recovery and yet be in doubt concerning the restoration of his health. Pain and weakness may cause him to hesitate. A child may be heir to his estate or kingdom, and yet derive no joy from the prospect of his future inheritance. He may be unable to trace his genealogy, or to read his title deeds, and the testament of his father; or with a capacity of reading them he may be unable to understand their import, and his guardian may for a time deem it right to suffer him to remain in ignorance. But his ignorance does not affect the validity of his title.

“Personal assurance of salvation is not necessarily connected with faith. They are not essentially the same. Every believer might indeed infer, from the effect produced in his own heart, his own safety and privileges; but many who truly believe are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and fail of drawing the conclusion from Scriptural premises which they would be justified in drawing”-Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, by the Rev. Thomas Biddulph, Minister of St. James’s, Bristol. 1830,

7 “He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. Never was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout,-‘Never man perished with his face towards Christ Jesus.’-Traill.

8 “The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and, the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that

which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth.”-Joseph Caryl.

9 “It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, “When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks then I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all trouble: no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit, that I could run into a very mouse-hole.”-Quoted by Christopher Love. 1653.

‘‘Assurance will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions into which the saddest of times can bring us. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’-Bishop Reynolds on Hosea xiv. 1642.

“We cannot come amiss to him that hath assurance: God is his. Hath he lost a friend?-His Father lives. Hath he lost an only child? God hath given him His only Son. Hath he scarcity of bread?-God hath given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life.-Are his comforts gone?-he hath a Comforter. Doth he meet with storms?-he knows where to put in for harbour.-God is his portion, and heaven is his haven.”-Thomas Watson. 1662

10 These were John Bradford’s words in prison, shortly before his execution. “I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her.”

This was Rutherford’s experience, when banished to Aberdeen. ‘How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of exile.” “My prison is a palace to me, and Christ’s banqueting house.”-Letters.

11 These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold at Edinburgh, 1666. “Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations; farewell, the world and all its delights; farewell, meat and drinks; farewell, sun, moon, and stars. Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed my soul, O Lord God of truth.”

12 These were Rutherford’s words on his death bed. “O that all my brethren did know what a Master I have served, and what I have this day! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness.” 1661.

These were Baxter’s words on his death bed. “I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within.” Towards the close he was asked how he did? The answer was, “Almost well.” 1691.

13 The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it.”-Fairclough’s Sermon in the Morning Exercises.

14 “Assurance would make us active and lively in God’s service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-running.”-Thomas Watson.

“Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul: what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant.” -Thomas Brooks.

15 “The true assurance of salvation, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in any heart, hath that force to restrain a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else hath in all the world. It is certainly either the want of faith and assurance of God’s love, or a false and carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of all the licentiousness that reigns in the world.”-Hildersam on 51st Psalm.

“None walk so evenly with God as they who are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust makes way for strictness of life. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and their floating belief is soon discovered in their inconstancy and unevenness of walking. We do not

with alacrity engage in that of the success of which we are doubtful: and therefore when we know not whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance an idle doctrine."-Manton's Exposition of James. 1660.

"Who is more obliged, or who feels the obligation to observance more cogently,-the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him, or the servant that hath great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison of love. Terrors may awaken; love enlivens. Terrors may 'almost persuade;' love over-persuades. Sure am I that a believer's knowledge that his Beloved is his, and he is his Beloved's (Cant. vi. 3), is found by experience to lay the most strong and cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For as to him that believes Christ is precious (1 Peter ii. 7), so to him that knows he believes Christ is so much the more precious, even the 'chiefest of ten thousand.'" (Cant. v. l0)-Fairclough's Sermon in Morning Exercises. 1660.

"Is it necessary that men should be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strongest principle of obedience: nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please Him."-Robinson's Christian System.

16 "That which breeds so much perplexity is, that we would invert God's order. 'If I knew,' say some, 'that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe:' that is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: 'I had fainted,' says David, 'unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.' He believed it first, and saw it afterwards."-Archbishop Leighton.

"It is a weak and ignorant, but common, thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be well advanced in holiness and meetness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him."-Traill.

17The Westminster Confession of Faith gives an admirable account of justification. "Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other Evangelical obedience, to them, as their righteousness: but by imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith."

18"Whose fault is it that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish."-Traill

"A lazy Christian shall always want four things: viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together, that God hath put so far asunder."-Thomas Brooks.

"Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace consolation, and establishment? Why lie you upon your faces? Get up: watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests: this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These things are not peace, are not assurance; but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them."-Owen on the 130th Psalm.

19 "Wouldest thou have thy hope strong?-Then keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile one without weakening the other. The godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart."-Gurnall

"One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining some known sin. It puts out the eye of the soul, or dimmeth it and stupifies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His Spirit."-Baxter's Saints' Rest.

"The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of His favour. Worldly Christians, remember this. You and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet."-Thomas Brooks.

20 “They are doubly miserable that have neither Heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternals, made sure to them in changing times.”-Thomas Brooks.

21 “None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and checkered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark, and others are sunshine: such is usually the life of the most assured Christian.”-Bishop Hopkins.

“It is very suspicious that that person is a hypocrite that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good.”-Traill.

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1 John 5:12 Commentary <> 1 John 5:14 Commentary