

Assurance of Salvation

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INTRODUCTION: Fanny Crosby's timeless hymn is a beautiful expression of the assurance every believer in Christ can know as their day to day reality for it founded on the truth that "**you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God**" (Colossians 3:3+). **Hidden** (*krupto*) is in the [perfect tense](#), signifying the moment we believed, we were placed securely **with Christ in God** and that position is permanent, eternally secure! (cf Jn 10:28, 29) So here we can see the **assurance of our salvation** in a single verb and the tense of that verb! Beloved, it does not get much more secure than that, but the following compilation has a number of additional notes regarding Biblical truth to give you a firm foundation today and until the day we see Jesus face to face. Lord, use the truth of Your Holy Word illuminated by Your Holy Spirit to set every saint in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6+), firmly, unshakably convinced of their eternally secure position [in Christ Jesus](#), our Savior, Sustainer and Friend. Amen

[Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!](#)

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

REFRAIN

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

"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; 1 Jn 4:13).
7. One infallible test of knowledge (1 Jn 4:1–3).
8. The consciousness that we have eternal life comes through belief in God's Word (1 Jn 5:13). (Handfuls of Purpose)

ASSURANCE GOT QUESTIONS

Question: "How can I have assurance of my salvation?"

Answer: 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." 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.

God wants us to have assurance of our salvation. We should not live our Christian lives wondering and worrying each day whether or not 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). "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Have you repented? Do you believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sins and rose again from the dead (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.

- **Source:** [Recommended Resource - Got Questions](#)
- [How can I have assurance of my salvation?](#)
- [How can I stop questioning my 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?](#)
- [Can a person believe in some sense but not be saved?](#)
- [How can I avoid being a doubting Thomas?](#)

ASSURANCE TORREY'S TOPIC

- Produced by faith - Ephesians 3:12 ; 2 Timothy 1:12 ; Hebrews 10:22
- Made full by hope - Hebrews 6:11,19
- Confirmed by love - 1 John 3:14,19 ; 4:18
- Is the effect of righteousness - Isaiah 32:17
- Is abundant in the understanding of the gospel - Colossians 2:2 ; 1 Thessalonians 1:5

SAINTS PRIVILEGED TO HAVE, OF

- Their election - Psalm 4:3 ; 1 Thessalonians 1:4
- Their redemption - Job 19:25
- Their adoption - Romans 8:16 ; 1 John 3:2
- Their salvation - Isaiah 12:2
- Eternal life - 1 John 5:13
- The unalienable love of God - Romans 8:38,39
- Union with God and Christ - 1 Corinthians 6:15 ; 2 Corinthians 13:5 ; Ephesians 5:30 ; 1 John 2:5 ; 4:13
- Peace with God by Christ - Romans 5:1
- Preservation - Psalm 3:6,8 ; 27:3-5 ; 46:1-3
- Answers to prayer - 1 John 3:22 ; 5:14,15
- Continuance in grace - Philippians 1:6
- Comfort in affliction - Psalm 73:26 ; Luke 4:18,19 ; 2 Corinthians 4:8-10,16-18
- Support in death - Psalm 23:4
- A glorious resurrection - Job 19:26 ; Psalm 17:15 ; Philippians 3:21 ; 1 John 3:2
- A kingdom - Hebrews 12:28 ; Revelation 5:10
- A crown - 2 Timothy 4:7,8 ; James 1:12
- Give diligence to attain to - 2 Peter 1:10,11
- Strive to maintain - Hebrews 3:14,18
- Confident hope in God restores - Psalm 42:11
- Exemplified
 - David - Psalm 23:4
 - Asaph - Ps 73:24-26
 - Paul - 2 Timothy 1:12 ; 2 Ti 4:18

ASSURANCE QUOTATIONS

That faith which is never assaulted with doubting is but a fancy. Assuredly that assurance which is ever secure is but a dream. - Robert Bolton

A soul under assurance is unwilling to go to heaven without company. - Thomas Brooks

A well-grounded assurance is always attended by three fair handmaids: love, humility and holy joy. - Thomas Brooks

Assurance is glory in the bud, it is the suburbs of paradise. - Thomas Brooks

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 - Thomas Brooks

Assurance is optimum maximum, the best and greatest mercy; and therefore God will only give it to his best and dearest friends. - Thomas Brooks

Assurance makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, bitter afflictions sweet. - Thomas Brooks

Assurance makes most for your comfort but holiness makes most for God's honour. - Thomas Brooks

Faith cannot be lost, but assurance may; therefore assurance is not faith. - Thomas Brooks

Many a Christian has his pardon sealed in the court of heaven before it is sealed in the court of his own conscience. - Thomas Brooks

Perfect signs of grace can never spring from imperfect grace. - Thomas Brooks

Reason's arm is too short to reach the jewel of assurance. - Thomas Brooks

The more the soul is conformed to Christ, the more confident it will be of its interest in Christ. - Thomas Brooks

Though no man merits assurance by his obedience, yet God usually crowns obedience with assurance. - Thomas Brooks

Without the diligent use of means a lazy Christian has no right to expect to receive assurance. - Thomas Brooks

Let us not seek any other ground of assurance than God's own testimony. - John Calvin

The inward testimony of conscience, the sealing of the conscience, the sealing of the Spirit ... far exceeds all the evidence of the senses. - John Calvin

There is no better assurance of salvation to be found anywhere than can be gained from the decree of God. - John Calvin

Assurance is the fruit that grows out of the root of faith. - Stephen Charnock

Assurance is from God every bit as much as faith is. - J. C. P. Cockerton

Assurance does not grow like a hothouse plant, pampered in an even temperature and sheltered from every puff of wind! It is an outdoor species, meant to flourish in the ever-changing weather conditions of the world. - J. C. P. Cockerton

The gospel is the ground of the believer's assurance, while the Holy Spirit is its cause. - J. C. P. Cockerton

Assurance does not lie in what we are, be we great or small. It lies in what God has done in his plan of salvation to secure us to himself. - Sinclair Ferguson

Assurance is our reaction to the gift of salvation and our reflection on our trust in Christ. - Sinclair Ferguson

Faith alone justifies, through Christ alone. Assurance is the enjoyment of that justification. - Sinclair Ferguson

Assurance hath a narrow throat, and may be choked with a small sin. - Thomas Fuller

Fear to fall and assurance to stand are two sisters. - Thomas Fuller

Assurance is, as it were, the cream of faith. - William Gurnall

A well-grounded assurance of heaven and happiness, instead of puffing a man up with pride, will make and keep him very humble. - Matthew Henry

I think the first essential mark of the difference between true and false assurance is to be found in the fact that the true works humility. - A. A. Hodge

None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and chequered 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. - Ezekiel Hopkins

Faith rests on the naked Word of God; that Word believed gives full assurance. - H. A. Ironside

Sin can never quite bereave a saint of his jewel, his grace; but it may steal away the key of the cabinet, his assurance. - William Jenkyn

The Holy Spirit is no sceptic, and the things he has written in our hearts are not doubts or opinions, but assertions—surer and more certain than sense or life itself. - Martin Luther

None walk so evenly with God as they who are assured of the love of God. - Thomas Manton

Our assurance must be founded, built up and established on the mercy of God alone. - Will Metzger

The doctrine of assurance, biblically understood, keeps the saint on his toes. - J. A. Motyer

Faith is our seal; assurance of faith is God's seal. - Christopher Nesse

Feelings of confidence about our salvation need to be tested before they are trusted. - J. I. Packer

The assurance that we are called of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, affords a safe and secure anchorage from which no tempest can ever dislodge us. - James Philip

Where the eternal interests of the soul are concerned only a fool will give himself the benefit of the doubt. - A. W. Pink

Your Rock is Christ, and it is not the Rock which ebbs and flows, but your sea. - Samuel Rutherford

Assurance ... enables a child of God 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. - J. C. Ryle

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. - J. C. Ryle

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope! - J. C. Ryle

Assurance of hope is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, and beauty. - J. C. Ryle

No less a person than God is needed to assure us of God's love. - Richard Sibbes

Christians should never rest until the soul evidences that it is the Lord's ... While our interest in his favour is doubtful, what happiness can we enjoy? - Charles Simeon

Our assurance is only as strong as our faith. - R. C. Sproul

Assurance is a jewel for worth but not for rarity. - C. H. Spurgeon

Assurance of faith can never come by the works of the law. It is an evangelical virtue, and can only reach us in a gospel way. - C. H. Spurgeon

Faith saves us, but assurance satisfies us. - C. H. Spurgeon

Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to satisfaction. - C. H. Spurgeon

No believer should be content with hoping and trusting, he should ask the Lord to lead him on to full assurance, so that matters of hope may become matters of certainty. - C. H. Spurgeon

We count it no presumption to say that we are saved, for the Word of God has told us so in those places where salvation is promised to faith in Christ. The presumption would lie in doubting the Word of God. - C. H. Spurgeon

If the priesthood of all believers is the first fruit of justification, 'assurance' is the second. - John R. W. Stott

A letter may be written, when it is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, and the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it. - Thomas Watson

Faith will make us walk, but assurance will make us run. - Thomas Watson

Sanctification is the seed; assurance is the flower which grows out of it. - Thomas Watson

The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of the heart. - Thomas Watson

The inward witness, son, the inward witness; that is proof, the strongest proof of Christianity. - Samuel Wesley

ASSURANCE DEVOTIONALS

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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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 settled it for Billy. He simply believed 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](#))

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 (1 John 2:2,4; 2:15; 5:1), loving the brethren (1 John 3:14, 18, 19, 4:7-8), and obeying Christ's commandments (1 John 2:3-5).

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 ; 2Cor 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. 1Cor 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 (2Cor 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](#))

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Thomas Brooks, 1667

A serious discourse concerning a well-grounded assurance. Assurance has amazing transforming powers. It changes iron to gold, ignominies to crowns, and all sufferings to delights!

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- EXCERPT FROM INTRODUCTION - [CLICK FOR FULL BOOKLET](#)

It's a heartache to me as a pastor to realize that so many Christians lack the assurance of their salvation. They lack the confidence that their sins are truly forgiven and that their place in heaven is eternally secured.

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 forever; [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](#), p. 11).

It doesn't have to be that way. The apostle Peter said, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2 Peter 1:10, emphasis added). The prophet Isaiah said, "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever" (Isaiah 32:17). Where God grants righteousness, He also adds peace and assurance.

It's true that someone can be saved and doubt it. One may go to heaven in a mist, not knowing for sure he's going, but that's certainly not the way to enjoy the trip.

Incorrect Assumptions About Salvation

All of us as Christians have times when doubt makes us question if we're saved. For some, those times are but fleeting moments; for some, they last a long time; and for others, they seem like a way of life. Before we explore the reasons so many Christians lack assurance, there are two issues we need to consider.

Undeserved Assurance

Some people have assurance who have no right to it. The old slave spiritual put it simply: "Everybody talkin' about heaven ain't going there." Some feel all is well between them and God when it isn't. They don't understand the truth about salvation and their own spiritual condition.

People often ask me why I speak so frequently about salvation and spiritual self-examination. It's because Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you'" (Matthew 7:21-23). Many people are deceived about their salvation. That's why the apostle Paul said, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

How did those people get their false assurance? By receiving false information about salvation. Much of our modern-day evangelism contributes to that through what I call "syllogistic assurance."

A [syllogism](#) has a major premise and a minor premise that lead to a conclusion. Let's consider John 1:12: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."

The major premise: anyone who receives Jesus becomes God's child.

The minor premise: the person you just witnessed to received Christ.

Conclusion: the person must now be a child of God.

That seems logical, but the problem is, you don't know whether the minor premise is true—whether the person truly received Christ. Beware of trying to assure people of their salvation based on an untested profession. Assurance is the reward of tested and proven faith. It is the Holy Spirit who gives it, not a human being.

Undermined Assurance

Another preliminary issue you need to be aware of is that some think no one has the right to assurance—not even a true Christian. They think it's presumptuous to think you can be spiritually secure. That's the historic Arminian view. It asserts that if a person thought he was secure forever, he would do whatever he wanted and

be spiritually negligent.

That is also the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council of Trent in the mid-1500s declared it anathema to say "that a man who is born again and justified is bound [of faith] to believe that he is certainly in the number of the predestined" (can. 15 on justification). Modern Catholic teaching upholds that position.

G.C. Berkhouwer's [The Conflict with Rome](#) explains that Rome's denial of the assurance of salvation is consistent with its conception of the nature of salvation (pp. 118-19). Since it conceives of salvation as a joint effort by man and God, something that's maintained through the doing of good works, it concludes the believer can never be absolutely sure of his or her salvation. Why? Because if my salvation depends on God and me, I might mess up.

When you have man involved in salvation, whether through Arminian or Roman Catholic theology, there can be no security because man can default. But historic biblical theology declares that salvation is entirely the work of God, which leads to the concomitant doctrines of security and assurance.

With that understanding, let's get back to our basic question, Why do people lack assurance? One obvious reason is that some aren't saved, but let's go beyond that. Why do Christians lack assurance? There are eight basic reasons.

Eight Reasons for Shaken Assurance

(NOTE: To see explanations of each reason below read the excellent article [A Believer's Assurance](#))

1. Strong Preaching
2. Guilt
3. Ignorance
4. Uncertainty
5. Temptation
6. Trials
7. Fleshliness
8. Disobedience

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 **Wendell G. Johnston**

THE WEALTHY YOUNG RULER who talked with Jesus seemingly had everything except the assurance of eternal life. This lack of assurance was reflected in the question he asked Jesus: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18). The text gives no indication that the man was insincere or seeking to trap Jesus. In fact Mark recorded the Lord's favorable response to him: "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21). The man had done what he thought was required to obtain eternal life, but he wanted to be sure he hadn't overlooked something. The Lord's words were not reassuring. They revealed that the young man had a deeper problem: His trust was in his money and thus his faith was defective. Heeding the invitation to follow Christ would have been the step of faith needed for salvation and the assurance of eternal life he sought.

Salvation is a gift of God and cannot be earned or acquired by human effort. It must be received by faith. Assurance is one's understanding and conviction of the supernatural work of God through the death and resurrection of Christ that declares a believing sinner righteous and imparts eternal life, which transaction can never be rescinded.

Since assurance has a strong subjective element, lack of assurance can cause uncertainty, emotional anguish, or despair. The basis of assurance is objective; however, it is possible for a person to be a genuine believer and yet lack a sense of assurance. Sometimes a specific sin may cause a believer to doubt his salvation. Often lack of assurance stems from the failure to take into account what the Bible teaches about salvation and to accept what God has said in His Word about sin and forgiveness.

Assurance of salvation is based on the character of God and His Word. He can be trusted regardless of the circumstances or issues involved. Jesus said that anyone who believes on Him has eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47). Thus the moment a person places his or her faith in Jesus Christ, that individual can be assured right then that he or she possesses eternal life. Since Jesus' words are the basis of this assurance, a person doesn't need to wait till a later time to base assurance of salvation on his or her works.

The apostle Paul wrote that God remains true and His Word certain even if people are false and unfaithful (Rom. 3:3-4). Salvation is of the Lord, available only through the supernatural work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because God does the saving, the forgiving, and the imparting of eternal life, salvation is much more objective than subjective. God is faithful, His Word is true, His ways are perfect, and His salvation is sure. The entire Godhead is involved in assurance, since God, who gave His Son to die for us, sent His Spirit to dwell in our lives, and the Spirit testifies to the truth that we are His children (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6).

The ministry of the risen Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest is one of the major themes in the Book of Hebrews. The writer declared that Jesus by His once-for-all sacrifice for our sins "has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb. 10:14). This objective truth has subjective implications. Believers are encouraged to draw near to God with sincere hearts with complete or full assurance because God has provided relief from their guilty consciences (Heb 10:22).

Assurance is one of the themes in 1 John. The apostle John explained the objective reality of this assurance with the words, "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" (1 John 5:11-12). John then declared that these things were written so that those who believe in Christ may know that they have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13). This objective fact has subjective and practical ramifications. Our prayer life is a daily reminder of our relationship with God and adds to the assurance that we belong to Him (1 Jn 5:14-15).

The love believers have for each other witnesses to the reality that they belong to the truth and it "sets our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us" (1 Jn 3:18-19). John allowed for the fact that Christians do not always know the motive of their hearts, and so he wrote that "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 Jn 3:20). This combination of subjective and practical assurance finds its ultimate reality in the character of God who knows the inner depths of our hearts. (Source - [Theological Wordbook](#) - excellent resource)

Live each day with the reality that your sins have been forgiven
and that nothing can separate you from the love of God

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 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 righteousness? "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+).

"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).

"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+).

"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; 2 Ti 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, 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

"For 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 those who love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

In these words you see the apostle Paul looking three ways—downwards, backwards, forward. Downwards to the grave, backwards to his own ministry, forward to that great day, the day of judgment. Let us stand by his side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul among us who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke.

1. He looks downwards 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 horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head. 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 which fasten me to the shore, and I shall begin my voyage.

Brethren, 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 draw near to it ourselves. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening idea, and it is vain to pretend it is not; 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."

2. Let us listen to him again.

He looks backwards, 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 staked out for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, and have at length reached 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 notions, 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.

Brethren, that Christian is happy who, as he leaves this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man, wash away no sin, lift us not one inch towards heaven. Yet a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedsides in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in Pilgrim's Progress, which describes old Honest's passage over the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places—but Mr. Honest in his lifetime 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.

3. 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 those who love His appearing." 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 besides me who have loved Him as an unseen Savior, and longed to see Him face to face. My work is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

You see, brethren, he speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing, as his own already. He declares his belief that the righteous Judge will give it to him, with an unfaltering confidence. Paul was no stranger to all the circumstances and accompaniments of that great day to which he referred. The great white throne, the assembled world, the opened books, the revealing of all secrets, the listening angels, the solemn sentence, the eternal separation, all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His faith overleaped them all, and only saw Christ, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," says he, "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. I shall therefore 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, 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 delicate 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.

Now, there are just four things which I wish to bring before you, and it may perhaps 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 said, an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul here expresses, is not a mere imagine or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits or a lively temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Spirit, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ should 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 lay it down deliberately that a true Christian or converted man may reach that comfortable degree of faith, that in general he shall feel confident as to the safety and forgiveness of his own soul, shall seldom be troubled with doubts, seldom be distracted with hesitations, seldom be distressed with anxious questionings, seldom be alarmed about his own state. He may have many an inward conflict with sin—but he shall look forward to death, like Paul, without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.

Such is my account of assurance. Mark it well. I say neither less nor more.

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

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured tones. The Council of Trent declares roundly that "a believer's assurance of the pardon of his sin is a vain and ungodly confidence"; and Cardinal Bellarmine, their well-known champion, calls it a "prime error of heretics."

The great majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them. 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. They shrink from it as a notion fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous fools who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scripture warrant. There always are some who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of their own case when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses, impositions and counterfeits. Weeds will grow as well as wheat in rich ground. There will be fanatics as long as the world stands. But for all this, an assured hope is a real and true thing. My answer to all who deny the existence of real well-grounded assurance is simply this, "Look at Scripture." If assurance be not there I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, "I KNOW that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4)

Does not Isaiah say, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3) and again, "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa 32:17)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16) and to the Corinthians, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God" (2 Cor. 5:1) and 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 Tim. 1:12) And does He not speak to the Colossians of the "full assurance of understanding" (Col. 2:2), and to the Hebrews of the "full assurance of faith and of hope" (Heb. 6:11, 10:22)

Does not Peter expressly say, "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 "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God: that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13), "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 John 5:19)

Brethren, I desire to speak with all humility on every 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 quoted I see something far higher than the mere "hopes," and "wishes," where so many appear content to stop. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge, nay, I might almost say of certainty—and I feel for my own part, if I may take the Scriptures in their plain obvious meaning, assurance is true.

But my answer furthermore to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this. It cannot be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of John and of Job. 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 by no means incompatible, and for this simple reason, if for no other, the charge of presumption falls to the ground.

My answer furthermore is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern days. Many have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left on record their experience. I could mention well-known names in proof of this, if time permitted. The thing has been, and is, and that is enough.

My answer lastly is, it cannot be wrong to feel confident in a matter where God speaks unconditionally, to believe decidedly when God speaks decidedly, to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when one rests 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 Scriptures of truth, and on the Mediator of the new covenant. He believes the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His word. Assurance is, after all, no more than a full-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands; a faith that argues like the good centurion—"If you only speak the word Lord, I shall be healed."

Depend on it, Paul was the last man in the world to build his assured hope on anything of his own. He, who wrote himself down chief of sinners, 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. He had a clear view of the fountain of evil within him—but then he had a still clearer view of that other fountain which removes all uncleanness. He had a lively feeling of his own weakness—but he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "They shall never perish," would never be broken. He knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor frail bark traversing 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 so had hope. He remembered that anchor within the veil, sure and steadfast. He remembered the word and work and intercession of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me; the Lord shall give it to me; the Lord will preserve me; I shall never be confounded."

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 fully. 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 you have no part or lot in Christ except you feel assurance. To have saving faith is one thing: to have an assured hope like the apostle Paul's is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different view. But I desire to call no man master. For my own part, I should think any other view than that I have given, a most uncomfortable gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep men back a long time from the gate of life.

I shrink not from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ, really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him, really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet never, to his last day, be free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

"A letter," says old Watson, "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 fullness of his possession. 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, never know the real privilege of his inheritance.

Do not therefore, my brethren, mistake my meaning. Do not do me the injustice to say I told you none were saved except such as could say, like Paul, "I know and I am persuaded, there is a crown laid up for me."

I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind. Faith in Christ a man must have. This is the one door. Without faith no man can be saved—that is certain. A man must feel his sins and lost estate, must come to Christ for salvation, must rest his hope on this alone. But if he has only faith to do this, however weak that faith may be, I will engage he will not miss heaven. Yes! though his 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 justification there are none.

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no assurance of his acceptance with God. He may have fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt, 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 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 harbor—but I will not engage he does not reach the shore weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely knowing himself that he is safe.

Brethren, 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 never have the flower. Faith is that poor trembling woman, who came behind Jesus in the press, and touched the hem of His garment; 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." Faith is the penitent thief crying, "Lord, remember me"; assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink, "Lord, save me"; assurance is that same Peter declaring before the council, "There is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved; we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." Faith is the still small voice, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief"; assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? who is he who condemns?" Faith is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone; 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."

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

Brethren, it is not a question of saved or not saved—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 class and the highest class. He who has faith does well. Happy would I feel, if I thought you all had it. Blessed, thrice blessed, are those who believe: they are safe; they are washed; they are justified; they are beyond the power of hell. But he who has assurance does far better, sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy, the days of heaven upon earth.

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 us begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting, die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist. It would ill become me to speak slightly of "hopes" and "wishes," but I fear many of us sit down content with them and go no further. I would like to see fewer "doubting babes" in the Lord's family, and more who could say "I know, and am persuaded." Oh! that you would all covet the best gifts, and not be content with less. You miss the full tide of blessedness the gospel was meant to convey. You keep yourselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while your Lord is saying, "Eat and drink, O beloved, that your joy may be full."

1. Know then, for one thing, that assurance is a thing to be desired, because of the present joy and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have great power to mar the comfort of a true believer. 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. Now so long as a believer cannot get beyond "I hope and I wish," he manifestly feels a certain degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much: he says "I hope" because he dare not say "I know."

Assurance, my brethren, goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and mightily ministers to comfort. It gives him joy and peace in believing. It makes him patient in tribulation, contented in trial, calm in affliction, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places on which he travels, it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him feel as if he had something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hand, a sure Friend by the way and a sure home in the end. He feels that the great business of life is a settled business—debt, disaster, work, and all other business is by comparison small. 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 can never be taken away." Assurance will support a man in sickness, make all his bed, smooth his pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house of this tabernacle fail, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . I desire to depart and be with Christ. My flesh and my heart may fail—but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

He who has assured hope can sing in prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. Assurance can give songs in the night. He can sleep with the full prospect of execution on the next day, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. Assurance says, "I will lay me down and take my rest, for you, Lord, make me dwell in safety." He can rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the apostles did. Assurance says, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad—there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He can meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in olden time, and Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer and Taylor in our own land. Assurance says, "Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. Lord Jesus, into Your hand I commend my spirit."

Ah, brethren, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a great point, depend upon it, and never will you think it so great as when your turn comes to die. In that solemn hour there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of assurance, whatever they may have thought about it in their lives; general hopes and trusts are all very well to live upon—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 to cross alone. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are in departing, there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book's Visitation of the Sick. "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all those who put their trust in Him, be now and evermore your defense, and make you know and feel that there is no other name under heaven through whom you may receive health and salvation—but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The compilers showed great wisdom there: they saw that when the eyes grow dim and the heart grows faint, there must be knowing and feeling what Christ has done for us if there is to be perfect peace.

2. Let me name another thing. Assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active, useful 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 daresay—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. He will be full of his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find that 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 covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Savior, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the Lord's work, and so in the long run to do more.

Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in Australia or New Zealand. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument, let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs forever, 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 labor at it day after day without intermission or cessation. Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and repeatedly going 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 diligently work on; the other shall never feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney 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 under tillage, have the best crops to show? You all know as well as I do—I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply.

Brethren, so will it be in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought them as the believer who sees that title clear. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Your salvation . . . then will I teach transgressors Your ways." Never were there such working Christians as the apostles. They seemed to live to labor: Christ's work was their food and drink. They counted not their lives dear; they spent and were spent; they laid down health, ease, worldly comfort at the foot of the cross. And one cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who said, "We know that we are of God."

3. Let me name another thing. 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 disease, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and an 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 a hope that they are God's children, and have 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 to that place? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and entertainments? Are we never to dance, never to play at cards, never to attend pleasure parties?" These are questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of this perplexity is that they do not feel assured that they themselves are 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 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 until you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often just turns the scale, and leads on to some wretched conformity to the world.

Brethren, I verily believe you have here one reason why so many are inconsistent, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so they feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not confident they have put on the new. Depend upon it, one secret of halting between two opinions is want of assurance.

4. Let me name one thing more. Assurance is to be desired because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This, too, sounds wonderful and amazing—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 is a fact. Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He who is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he who has the fullest

assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in the first Epistle of John, "Every man who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure."

None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over their heart and life, 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 inconsistencies. He who goes a journey and has little money to lose, takes little thought of danger, and cares not how late he travels in a dangerous country. He who carries gold and jewels, on the contrary, will be a cautious traveler: he will look well to his road, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed comfort, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Beloved brethren, would you have great peace? Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus drawing near to your soul, and saying, "I am your salvation"? Would you be useful in your day and generation? Would you be known of all as bold, firm, decided, single-eyed followers of Christ? Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy? "Ah!" you will some of you say, "these are the very things we desire: we long for them, we pant after them—but they seem far from us."

Then take my advice this day. Seek an assured hope, like Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed; I am persuaded that He is mine and I am His."

You have many of you tried the ways and methods, and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Begin with assurance. Lay aside your doubts. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul and your sins upon your gracious Savior. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.

IV. I come to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

This, brethren, is a very serious question, and ought to raise in us all great searchings of heart. Few certainly of all the sheep of Christ ever seem to reach 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 our text.

Now, why is this so? Why is a thing which Peter enjoins as a positive duty a thing of which few believers have an 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 some men's natural temperament which makes assurance not good for them. Perhaps 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 common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are in many minds insensibly confused together. They receive the gospel truth that there must be something done in us, as well as something done for us, if we are true believers; and so far they are right. But then, without being aware of it perhaps, they seem to imbibe the erroneous idea, that this justification is in some degree affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work and not their own work, either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly, alone is the ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely outside of us, and nothing is needful on our part but simple faith, and that the weakest believer is as fully justified as the strongest. They appear to forget sometimes that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only as 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 always to the very last. They seem, too, to expect that a believer may some time in his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelical state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something wrong, go mourning all their days, and are oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ.

My dear brethren, if you or any believing soul here desires assurance and has not got it, go and ask yourself first of all if you are sound in the faith, if you are thoroughly girt about with truth, and your eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification.

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, I am afraid, is slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point. Many appear to me to think that, once converted, they have little more to attend to—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 imagine that grace is given to them, that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given to be used and employed, like a talent. Such people 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 do-little condition of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

Brethren, you must always remember there is an inseparable connection between assurance and diligence. "Give diligence," says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." "I desire," says Paul, "that everyone of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." "It is the diligent soul," says the Proverb, "that shall be made fat." There is much truth in the maxim of the Puritans, "Saving faith comes by hearing—but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

3. Another common cause 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. Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of great peace of heart. The two things are incompatible. They cannot go together. If you must keep your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up, if you shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye when required, I will engage you shall 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 profession—all these make up a sure recipe for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul. It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your pardon and peace, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin whether great or small. One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart, will poison all your springs of comfort.

I bless God our salvation in no sense depends on our own works. "By grace are we saved;" not by works of righteousness that we have done, through faith, without the deed 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—but you will not be able to see its brightness and enjoy its warmth. It is in the path of well-doing that assurance will come down and meet you. "The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with those who fear Him." "Great peace have those who love your law: and nothing shall cause them to stumble." "To him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Paul was a man who exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man; he could say boldly, "I have fought a good fight, . . . I have kept the faith." I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add confidently, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Brethren, I commend the three points I have just named to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth thinking over, and I advise every believer present who lacks assurance to do it. And may the Lord give him understanding in this and all things.

And now, brethren, in closing this sermon, let me speak first to those among you who have not yet believed, have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part and followed Christ. See, then, my dear friends, from this subject the real privilege of a true Christian. Do not judge the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. Do not judge the comforts of His kingdom by the measure to which many of His subjects attain. Alas! we are many 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 lifetime. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us, alas! eat but little of it, and continue weak.

And why should not you enter in and share our privileges? Why should not you come with us and sit down by our side? What can the world give you, after all, which will bear comparison with the hope of the least member of the family of Christ? Truly the weakest child of God has got more durable riches in his hand, than the wealthiest man of the world that ever breathed. Oh! but I feel deeply for you in these days, if ever I did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth and whose hopes are this side the grave. Yes! when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundations; when I see property dependent on public confidence melting like snow in spring, when I see stocks and shares and funds losing their value, I do feel deeply for those who have no better portion, no place in a kingdom that cannot be removed.

Take the advice of a minister of Christ. Seek a treasure that cannot be taken from you; seek a city which has lasting foundations. Do as the apostle Paul did. Give yourself to Christ, and seek an incorruptible crown that fades not away. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ 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 this world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but Christ can fill.

Lastly, let me turn to all believers here present and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel. For one thing, resolve this day to seek after an assured hope, if you do not feel you have got it. Believe, me, believe me, it is worth the seeking. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things! Seek to know that you have a title, good and solid and not to be overthrown. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? Paul never saw

the book of life; and yet Paul says "I know and am persuaded." Go home and pray for an increase of faith. Cultivate that blessed root more, and then by God's blessing you shall have the flower.

For another thing, be not surprised if you do not attain assurance all at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. Joseph waited long for deliverance from prison—but it came at length. For another thing, be not surprised at occasional doubts after you have got assurance. No morning sun lasts all the day. There is a devil, and a strong devil too, and he will take care you know it. You must not forget you are on earth and not in heaven. Some doubt there always will be. He who never doubts has nothing to lose. He who never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He who is never jealous knows little of deep love.

And finally do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost. Oh! it is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So take care. David lost it. Peter lost it. Each found it again—but not until after bitter tears. Quench not the Spirit; grieve Him not; vex Him not. Drive Him not to a distance by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies will bring in a distance between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. The nearest walker with God will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope!

The Doctrine of Assurance

Herbert Lockyer

- Source - [All the Doctrines of the Bible](#) - excellent overview

As assurance is the spiritual birthright of every believer, it is their privilege and duty to experience and enjoy such an inner possession. Webster defines "assurance" as meaning a pledge or guarantee: the state of being sure or certain: insure against risk: security, certitude, confidence. In the realm of salvation, the word "assurance," occurring six times in the Bible, means full of confidence, and expresses the guarantee the believer has that he is forever secure. As Dr. C. I. Scofield expresses it, "Assurance is the believer's full conviction that, through the work of Christ alone, received by faith, he is in possession of a salvation in which he will be eternally kept. And this assurance rests only upon the Scripture promises to him who believes." The Biblical statement of this vital Bible truth is given by Isaiah—

The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.

This assurance of salvation is plainly written over the pages of the New Testament. Christ and His apostles lived in the air of certainty. Doubt in a regenerated heart is everywhere condemned. The epistles glow with the truth that we may know we possess salvation. They present a tenor of joy in a present experience, but the tragedy is that while all who are saved have the right to assurance, all do not experience it. As a letter can be written, and yet not sealed, so grace may be written within the heart, but faith is not strong enough to set the seal of assurance to the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit. Faith in the heart, however, should appear in the fruit of assurance.

Many lack assurance through dependence upon their feelings. But it is amazing to discover that the Bible maintains a profound silence on feelings. The Concordance shows that the word is used only twice in the Word, and in neither case is it employed in connection with our salvation. In Ephesians 4:19 the word describes a Christ-rejecting and hardened sinner. In Hebrews 4:15 the word denotes Christ's feeling or His power to sympathize. The word "feel" is found in six places, but in no instance is it related to a true Christian experience. Our salvation rests, not upon fluctuating and fitful feelings, but upon the unassailable facts the Scriptures present.

Saving faith directs attention away from self to the Saviour. The Bible does not say, "He that feeleth good, or feeleth bad, shall be saved," but "he that believeth." We are not left to pump dry hearts and bring up feelings, but are to have thoughts wholly occupied with Christ and His finished work on our behalf. We must hasten to say that it is not our experience or even our faith that saves, but Christ alone. He, alone, is the ground of our salvation and certainty. Whatever our changing feelings, our minds must be wholly stayed on the Lord. It was Faber who taught us to sing—

These surface troubles come and go,
Like ruffles of the sea;
The deeper depth is out of reach,
To all, my God, but Thee.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the Bible teaches the truth that all who are regenerated by the Spirit can be absolutely certain of their standing in grace. All who have accepted Christ as Saviour are saved, but a few timid souls probe their feelings, practicing psychoanalysis. With them it is, "I hope so"; "maybe"; "Perhaps so," while it should be "I know so"; "Have"; "Is"; "You have." This is a profound assurance, of which John wrote:

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 (I John 5:13).

There can be no assurance within unless there is the acceptance of the direct testimony of the Word of God. Such an assurance is not a mere mental assent to the veracity of scriptural statements, but an inner light, produced by believing God. Assurance is no vocal or audible voice or the revelation of an angel, but a condition of being secure, the willingness to take God at His word.

Assurance is the mental and spiritual certainty of sins forgiven, of justification before God, of the possession of eternal life. Uncertainty regarding these facts breeds doubt and fear. But when with confidence we can say with Paul, "... 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" (II Timothy 1:12), all doubt is excluded. Assurance is a birthright we must preserve and never forfeit. We must "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6, 14). Such confidence must never be "cast away" (Hebrews 10:35). When Peter took his eyes off Christ and looked at the waves, he began to sink.

The Source of Assurance

Full assurance rests upon unassailable and unchanging Bible facts. An objective source of our assurance are the unconditional promises of God like John 6:37; 10:27, 28; Romans 8:31-39. True assurance is built upon a scriptural foundation.

In the first epistle of John, the word translated know occurs 42 times, and should be sufficient to stay all doubts as to the certainty of salvation. What peace of mind a doubting, fearing believer forfeits if he is uncertain whether he is a real believer. Assurance comes through the acceptance of divine promises. Jesus declared that all receiving Him as Saviour will never perish (John 10:28). To doubt His affirmation is to make Him a liar. Paul says that Christ is able to keep us (II Timothy 1:12); that we are—not may be—in Him; that we have been forgiven (Colossians 2:13). With all these precious facts and promises, how sad it is to encounter many believers tossed about on the troubled sea of uncertainty and insecurity. What God begins, He will complete (Philippians 1:6). Faith in what the Bible declares produces a harvest of assurance.

Another source of assurance is the completeness of Christ's atoning work. "It is finished" (John 19:30); "Purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:3). Dr. R. A. Torrey once wrote, "It is the blood of Christ that makes us safe; it is the Word of God that makes us sure."

Full assurance also rests upon the intercessory work of Christ, who is "able to succour" and also able to "save to the uttermost" (Hebrews 2:18; 7:25). God's own nature, imparted to the believer in the hour of assurance. Christ becomes "our Life" (Colossians 3:4). By faith, through grace, we become partakers of a divine nature (II Peter 1:4; I Peter 1:23).

Further, assurance springs from righteousness, not our own, but the Lord's (Isaiah 32:17). Many are confident that all is well because of their own morality. But their assurance is false, seeing all their righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight. Only divine righteousness can avail on our behalf, and when clothed with it, a blessed assurance becomes ours. Assurance rests not upon what we are in ourselves, but upon what we have become in Christ (Hebrews 12:2, margin).

The inner witness of the Spirit is likewise a contributing factor to our assurance. The Holy Spirit is a voice of divine assurance (I John 4:13). Thus, the sources of assurance are external and internal. The Spirit within us, who inspired the Word, creates assurance in all it declares concerning our relationship to God. While the assurance of salvation is a subjective experience, it results in the inner consciousness and confidence that all is well between the soul and God. Assurance of an eternal salvation is based on understanding (John 20:31; Colossians 2:2; I John 5:13, 20). Assurance is an intellectual process whereby the mind is enabled by the Spirit to accept revealed truth, resulting in an emotional state, or a deep soul satisfaction. John Wesley wrote of assurance as

an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God: that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me: and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

Assurance, then, comes as the fruit of a Spirit-inspired faith in divine facts. We recognize that many who lack this assurance are as truly saved as those who are confident they are the Lord's. Those who live in doubting Castle have faith, but it is a weak faith. We disagree with Martin Luther and John Calvin, both of whom suggested that one lacking personal assurance cannot be regarded as a true believer. Faith may be weak, but it is nevertheless a genuine faith and as it blossoms into the full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22), the soul is elevated from the valley of doubt to the plateau of assurance. It is the purpose of God that all believers should possess a strong, lively faith, and it is their privilege and duty to experience same.

The Scope of Assurance

The Scriptures present the following three aspects of the believer's assurance:

1. Full Assurance of Faith (Hebrews 10:22). The believer is saved by grace through faith, and such a faith rests upon the eternal Word of the eternal God.
2. Full Assurance of Understanding (Colossians 2:2). Here we have the mental grasp of all spiritual privileges. The Spirit of understanding (Isaiah 11:2) is responsible for our mental comprehension and apprehension of truth.
3. Full Assurance of Hope (Hebrews 6:11). This aspect of assurance is related to the confidence and joy resulting from the discovery and appropriation of revealed truth. The hope assurance covers is one making the future bright with the blessed hope (Titus 2:13; I Peter 1:4, 5; I John 5:13).

Some of the facts of our faith confidently embraced by assurance are:

- Salvation (Isaiah 12:2). The fact of our salvation being not something, but Someone, produces quietness of spirit and an unshakeable confidence.
- Adoption (I John 3:2). Assurance of sonship is a most inspiring factor in life and service. As sons, we have the legitimate heritage of all that is in Christ.
- Vital Union (II Corinthians 13:5). Our loving, living, lasting union with the risen Head should result in a grateful assurance. His, forever His!
- Love for Others (I John 3:14; I John 5:1). Love for fellow believers is a striking proof that assurance is well grounded. Jealousy, bitterness and hatred never foster assurance. The absence of brotherly love, the presence of ill-will, cynicism, resentment, blast the fruit of assurance. While it is important to believe correctly if we would have assurance, it is equally important to behave correctly, if assurance is to be enjoyed.
- Holiness of Life (I John 5:18). Unconfessed, unforsaken sin can rob one of full assurance. Sympathy with sin destroys confidence. "God never pours the wine of assurance into a foul vessel." We must exercise ourselves unto all godliness (I Timothy 4:7). Holiness is the sap helping to produce the fruit of assurance.
- Contentment amidst all circumstances. Paul experienced the fact that a deep-seated assurance is the secret of contentment (II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 13:5). The apostle wrote of being sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (II Corinthians 6:10). Assurance that we are eternally the Lord's and that He loves, knows and cares, silences all murmurings against His dealings. "Assurance," an old writer has said, "is like the mariner's lantern on the deck, which gives light in a dark night. Assurance enables us to rejoice in tribulation, to discover honey in the lion's carcass, and to take joy in the spoiling of our goods."

Latimer, the martyr, wrote, "When I sit alone, and can have a settled assurance of the state of my soul, and know that God is mine, I can laugh at all troubles and nothing can daunt me."

Peace of Soul (Ephesians 2:13, 14). The devil rocks men in the cradle of a false peace (Isaiah 57:21). To be saved and to be sure we are saved creates a peace passing all understanding. True peace is the sister of assurance, and springs from our union with Christ and constant submission to Him. Unfortunately, not all believers experience this deep, settled peace. They have the title to it, and the ground of it in their relation to Christ. Grace made them His, and they have the seed of peace within, but lack of obedience or full understanding of their position prevent the blooming of the flower of peace.

When peaceful assurance is ours, we have God's smile, and mount up with wings as eagles in the exercise of Christian service. "Assurance will be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock to set all the wheels of obedience running." Such assurance forms the first fruits of Paradise. How can a bride be happy if doubts validate her marriage? Commenting on the Christian graces, Paul speaks of as being the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), William Pope says, "The clearer these graces shine forth, and the more abundant they are, the greater will be the measure of assurance which they gender in the heart."

Witness among the Lost (I Thessalonians 1:5). Unless we have complete assurance within, there will not be convincing boldness as we witness for Christ among the unsaved. Paul possessed unwavering faith in his own salvation, hence his dynamic witness (Acts 28:31). If a believer has doubt as to his eternal salvation, how can he recommend it to others? As a gardener improves the quality of his fruit, we can improve the quality of our assurance, by telling others of all we find in Christ, telling the lost how He unlocked for us the secrets of free grace, causing them to yearn for the delights of His love. While Paul possessed the pearl of assurance, he did not boast of it. He thought of himself as being less than the least of all saints (Ephesians 3:8). Indifference to the need of our fellow men prevents assurance from budding (I John 3:17).

The Pauline assurance was not presumption. There are those who affirm that to declare we can know we are saved and safe for heaven is mere assumption. But both Paul and John could say, with all humility, "I know." There is, of course, a distinction between true assurance and presumption. Assurance comes from faith in God's Word, and His accomplishments on our behalf. Presumption is the forbidden fruit of self-confidence in our own possessions and attainments. No man has the jewel of assurance who does not

abhor the works of the flesh. Assurance is associated with true humility, while presumption is the other face of pride. Presumption estranges God from the soul. "The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of a humble heart."

Assurance can be cultivated by believing all God says (1 John 2:23; 5:2; 5:14), by Bible study, by prayer, and by desiring all the things of the Spirit. Lack of love for the Word and ignorance of the indwelling presence of the Spirit hinders assurance. Assurance is also strengthened as we scorn the garlic and onions of Egypt, sitting loose to the things of earth, and longing after the joys of heaven. Having assurance of our title to the realms of bliss, we should certainly long to be there.

Too many of the saints of God lack full assurance. They suffer themselves to be chained by fear and doubt. Possibly they are religious, but not regenerated. Theirs has never been the full commitment to the Saviour. No one can know if they are saved, unless they are prepared to be fully saved.

Others lack assurance simply because they are unwilling to carry out the known will of God. Obedience to all He reveals results in an assurance nothing can disturb. The absence of assurance means the presence of doubt. Modernism is responsible for the destruction of faith in the supernatural, and therefore stands condemned as the blatant destroyer of assurance.

There are some timid souls, smitten with an inferiority complex, in whom their failures and shortcomings create a feeling of inferiority and they deem themselves utterly inadequate to witness for Christ. Such an unwholesome attitude damages assurance.

Others allow their trials to produce an eclipse of their assurance. At one time David confessed, "Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes" (Psalm 26:3). Contrast this with his question, "Lord, where are Thy former lovingkindnesses?" (Psalm 89:49).

God desires His children to have a sky without a sunset, or the uninterrupted assurance of His provision and protection. But if we doubt His providential care, how can we approach Him with confidence?

[Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!](#)

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

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