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Can Christians know that they are saved forever from hell and God's judgment? Can they possess the assurance that they will never face the expression of God's righteous wrath and justice against sin and sinners? Can Christians come to the place where they no longer doubt their salvation? The Bible says we can definitely know that we are saved and secure through the work of Jesus Christ. We don't have to second-guess God's grace and the promise that He gives to His children regarding eternal life and salvation. When people come to know Christ as their Savior, they are brought into a relationship with God that guarantees their salvation as eternally secure.

Primary Assurance

Christians must always remember that the PRIMARY place to find assurance for their salvation is in Christ's finished work on the cross. Christ's saving work also extends to His resurrection and ascension ministry, which looks back and reconfirms Christ's work on the cross, as being sufficient to save us forever. If you want to be sure that you are saved, then you must look to the only One (Jesus) who can save you. Therefore, our assurance must originate from the foot of the cross but it must extend into the throne room of Heaven itself, where the risen Christ is interceding on behalf of every one of His children.

Isaiah 45:22

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else.*"

John 3:14-15

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (on the cross): That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The people had to look at the serpent on the pole in the wilderness (a sign of their sin and judgment). In a similar way, we must look to Christ on the cross for our assurance who through the act of imputation became a sin offering for us and took our judgment (2 Cor. 5:21). Looking is a synonym for faith. Where you are looking will determine whether or not you have assurance of salvation. If you look ONLY to Christ and His finished work, what He has done for you on the cross and is doing for you today in Heaven, then you will never doubt your salvation.

Looking at the Cross



In order to obtain assurance, we must LOOK at Christ's sufferings, the shedding of His blood and death upon the cross. Christ's death is the first part of the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:3-4) and the Bible speaks of the "hope of the gospel" (Co. 1:23) which is the assurance of being delivered from the penalty of our sins and possessing eternal life. It is the cross that provides us with total forgiveness of all our sins (past, present, and future sins) before God's throne (Ephesians 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 8:12; 10:17) and gives to us a perfect standing of righteousness in God's presence (Romans 5:8). This is called positional forgiveness and justification (righteousness) that we possess before the very throne of God! This NEVER changes. How can it change?

Think about this. If our forgiveness and righteous position before God's throne would vary or change then Christ would have died in vain, His death on the cross would have been powerless to save us, and the resurrection of Christ would be meaningless. Our STATE in our Christian life may change and vary but our STANDING in Christ never changes. Once you understand this, you can never doubt your salvation again!

Romans 5:1-2 gives us this reassurance:

"Therefore being justified (declared legally righteous before God) by faith (faith in Jesus Christ), we have peace with God (peaceful relations before God – instead of experiencing God's wrath we now have God's favor) through our Lord Jesus Christ (His sacrifice upon the cross): By whom also we have access (access inside God's throne room within Heaven) by faith (belief in Christ) into this grace wherein we stand (a permanent position of legal acceptance before God's throne through

Christ's gracious and saving provision), and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (the confidence of seeing God someday and sharing in His glory).

The Bible teaches that we can know that we have "access" into God's presence which means that we can experience an indescribable position of favor with God before His holy presence. This access comes to us "by faith" which means that we have this position on the basis of the faith that we have placed in Jesus Christ to be our Savior. Of course, we possess the assurance of salvation when we continue to believe that Christ's death has provided us with full acceptance before the Father's throne in Heaven. Our acceptance before God is based upon grace (God's unmerited favor and kindness). The phrase "into this grace wherein we stand" is referring to the sphere or circle of God's grace in which every believer is pictured as safely standing. It's a legal position of safety and security. If we are surrounded by God's grace on every side, this connotes safety and brings assurance to our hearts regarding our salvation.

If we are standing in grace (Rom. 5:2), surrounded or encircled by God's grace, it means that every child of God has received a permanent position of legal acceptance before God's throne based upon Christ's sacrificial sufferings and death upon the cross, which grants to them an unchanging positional forgiveness and justification (a righteousness standing) before God. This means that God will never again express His righteous anger against us. We never again must fear the judgment of hell. God accepts us unconditionally and forever because we stand in the circle of His grace. This should bring assurance to our heart that we are saved and secure forever.



All of this means that the sins we commit as a Christian do not cause us to lose our salvation. This is because Christ has already paid the price of judgment for each one of these sins (1 Cor. 15:3). As a result of Christ's sacrifice, He has also provided each one of us with positional forgiveness and justification (a righteous standing) before God's throne (1 John 2:12). In essence, we stand in grace, which means that we have received a permanent position of legal forgiveness, righteousness, and acceptance before God's throne forever through Christ's gracious work on

Calvary's cross. Therefore, when we confess our sins to God as a Christian (1 John 1:9), we receive the necessary forgiveness to restore our *fellowship* with God on earth but there is never a need to restore our acceptance before God in Heaven. The sins that you commit as a Christian do not affect your positional forgiveness before God's throne but only your fellowship with Christ on earth.

Think of it! Every person who believes on Christ has a permanent standing in grace ("this grace wherein we stand" – 1 Pet. 5:12). They are at this very moment surrounded by grace, which means they are forgiven forever, justified forever (declared innocent and righteous in God's presence), and accepted by God forever. Our salvation is based upon grace (not our works, the condition of our life, or feelings) and therefore it is secure. We can possess the assurance that we are saved forever when we understand that we are encircled by God's grace on every side!

Someone asked Martin Luther, "Do you *feel* that you have been forgiven?" His answer was interesting.

"No, but I'm as sure as there's a God in heaven.
For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.
Though all my heart should feel condemned for want of one sweet token,
There is one, greater than my heart, whose Word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in His unchanging love, Till soul and body sever;
For though all else shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever."

We are to base our forgiveness and eternal salvation on FACTS and not FEELINGS, FAITH in Christ and not our FAILURES, Christ's PROMISE and not our PERFORMANCE. We can possess assurance of salvation only when we accept the truth about our permanent position or STANDING in grace and the Gospel ("wherein ye stand" – Christ's finished work - 1 Cor. 15:1) and not base our salvation on the STATE of our living, which often changes and varies throughout our Christian life.

When Christ died on the cross, He spoke these words: "It is finished" (John 19:30). This means the full payment for all of our sins was made to the Father. Trying to live a good life or doing the best we can never add anything to our salvation. This is because Christ paid the fine we deserved which was hell (Gal. 3:10; Rom. 3:23) and upon believing on Christ we will never have to render any payment (judgment)

for our sins. This is because Jesus finished the payment on the cross that God required for our sins when He was judged in our place!

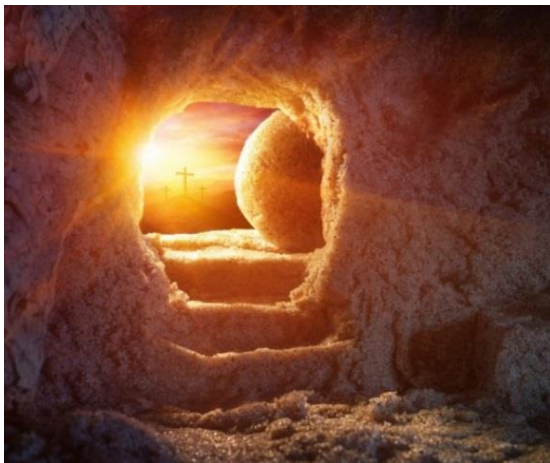
Our salvation would be subjective, speculative, and suspect if we must determine that we are saved on the basis of how good we have been or how bad we have been. Again, what is the exact ratio of goodness to badness that we must have in order to know that we are saved? We need to keep coming back to the cross and the finished work of Christ to provide us with assurance. It's still the cross, it's still His blood, it's still His sacrifice of love. This is where we find assurance. When we trust in the finished work of Christ, we will be finished with doubting our salvation!

Hebrews 2:17 declares:

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him (It was Christ’s obligation and duty) to be made like unto his brethren (humanity of Christ), that he might be a merciful (to lost humanity through the cross) and faithful (toward God and His justice) high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

Christ’s chief function as High Priest is to make “reconciliation” (propitiation or satisfaction) for the sins of His people (those who embrace Christ as Savior). To accomplish this, Christ did what no other High Priest living during the Old Testament era ever did or could do. He offered Himself as a sinless sacrifice. He willingly died in our place. So, Christ’s priestly ministry begins on the cross, where He paid the penalty or God’s judgment for all our sins, but this ministry extends into Heaven, before the Father’s throne, through His resurrection and ascension.

Looking at the Risen Christ



We must also LOOK to the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is part of the Gospel message (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Revelation 1:18 says that Jesus Christ is alive forevermore! Through Christ’s resurrection He gives us the promise and hope of eternal life (John 11:25-26). Only a living Christ can give to us eternal life! It’s the resurrection which confirms that the Father was satisfied with His Son’s sacrifice as being the sufficient payment for

all of our sins by which we are justified. This is why the Bible states that He was “raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). In His resurrection and ascension back to Heaven, Christ also became our High Priest. The understanding of being “saved by his life” (Romans 5:10) speaks of Christ’s resurrection and ascension back to the Father to become our High Priest in Heaven. Essentially, Jesus is alive today declaring before the Father that the penalty for our sins was paid on the cross, that our sin debt has been cleared in the records of Heaven, and that we are reckoned righteous in God’s presence (2 Cor. 5:21).

Christ is said to possess an unchanging priestly ministry in Heaven on the behalf of every person who has placed faith in Christ for salvation. He is “a priest for ever” (Heb. 7:21) who possesses “an unchangeable priesthood” (Heb. 7:24), and as a result of this unending priestly ministry in Heaven before the Father’s throne, we are saved forever!



Hebrews 7:25 declares:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Romans 8:33-34

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of Gods elect? *It is* God that justifieth (who declares us legally righteous in His presence forever through Christ). 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.”



“And now for me He stands,
Before the Father's throne.
He shows His wounded hands
and names me as His own.”

Through the New Covenant (Heb. 12:24), Christ’s death upon the cross ACTIVATED God’s will in relation to our salvation by providing us with complete forgiveness and righteousness, but through Christ’s resurrection and High Priestly ministry in

Heaven on our behalf, He ENFORCES God's will and makes sure it is eternally followed and kept intact. Hence, we are "saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). His resurrection and priestly ministry in Heaven GUARANTEES our eternal acceptance in God's presence. We can't be lost after we are saved since Christ saves us "to the uttermost" (completely and forever) through His High Priestly ministry. Christ's priestly ministry is the *insurance* that provides us with the *assurance* of our salvation! We cannot be condemned and never will be condemned because of what Christ had done and is doing for us today in Heaven. This is the wonder of grace!

Saved by Grace!

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."



The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace, through faith, and has nothing to do with our works, perseverance, how we live, our failures, our varying degrees of sanctification, or even our lack of sanctification. This is because our salvation is based entirely upon the work of Christ alone. Since salvation is only by grace, we can only possess the assurance of salvation through grace. This is not difficult to understand. There is no time in our Christian life when we can maintain or secure our salvation by our good works. Our salvation from start to finish is based upon God's amazing grace (Titus 2:11; 3:7). Our salvation and assurance is not dependent upon our goodness or badness.

If you think that you must do something, become something, promise something to God, stop doing something, or produce something in order to be saved, or even keep your salvation, then you have added works to grace and will never be sure that you are saved. This is because you can never know how good you must be for God to accept you, or how bad you must be before God rejects you, or what percentage of obedience you must maintain in order for God to save you.

William Pettingill once said:

"Salvation is by grace, through faith, plus nothing."

The foundation of our salvation, security, and assurance is based on God's grace. How we begin our Christian life is how we end our life – by grace! This should bring assurance to our hearts today, every day, and in the coming day when we die and enter Heaven.

“Someday the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace.”

Secondary Assurance

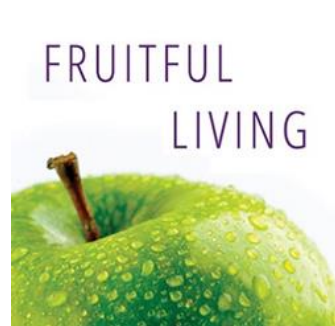


There is a SECONDARY assurance that we can receive when looking at our changed life. A born again believer will manifest a certain amount of change, transformation, and fruitfulness in his life that contrasts with his previous unsaved way of living (1 John 3:6-9; 5:18; Heb. 12:14). This means that God's children do not continually practice sin in their lives without demonstrating some

degree of fruitfulness and transformation of living. In addition to our faith in Christ, which is the primary way to KNOW that we have eternal life, we can also look at the fruit of our behavior as another determining factor that demonstrates we are truly saved and God's children.

We must remember that this secondary assurance that we receive only comes after we have already experienced assurance through placing faith in Christ, who paid the full penalty for our sins on the cross, and through having confidence in His priestly ministry in Heaven, which maintains our salvation before the Father. After we find security through Christ, we can then embrace the added assurance that comes when we see how God is sanctifying and transforming our lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22-23).

The fact that Christians do sin is not alarming to John (“And if any man sin” - 1 John 2:1). However, what is alarming is when people continue to sin without any change of behavior whatsoever and live like the devil their entire lives. It’s these type of people who give the telltale signs that they are not true believers in Jesus Christ but children of the devil (John 8:44; Eph. 2:1-2; Titus 1:16). Jesus taught this and the Bible is very clear on this matter.

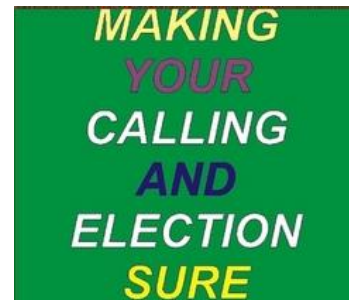


Here is the point. All Christians in some measure manifest new life and varying degrees of fruitfulness in their lives – some thirty, some sixty, and some one-hundred fold (Matt. 13:23). It’s wonderful to be able to look at our lives as Christians and say with John Newton: “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”

Seeing God at work in our lives provides us with the added encouragement that we have already been saved but our change of life should never become the basis of our salvation. Again, we must remember that looking at the transformation in our life is only a secondary confirmation of our salvation and should NEVER become the primary ground of our assurance. While looking at the things God is doing in our lives, when seeing our spiritual growth and observing the good works we are accomplishing in our Christian lives, we can gather some internal and external evidence that we have been saved by God’s grace. However, these things should not become the basis of our assurance of salvation.

We need to *look to Christ* for the assurance that we are saved (John 3:15-16) and we can then *look at ourselves*, or our new life in Christ (John 10:10; 2 Cor. 5:17), to find additional confirmation that we have already been saved by God’s amazing grace. But the order is very important to follow. We look to Christ and His saving work for assurance, and only after this can we look at the sanctification of our lives to find more assurance, when we see how God has been transforming our hearts and lives. If we overemphasize looking at ourselves, instead of looking to Christ ALONE and His finished work on the cross and priestly ministry in Heaven on our behalf (Heb. 7:25), then we will never have assurance of salvation. We will lack assurance. This is because Christ and His saving work is the primary cause and ground of our assurance.

The Bible teaches that we can “make our calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10) by looking at our changed life and conduct, but this Bible verse is not teaching that we can possess the assurance of our salvation on the sole basis of our transformed living and good works. This is because our good works and godly living fluctuates and varies from day to day, which means the way we live can never provide us with the assurance of our salvation. However, as we look at the big picture of our lives, after we have already been saved by God’s grace and become a Christian, we can see that God has been at work in our lives in various ways, new ways, exciting ways, and life-changing ways.



**MAKING
YOUR
CALLING
AND
ELECTION
SURE**

This general examination of our lives brings to us an added confirmation and blessing that we have been saved by God’s grace. Paul taught that none of us are perfect as God’s children (Phil. 3:13-14), but we know that God is still working in our hearts and lives and this brings an added comfort, blessing, and encouragement to our hearts that we have been saved and are gradually being transformed by God’s wonderful grace (Titus 2:11-12).

“He's still working on me
To make me what I need to be.
It took him just a week to make the moon and stars
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars,
How loving and patient He must be
'Cause He's still workin' on me!”

Second Peter 1:10 (“make your calling and election sure”) is teaching that we can in a secondary manner confirm that God has called and saved us and made us one of His children, when we see His life being manifested in us and through us (Phil. 2:13). However, we must never base our salvation or seek the primary assurance of our salvation on the basis of our conduct and changed life. The secondary confirmation of salvation that is experienced in our hearts through godly and transformed living is just that – it’s secondary. It should never overshadow the cross and the promise of what Christ did for us and is doing for us today in Heaven.

Although examining our new way of life can become a secondary confirmation and added encouragement to our hearts that we have been saved by grace (2 Cor. 13:5;

Eph. 2:10), our good works should never be elevated to the point that they become the sole confirmation and underlying premise of a person's faith and salvation. The problem arises when we make self-examination the ground and ultimate proof of our saving faith in Christ and the sole support for our assurance.



1 Peter 1:5 says that we are “kept by the power of God through faith” which means that our faith in Christ results in God keeping us safe and secure in relation to our salvation and eternal destiny which is Heaven. We are kept by the power of God – not the performance of man. God’s power is sufficient to keep His children

saved forever. We are literally “kept” or guarded by God’s power. Christians are not kept by their own power nor can they ever possess assurance through legalistically observing and performing their good works to confirm whether or not they are saved.

Through our union with Christ, we are guarded and guaranteed Heaven! This means we should not overly stress our good works and solely observe our sanctification as the basis of our assurance. It’s God’s power that keeps us and only when we believe in His power and promise to maintain our salvation will we possess assurance. Jesus taught something similar in John 10:28 when He said, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” No person, not even ourselves, is stronger than Christ. We are kept by God’s power and therefore we can know we are saved on the basis of God’s promise to keep or guard His children.

The Bible repeatedly teaches that we are saved and that our salvation is secure by God’s power when we express faith or belief in Jesus Christ to be our Savior. His power is sufficient to save us (Rom. 1:16) and keep us (1 Pet. 1:5). This means that our assurance must ultimately stem from God’s promise to save and secure us - not from our militaristic and legalistic self-examination of ourselves. We must be very careful we do not fall into the trap of basing the assurance of our salvation on varying degrees of our sanctification or holiness. Instead, we must base the assurance of our salvation on what Christ has DONE for us and is DOING for us today in Heaven as our High Priest. If we base our salvation on Christ ALONE (John 14:6)

and His POWER (John 10:28) and PROMISE of eternal life (John 5:24), then we will never doubt our salvation.

Everlasting Life

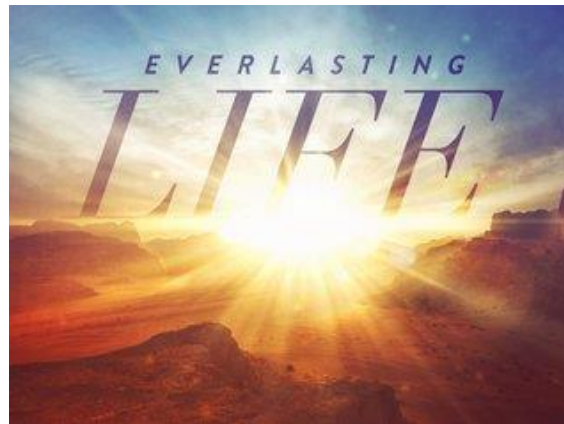
And what is the promise of Jesus?

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

John 6:47

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”



Christ’s promise which is given to His children regarding unconditional everlasting life is either true, or it’s false. Think of it this way. If it were possible for a true believer to perish and go to hell, then God would be a liar. But since God is not a liar and John 3:16 and 6:47 are true, we know that the believer shall “never perish” (John 10:28). The believer shall constantly possess what Jesus calls “everlasting” or “eternal” life from the moment he believes on Christ, until the time he enters Heaven, at the end of his days on earth. At the moment of death, the believer then enters into the joy of eternal life within the very presence of God in Heaven (“absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” - 2 Cor. 5:8).

Christ’s promise of eternal life is based upon what He has done for us through His death and resurrection. It has nothing to do with what we do. Salvation does not consist of two parts, God’s part and our part, or what God does and what we do. Salvation is linked to Christ’s finished work, His priestly ministry in Heaven on our behalf, and the wonderful promises He gave to us regarding eternal life.

Romans 6:23 says:

“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Bible repeatedly talks about the free gift related to our justification (“justified freely” - Rom. 3:24) and salvation (“let him take of the water of life freely” – Rev. 22:17) and now it mentions the “gift of eternal life” which is also a free gift. This verse contains a wonderful and clear analogy that helps us understand the free nature of eternal life. It explains eternal life as a free gift.



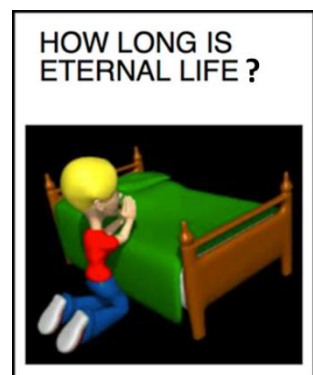
The gift of eternal life is something that is free to receive by expressing simple faith in Christ’s saving provision. This is because gifts are not earned or merited. The context talks about “wages” being earned (the wages of our sins) but the gift of eternal life is not earned. The nature of a gift is that it is given by the freewill of the giver. In a similar way, God acts on the basis of His own freewill to give us the gift of eternal life. This means it’s not a gift that we can earn or merit by trying to do our best, by attempting to sin less, or somehow gain God’s favor by the good things that we do.

If this were the case, there would be no reason for Christ to die on the cross and offer salvation as a free gift. However, the fact the “wages” or payment for our sins is eternal death or separation from God in hell means that I need to have this payment for sin, the judgment that God requires for sin and sinners, removed from my legal record before God. The only way it can be removed is to believe in Christ’s death and resurrection and allow His saving work to free us from the fine or payment that God required for sin. Upon believing on Christ, we receive the free gift of eternal life. God freely bestows this gift upon us without

How long is eternal life? Can you lose something that is eternal? Of course, the Biblical understanding and meaning of eternal life is that when we receive God’s free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), we can never lose it. It is ours forever and we can experience the assurance of our salvation by resting in God’s simple promise.

1 John 5:13 gives us this same promise of eternal life:

“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.”





The Bible teaches that we can actually “know” that we possess eternal life when we place simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to save us. If you don’t know that you have eternal life, you can know! Yes, we can possess the assurance that we have everlasting life. We must personally believe on Jesus Christ to be our Savior and then cling to the PROMISE of eternal life and not to the CONDITION of our life! We may not always act like we are saved or feel like we are saved, but grace says we are eternally saved (Eph. 2:8-9) through Jesus Christ alone. God knows only one way to save people – He saves them eternally!

Only Believe

Believing on Christ and His finished work on our behalf, *believing* in Christ’s priestly ministry in Heaven for us, *believing* in His promise of eternal life, and *believing* that our salvation from start to finish is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, brings assurance of salvation to our hearts. Only believe! Charles



Spurgeon once said that he was so sure of his salvation that he could swing across the fires of hell on a cornstalk singing, “Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine!”

“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.”

This is good enough for me! Is it good enough for you? Every Christian can rest in Christ’s finished work on Calvary’s cross and what He is doing today for us in Heaven, pleading the efficacy (value) of His sacrifice on the cross, as rendering full payment for your sins forever and providing you with eternal forgiveness and a perfect righteous and legal standing in the throne room of Heaven.

Isaiah 45:22

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

In giving his testimony of salvation, Charles Spurgeon said that “when I heard that word, ‘Look!’ what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, ‘Trust Christ, and you shall be saved.’”

When we LOOK to Christ or express faith in Him, who is God’s Son, and keep LOOKING to Christ’s saving work and ministry on our behalf to secure our salvation, it’s only then that we can have assurance of salvation. When we keep looking to Christ alone for our completed and eternal salvation, we can find peace! When we fully and finally trust in Christ alone for our salvation, Jesus gives us this wonderful personal promise: “I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

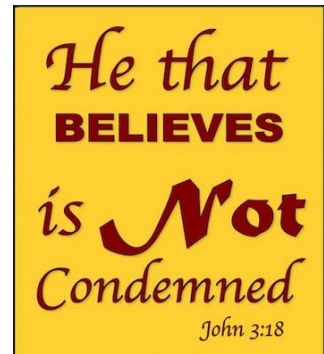
“Blessed quietness, Holy quietness,
What assurance in my soul;
On the stormy sea, Jesus speaks to me,
And the billows cease to roll.”

This peace or rest refers to the peace that comes from knowing our sins are forgiven forever, that we stand in Christ’s perfect righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), and that we are accepted before God on the basis of grace alone (Rom. 5:2). Do not doubt what Christ has DONE for you on the cross and is DOING for you today in Heaven. Only believe! Expressing faith in the truth about the work of Jesus Christ is what takes away our doubts regarding salvation. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” When our faith is resting in the truth of what God’s Word says regarding Christ’s saving work, it’s only then that we can find the peace of knowing that we are saved forever.

Believing in Christ brings assurance. Nothing else will give us confidence and assurance regarding salvation from hell. If you don’t possess the assurance of your salvation, it’s because you have been looking in the wrong places. Some people look to the sacraments. Others look at the ratio of their good works to their sinful deeds, how much and often they are persevering in their Christian life, or to what extent or degree they make Jesus lord over their lives, but when looking in these places, they are not looking at Christ alone for their salvation and security!

Jesus said in John 3:18:

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”



A similar statement is made in John 3:36:

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Once again, believing results in salvation, eternal security, and the assurance of salvation. You believe, you have everlasting life, and you can be confident and sure that you possess eternal life based upon the promise that Jesus gave. Jesus could not have made it simpler. There is no reason to doubt our salvation and make the matter of assurance complicated and complex. When you “first trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:12) to be your Savior, fully depending on Christ’s finished work for your salvation, you immediately received “everlasting life” and were saved forever. Now, you should continue to manifest this same type of faith in Christ as you live out your Christian life. This is because salvation from start to finish, until we take our last breath on earth, is based upon our belief in Christ and Christ alone.

Lewis Sperry Chafer once said:

“I will go throughout eternity saying, I only trusted Christ.”

Blessed Assurance!



Paul exclaimed in 2 Timothy 1:12, “for I know whom I have believed (the basis of our assurance), and am persuaded (the blessing of assurance) that he is able to keep (the source of our assurance - God) that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Let’s examine some words that are used in Scripture which talk about the assurance we can have as Christians. Paul uses one word in this text. It’s the word “persuaded” (2 Timothy 1:12).



Paul possessed the assurance of salvation for he says that he was “persuaded” that God would keep him safe and secure! This means that each one of us can be confident or possess assurance regarding our salvation, if we believe or express faith alone in Christ’s saving work on our behalf. Only God is “able to keep” His children saved which means that we have nothing to do with

keeping or maintaining our salvation. How wonderful it is to only believe or trust in Christ, to place your faith in Christ alone, from the start of your Christian life until the end of your Christian life, and receive the peace of knowing that you are saved forever. Biblical faith is not just an intellectual exercise.

“For I know whom I have believed.” What is belief? In order to be saved, you do not merely believe about Jesus, you believe in Jesus Christ. You commit your soul to Jesus Christ and allow Him to become your personal Savior. This is what Paul meant when he said “that which I have committed unto him.” I must commit myself to an airplane that is taking me from one destination to another. I must board the airplane and entrust myself to the pilot and aircraft with my life. The person who commits himself to the airplane flies to the destination. In a similar way, when we commit ourselves to the Son of God, by personally trusting or relying upon His sacrifice to save us, we get to the destination of Heaven. And when we totally rely on Jesus Christ to be our Savior, we can say, “I know whom I have believed” and can rest in God’s keeping power and promise as it relates to our salvation (“he is able to keep”).

Adrian Rodgers once said:

“Many Christians don't know they're saved. They go around with their shoulders all bent over—drooping, wondering, and worrying. They remind me of question marks with their heads bent over, rather than exclamation points standing straight and tall and saying, "I know whom I have believed!"

Just as salvation comes from believing in Christ alone, so does assurance. When we trust in Christ’s perfect sacrifice for our sins, the certainty of eternal life floods our hearts. Paul said that he was “persuaded” that God would keep his soul safe and secure as a result of believing in Christ’s sacrifice. Have you been persuaded in your

own heart that Christ's death and resurrection is sufficient to save you forever and eternally?

Romans 8:38-39

"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."

Paul uses the word "persuaded" once again which speaks of the assurance we can possess regarding our salvation. After speaking of Christ's High Priestly ministry on our behalf (Rom. 8:33-34), Paul reveals that no event we might pass through, in either this life or death itself, nor any created being in the universe (including yourself!) will be able to separate us from God's love which is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." When we understand that we possess full acceptance and access before God's throne in Heaven (Eph. 3:12), through our standing in the provision of Christ's eternal forgiveness and perfect righteousness, it's only then we can be persuaded or sure that we will always be saved.

We are "accepted in the beloved" Son of God (Eph. 1:6). God the Father loves and accepts us unconditionally and forever through His Son! He sees us through the saving work of His Son and keeps His own children saved and secure through Christ's redemptive sacrifice and perpetual priestly ministry. Our eternal security is based on God's love for those who are redeemed and represented by Jesus Christ as forgiven, justified, and accepted in the heavenly throne room of the universe! Our eternal security has been purchased by Christ (John 3:15-16), promised by the Father (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25), and permanently sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

Hebrews 10:19

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

This Bible verse also speaks of why we can possess the assurance of our salvation. We can have "boldness" or confidence (the total assurance) that through Christ's sacrificial blood and death on the cross we can permanently enter



“the holiest” (the presence of God) and be fully accepted by God forever. This is because Christ’s great sacrifice has provided us with legal forgiveness and a righteous stand before God’s throne.

Philippians 1:6 gives us more assurance:

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.”

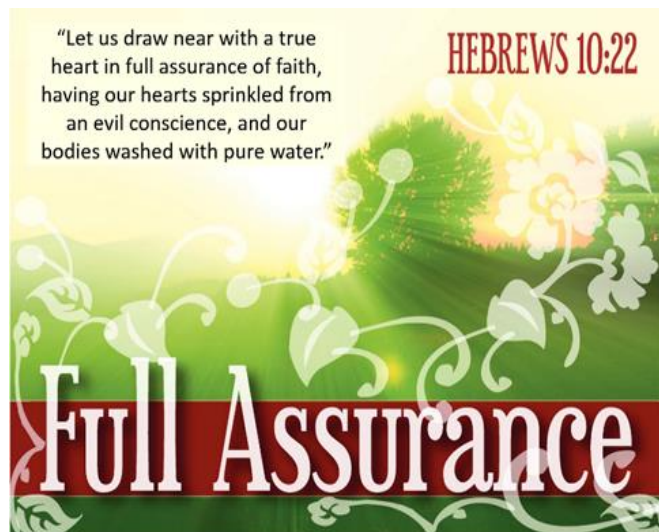


The good work that God began in you was the great work of salvation. Paul once again says that we can be “confident” or possess the assurance of our salvation based upon what God has promised. God has given us the promise that He will “perform (finish or complete) it until the day of Jesus Christ” which means He will see us through, maintain our salvation, and this will be evident as He continues to transform our lives, working within us (Romans 8:29-30), until Jesus Christ returns for His Bride or Church.

Hebrews 10:22

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

We are invited to “draw near” to God’s presence and fellowship with Him out of a sincere heart, “in full assurance of faith.” This expression once again reminds us that we can possess the complete assurance that God has accepted us through Jesus Christ’s saving work. We draw near to God in prayerful fellowship and worship with total confidence in the promises of God and with the firm conviction that through Jesus Christ we shall have a gracious reception into His presence!



We can possess this type of faith and assurance that God accepts us since we have been given a clean conscience (“sprinkled from an evil conscience”). This is referring to a conscience that is no longer plagued by sin. It’s a conscience that is freed from guilt by knowing that all of our sins are eternally forgiven before God’s throne. Just as the Israelites sprinkled their doors with the blood of the Passover lamb, so, figuratively speaking, when the blood-sprinkled way of the cross is applied to our heart, it delivers us from an evil conscience that is tormented and troubled by sin. We can put away our inward guilt knowing that our sins are forgiven. Christ’s sacrifice reminds us that we are forgiven forever and unconditionally loved by God. Therefore, our testimony should be this:

“Conscience now no more condemns us,
For His own most precious blood
Once for all has washed and cleansed us,
Cleansed us in the eyes of God.”

As a believer, we can approach God knowing that we stand eternally cleansed and forgiven in the presence of God through Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf (“our bodies washed with pure water”). This again is a figurative way of saying that we have been thoroughly cleansed by Christ’s gracious sacrifice once and for all. Yes, we can possess the assurance of our salvation based upon what Christ has done for us. If we lack assurance, we must remind ourselves of the blood-sprinkled way of the cross and experience our freedom from sin’s condemnation and judgment.

What is the level of your faith? The level of your faith in Christ will determine the level of your assurance. The Bible says we can possess the “full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:22) which means that we can continue to express complete confidence that Christ’s sacrifice has saved us completely and forever and given us full and final acceptance in the presence of God. The Hebrew Christians needed to realize that the sacrificial system of the past was gone forever and Christ’s sacrifice was the fulfillment and final answer to all of those sacrifices. They could be absolutely sure and possess “the full assurance of faith” that Christ alone has taken away their sin (Heb. 9:26) and given them eternal forgiveness,

Full Assurance of Faith

At What Level is Your Faith?



justification, and acceptance in God's throne room (Heb. 7:25; 10:19). Once again, full assurance can only be ours, when we believe on Christ (Eph. 1:12; Acts 16:31) and keep on believing in the saving merits of Christ's work on our behalf. This is the only way we can possess the full assurance that we are saved forever.

Hebrews 10:23 finishes with this admonition:

"Let us hold fast the profession (confession) of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)"

The idea is that we don't have to keep second-guessing the genuineness of our faith in Christ. We can stick to our original decision to trust in Christ and go on trusting Him for salvation and justification before God. This means we can simply believe that God is faithful to His promise regarding the sufficiency and finality of Christ's sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins and pave the way for justification and acceptance in the very throne room of God. We can possess a "faith without wavering" (confidence in the reliability of God's promises), which means we don't have to doubt the validity of our faith in Christ, but simply rest in the child-like faith we placed in Christ at the time of our salvation and continue to manifest this simple faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

It is our belief or faith in Christ (not our good works produced by Christ) that gives us the primary assurance that we are saved. If we veer away from Christ by overemphasizing our sanctification and good works as our primary assurance of salvation, we will eventually doubt our salvation and wonder if we have produced enough evidences to prove we are saved.

Hebrews 4:14 conveys something similar to Hebrews 10:23:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession" (confession).

Since Jesus Christ has passed into the heavens, all the way to the Father's throne, we can be sure that we are saved, we can have complete confidence that we will never lose our salvation. Why? It's because Christ is in the Father's presence declaring the sufficiency of His sacrifice to take our sins away forever and provide us with a perfect righteousness standing and acceptance before the throne of God. Indeed, Jesus is "a great high priest." He is great for He is "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13) who as our mediator opened the eternal pathway

of acceptance to God (1 Tim. 2:5). For this reason, professing or confessing simple faith in Jesus Christ and the absolute sufficiency of His saving sacrifice on our behalf is more than enough to provide us with confidence and assurance regarding our salvation.

We discover that both Hebrews 10:23 and 4:14 teach that our faith in Christ is enough to provide us with the absolute assurance that we are eternally saved. We don't have to revert to the unbiblical and unreliable practice of constantly looking at our sanctification or good works to obtain the assurance of our salvation. One day we might feel saved because we lived an exemplary life while the next day there may be doubts because some of the blunders we made! Those who place the primary emphasis on their sanctification for acquiring assurance can never come to "the full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22) since their lifestyle fluctuates. Many of the proponents of the "good works assurance" approach will not dogmatically state that they can be sure of their salvation.

R. C. Sproul once said:

"Well, my question is, can even the one who is walking with the Lord and knows the Lord and is submitted to the Lord and is full of God's Spirit have such absolute certainty? He will have an assurance but that is not to say that there will never be any questions of doubt."

This answer is absolutely correct when a person like Sproul is following "the good works approach" to possess assurance. A person can only have "an" assurance but not absolute assurance when they turn their eyes away from the blood-stained cross and His resurrection for his assurance. Christians will continue to doubt their salvation if they think their works in some way will bring them acceptance before God (a legalism related to gaining salvation) or if they believe their works must be viewed as the sole basis to prove the validity of their faith and salvation (a legalism related to gaining assurance). Like Sproul, many Calvinists embrace the latter teaching. However, this approach in determining assurance also creates the atmosphere of legalism since Christians must constantly look to themselves for assurance instead of looking only to Christ. This is why many Christians cannot say that they are "saved without a doubt."



SAVED
WITHOUT A
DOUBT

The Pillars of Assurance



The assurance of our salvation actually rests upon four unshakeable pillars that work harmoniously together to bring about the assurance of one's salvation. Each builds on the other. The order is significant. Many want to reverse this order, but as we have discussed, this creates a lack of assurance. However, when following the proper order, we can possess Biblical assurance

which teaches us that we can be absolutely certain of our salvation. Let's investigate these pillars of assurance and reiterate what we have studied.

- 1** The first pillar of Biblical assurance rests on God's character of faithfulness. God cannot lie and He has promised to give us eternal life and salvation!

Titus 1:2

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

Yes, God the Father purposed and promised to give us eternal life in eternity past (Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Tim. 1:9) and Jesus while He was here on earth promised to give us eternal life when we believe on Him (John 3:16; 6:47). Our assurance of salvation ultimately rests on the unchanging character of God! God is faithful (1 Cor. 1:9). Therefore, what God says He means and He can be trusted to keep all of His promises. If we don't believe and embrace in our hearts what God says, then we will never have assurance. Will you keep doubting your salvation or will you come to the place where you finally rest in God's promise?

1 John 5:9-11 says:

"If we receive the witness (testimony) of men, the witness (testimony) of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that

believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

Rejecting the promise that God gave regarding eternal life is to reject the very character of God who is truthful and faithful to His Word. Blessed noonday truth! God’s record is clear and plain. Eternal life comes from His Son Jesus Christ and is not contingent upon how we live, what we do, or who we are. Eternal life is ours to claim when we believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

The witness or testimony of God (what God says) is greater than the testimony of men. The record or testimony that God gave is that eternal life comes only through the saving work of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. Period. End of discussion. God’s testimony is greater than any other human testimony or saying that might conflict God’s testimony about eternal life. In fact, God’s children can possess an internal witness regarding the assurance of their salvation (“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself”). God’s children have the assurance of their salvation confirmed within their hearts, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, when they believe upon Jesus Christ as the sole Giver and divine Keeper of eternal life. God’s record in His written Word becomes an inner witness in our hearts. As a result, we can bank our eternal destiny on the character of God’s faithful witness!

2 The second pillar of Biblical assurance rests upon the fact that Jesus paid it all! By this we mean that Christ died on the cross to pay the dreadful penalty for all our sins – past, present, and future. Christ’s work of redemption is completed; our entire sin debt has been paid in full. This is why Jesus cried “It is finished” (John 19:30) while hanging on the cross, just before He expired. He had paid the necessary fine that God required for each one of our sins so that we will never come into judgment for any of our sins (John 5:24; Romans 8:1).

3 The third pillar of Biblical assurance rests upon the fact that Jesus is alive and representing us in Heaven. He rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:2-4). He is our victorious and risen High Priest declaring before the Father His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross which paid the penalty for every one of our sins.

Hebrews 7:25 is worth repeating:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost (completely, full-ended, forever) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

**Once Saved
Always Saved**

In short, we are kept saved and secure by Christ’s intercessory work on our behalf before the Father’s throne as He declares the value of His great sacrifice on Calvary’s cross before the presence of the Father. Therefore, we must embrace the old axiom which says, “Once saved, always saved!” How can it be any other way? How can a person lose the redemptive salvation that Jesus paid for with His very own blood and life? How can we lose the very salvation that Jesus is protecting in Heaven? Right now, at this very moment, Jesus is our Great High Priest, defending and maintaining our salvation before the Father. His risen presence in Heaven makes the case that His sacrificial death upon the cross has rendered full payment for our sins, and was the satisfying sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2) and reconciling sacrifice (Col. 1:20), which restores us to God’s favor and provides us with acceptance before God.

4 A final pillar of assurance comes from our new life in Christ. Sanctification can also provide some measure of assurance that we have been saved by grace and we are on our way to Heaven.

1 John 2:3

“And hereby we do know (possess confidence or assurance) that we know him (possess a saving relationship with God), if we keep his commandments” (as a pattern and way of life).

1 John 3:6

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not (does not continually practice sin and show no signs or evidence of the new birth): whosoever sinneth (continually practices sin without evidencing any signs of new life) hath not seen him, neither known him.”

1 John 3:9

“Whosoever is born of God (possessing God’s new life and nature) doth not commit sin (does not continually and habitually practice sin without showing any signs or

evidence of new life); for his seed remaineth in him (the seed of God's life and new nature): and he cannot sin (he is not able to go on sinning as a pattern or way of life and remaining in a permanent state of sin without evidencing God's life and nature), because he is born of God."

These verses do not speak of the WAY of salvation but the CONFIRMATION of a person's salvation, a salvation they already possess through the saving work of Jesus Christ. All who have been born again will see some clear evidences that God is working in their hearts and lives. No born-again child of God will continually live under sin's power without manifesting some evidence of their new life in Christ.

While we will never become perfect in this life, we will, nevertheless, experience a change in our heart and life. It is this inward and outward transformation of fruitful living (John 15:1-3) that provides another added confirmation and proof of our salvation which we have already received through God's saving grace. This fruitful living will vary among Christians but there will always be some new evidence that a person has been saved by God's grace (Titus 2:11-12).

Now think of this. We could never get to the fourth pillar related to assurance (the evidence of new life) without the other three pillars providing us with the assurance of our salvation, which include God's truthful promise He gave regarding eternal life, Christ's paying the penalty for all of our sins, and Christ's priestly ministry occurring this very moment on our behalf within the throne room of God in Heaven. The evidence of God working in our hearts and lives becomes the final way we can possess the assurance of our salvation. This is an added blessing and assurance that stems from the salvation we already know that we possess through Christ's saving work and His promises that He gave to us regarding eternal life (John 5:24).

Not only does the promise of eternal life provide us with assurance (John 6:47), but our new quality of life (Rom. 10:10) can also act as a reconfirming sign that we have been saved. Our new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) is the *evidence* that we have been saved and the transformation that is taking place in our lives becomes another added blessing and confirmation of our salvation. We are saved by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9) but at the same time we are saved "unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). Romans 8:1 declares that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (the way of salvation and our primary assurance) "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (the confirmation of our salvation – a secondary assurance).

(CED) Compulsive Examination Disorder

At this point, let me share a word of caution. A Christian should never become obsessed with only looking at themselves to determine whether or not they possess salvation and eternal life. I have called this CED or Compulsive Examination Disorder. The Bible teaches that we are to look to Christ as the sole determining factor of our salvation (John 3:14; Isa. 45:22; Titus 3:5) and claim the Bible promises regarding eternal life (John 4:14; 6:40).



In many reformed circles and churches, which espouse the basic tenants of Reformed Theology, the saints are taught to continually examine themselves, to look at their perseverance, their good works, their commitment and surrender to Christ. Why is this? It's because it is taught and believed by many that self-examination is ultimately the way to possess the assurance that we are saved. This is an errant teaching that has brought confusion to many Christians and has caused them to actually doubt their salvation. We need to stop this obsession with ourselves and be obsessed with Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for all our sins! We need to keep "looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:2). Our assurance is rooted in Christ – not in our endless self-examination and degree of perseverance.

Legalistic Assurance



Without realizing it, some Christians have become legalistic in obtaining the assurance of their salvation. Instead of viewing God's work in their lives as an added blessing and confirmation of the salvation they already possess through Christ, they develop a legalistic system of self-examination to prove the genuine nature of their salvation and then

use this repetitious and legalistic examination of themselves as the sole measuring stick to possess assurance.

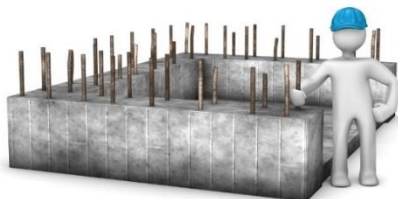
Of course, the Bible does tell us to "Examine yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

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?”

It should be noted that this self-examination has to do with remaining in “the faith” (the objective fundamental teachings of historic Christianity) and it is dealing with “reprobates” or those who totally abandon truth and turn their backs on Christ and Christianity. In other words, we can in a general way examine our beliefs and manner of conduct, which can then be used as a secondary way to confirm our salvation, since we are not living as an apostate or reprobate that God has rejected. This examination should not be construed to mean that we must establish a detailed and legalistic observation of ourselves in order to determine if we are saved or unsaved. This is because when we look to ourselves, without looking to Christ as the only source, hope, and assurance of our salvation, we will lack assurance.

Some Christians try to find assurance by first examining themselves. They look at their good works and changed life in order to see if their faith, which they originally placed in Christ, was genuine and their salvation was real. After they examine themselves, they will then look back to Christ and His saving work, claiming that it’s Christ who actually saves them. Some Christians will claim that they believe salvation is in Christ alone through faith alone but they cannot know that they have salvation in Christ alone by faith alone without examining themselves to determine this. The problem with this approach is that it breeds doubt in relation to one’s salvation because it moves away from the very foundation upon which they claim to stand – faith alone in Christ alone.



If faith alone in Christ alone is all a person needs for salvation and eternal life (John 3:16), then why stress that examining a person’s good works and sanctification must be the underlying foundation that determines the assurance of their salvation? Self-examination is not the basis of Biblical assurance. Christ is the foundation of our assurance

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). The foundation is nothing but “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

It is the “blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20). It is “he arose again the third day” (1 Cor. 15:3).

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

We must remember that sanctification is merely the byproduct of the salvation we already possess through Christ alone and should not be used as the sole measuring stick for the proof of our salvation and for assurance. If we are trying to find assurance without totally relying on the foundation of Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection, then we will not possess assurance. We must go back to the foundation to possess assurance.

James does teach that spiritual fruit follows faith to prove the genuine character or nature of a person’s faith in Christ and their new birth (James 2:17-26). However, good works are not part of a person’s faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). Works or obedience in some measure will follow faith but they are not part of faith. We must allow faith to be just one thing – faith. Whenever obedience is construed together with the understanding of faith it can only lead to legalism and doubt regarding our salvation.

Bearing Fruit



It should be noted that James was not teaching that the foundation of one’s assurance is based upon self-examination for “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness” (James 2:23). James was not saying that a person must speculate about his salvation and the genuine nature of his faith in Christ by constantly looking at his life (the good and the bad) in order to reassess his salvation and possess assurance. God does not want us to live a type of “merry-go-round” existence

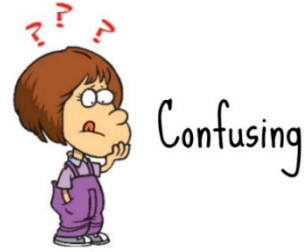
where we are constantly reexamining and reassessing the nature of our faith that we have placed in Christ and our entire Christian life in order to acquire assurance of salvation. This kind of excessive and extreme obsession with self-examination produces a subjective assurance of salvation that is based on good works (human performance) and not faith alone in Christ alone. It creates a legalistic approach in determining our salvation and assurance.

Like other writers, James is simply teaching that if we paint the picture of our Christian life with the broad stroke of a brush, or give a general overview of one's life, there will be some fruit or evidence that we have been born again. We won't live like "children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6) or unsaved people, who show no signs of regenerating life. We won't live like the devil's people the rest of our lives without experiencing God's inner conviction and varying amounts of character transformation which will be manifest in our hearts and lives.

Neither James (James 2:17-26) nor John in his first epistle (1 John 2:29; 3:8-10; 4:16; 5:18) is calling for a type of legalistic and lifelong examination of our lives in order to prove to ourselves and others the authenticity of our salvation. They are simply reinforcing the Biblical teaching that God's people who possess God's life will not live a totally godless and pagan life without giving evidence of the new birth. The writers of Scripture do not speak of a never-ending and laborious process of self-examination that a person must devise to determine if they are saved, and so they can possess assurance of their salvation.

Here is the point. Many Christians are looking for assurance but they will never find it by being overly obsessed with the self-examination of themselves. A person may believe that Christ saves them, but their assurance is not based on Christ, if they must look at their good works to gain assurance before looking at the cross! How sad to know that it's Christ who saves you, but in the end, never being absolutely sure that you are saved, if your life has not changed enough, or if you have not measured up, to prove that you are saved. Some Christians will tell you that they believe in God's promise of eternal life; however, at the same time they cannot tell you with absolute assurance that they possess eternal life, since they need to keep observing their works and life to authenticate and confirm they have received it.

How comforting is it to know that you can have eternal but not know that you have it? If all of this sounds confusing, it's because it is! The Bible makes it very simple: Just look and live!



Isaiah 45:22

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.”

“Look and live,” my brother, live,
Look to Jesus now, and live;
'Tis recorded in His word, hallelujah!
It is only that you “look and live.”

Looking means to express faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save you and keep you saved. It's this look of faith in Christ alone that results in a Christian possessing the assurance of his salvation. It initially occurs at the time of one's salvation (John 3:14-15) but it's a look that should continue on throughout the entire lifetime of the Christian. Hebrews 12:2 reminds us that we are to keep “looking unto Jesus” (the suffering and death He endured for us on the cross) to inspire us and remind us of His great sacrifice on our behalf. Only when we are looking can we be trusting and only as we are trusting can we be rejoicing in the certainty of our salvation.

Hebrews 2:9 adds:

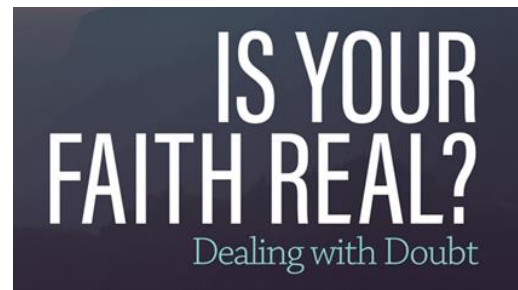
“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

In other words, we are to continue to look to Christ's sacrifice and God's grace to maintain our salvation. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we can possess full assurance regarding our salvation for we will know that Christ's saving work has paid the penalty for our sins and provides us with eternal forgiveness and life. When we take our eyes of faith off Jesus, we begin to doubt our salvation. Our desire should be this: “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 2:21).

“Open our eyes Lord
We want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him.
Open our ears, Lord
And help us to listen
Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus.”

Here is the bottom line. God’s Word does not teach that we must look back on our conversion experience and question our faith, when we know that with sincerity of heart and out of deep conviction, we have trusted in Christ to be our Savior (“I know whom I have believed” - 2 Tim. 1:12). The Bible does not teach that we

must pass through a lifelong process of meticulously examining our works, or constantly reassessing the degree of our surrender and commitment to Christ, in order to determine if our faith was real, or to determine whether or not we are saved and can possess assurance.



How many good works does it take to determine whether or not our faith in Christ is real or genuine? What is the ratio of good deeds versus sinful deeds that can give us the assurance that our faith was genuine and that we are saved? What is the percentage of good works that we must maintain and evidence in our lives to determine if our faith in Christ was not counterfeit? How many failures does it take to create the possibility that we might not be saved and how many victories gives us the assurance that we are saved? What if we die without confessing a known sin or even an unknown sin? When we view our salvation and assurance through the lens of our sanctification, or lack thereof, we will doubt our salvation.

Again, this legalistic or “good works” approach and process to determine the genuineness of our faith and salvation, or to gain assurance, is never presented in the Bible. We are to remember when we “first trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:12) and we are asked to only “look” to Christ (not our good works) in order to possess salvation and know that we are saved. Look, look, look! And we must keep on “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) so we can possess the assurance of our salvation. It’s faith alone

in Christ that saves us (Gal. 2:16; Col. 1:4) and it is faith alone in Christ that gives us assurance (Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:12). I know Christians who struggle with assurance simply because they refuse to believe in God's promise of unconditional salvation and eternal life through simple faith in Christ's saving work. They focus on their sins, failures, their good works, and how they feel instead of focusing on Christ and His promise. As a result, they doubt their salvation.

To become obsessed with the self-examination of our life and works in order to confirm the genuineness of our faith in Christ and prove our salvation will only breed confusion and doubt. This type of never-ending spiral will keep a question



mark in our minds regarding our salvation. Do you possess CED (Compulsive Examination Disorder)? Are you basing the validity of your faith and genuineness of your salvation upon your performance or the way that you live? If so, you will never have assurance. God does not want us to put a question mark where He has put a period. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). You believe and then receive eternal life. Period. Jesus did not say,

"He that believeth, and examines his life to determine the true nature of his faith, might possess everlasting life, but only if he keeps persevering in good works."

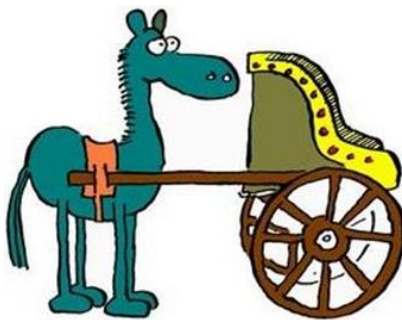
Some Christians will tell you that they fully embrace what the Bible says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). But then they will ask, "How do I know that I've done this?" In other words, they don't know for sure if their faith was sincere and they are truly saved, unless they continue to persevere in good works to prove the genuineness of their faith and salvation. This rollercoaster approach to obtaining assurance is not Biblical and creates doubt and diversion from "faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone" as the only way of salvation and assurance.

Once again, self-examination has the purpose of proving that people are "reprobates" or unsaved people, who are counterfeit Christians (2 Tim. 3:8), which have no interest whatsoever in the Gospel, the truth, and doing what is right (2 Cor. 13:5). There are people who have not fully embraced the Gospel message and have "believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2). This is the kind of person that 2 Corinthians 13:5 is talking about. Their rejection of fundamental doctrine, including the Gospel, and even their sinful lifestyle (Matt. 7:20) gives proof that they have never been born

again and are not possessors of salvation. The examination of 2 Corinthians 13:5 does not imply that Christians with a sincere faith, who “with the heart believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10), must constantly assess or evaluate themselves, their conduct, their living, in order to determine whether or not their faith is genuine and that they have been saved, so they can possess assurance. This is a legalistic system that backloads the Gospel with works in order to determine one’s assurance. Biblical assurance can only come by looking to Christ and His saving work.

The Cart Before the Horse

The proper order for obtaining the assurance of our salvation, based upon the clear teachings and revelation of Scripture, can be summarized in this way: Faith in Christ’s promise of eternal life (John 3:16; 5:25), which is based upon faith in Christ’s cross and resurrection, faith in Christ’s priestly ministry in Heaven on our behalf, and then experiencing Christ’s newness of life (Rom. 6:4) within our hearts and lives. Reversing the order can never bring the peace of assurance in our heart. In order to possess assurance of salvation, our focus must be on Christ. If we lack assurance, it’s because our view of salvation is not completely Christ-centered. Instead, it has become to some degree man-centered.



We can illustrate this in a simple manner. Some Christians are putting the cart before the horse, their works before Christ, in order to possess assurance of salvation. Of course, this will not work in the physical realm or the spiritual realm. The whole idea of putting works before the cross to gain assurance is as silly as watching a horse walk after a cart. If works come before the cross to confirm one’s salvation, then works are in the forefront and obscure the way of the cross and assurance.

The Bible teaches that the primary assurance of our salvation comes through faith in Christ (John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Eph. 1:13) while the secondary conformation and assurance of our salvation stems from our change of life and conduct (2 Pet. 1:10; 1 John 3:14). When we already know that we have been *saved by grace* (Eph. 2:8-9), *standing in grace* (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12), and therefore are *secure* in grace, we will then see ourselves being *sanctified by grace* (Rom. 6:1-15; Titus 2:12) and all of these work harmoniously together to provide us with assurance of our salvation.

The final confirmation of our salvation (a transformed life) does not work independently of the assurance we find through Christ's saving work and God's promise of eternal life. Biblical assurance actually begins and ends with Christ; however, our sanctification that is part of our Christian life produces an added assurance and blessing that is comparable to the icing on a cake and the whipped cream or cherry on top of the ice-cream. The fact that God is working in our hearts and lives is another way to know that we have been saved by God's grace and we are one of His children (John 1:12).

In conclusion, the same God who saved you is the same God who will keep you. Once we are saved, we are always saved. Our salvation is most definitely eternally secure! The Bible repeatedly teaches that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and is maintained by God alone who said that "none of them is lost" (John 17:12). The work of Jesus Christ is eternal. It will never be revoked! The *penalty* for all of our sins has been paid, His *priestly* ministry is maintained in Heaven, and the *promise* of God still stands: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Jesus taught in John 6:37 that "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." What a promise! Jesus will never cast away and abandon those who come to embrace Him as their Savior and only hope of Heaven. This means that at no point in your Christian life and experience will Jesus abandon you. You are His forever! You can claim this promise today by faith and go on your way singing these words:

Be confident and assured
God loves you

▪... *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

•John 6:37

"My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device or creed;
I trust the ever-living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.

Enough for me that Jesus saves,
This ends my fear and doubt;
A sinful soul I came to Him,
He'll never cast me out.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me.”