

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh what a fore-taste of glory divine!” Do these words reflect your innermost feelings? I fear that there are many in the church who do not feel this blessed assurance—some, of course, rightfully so because they are not faithful---but I’m speaking of those who are!

If I should die right now, am I confident that I would go to heaven? Years ago one faithful fellow gospel preacher expressed the feeling that he would be lost because he was not always doing everything he could do in serving the Lord. Another older brother who had spent most of his life in the church and had been most generous with his money in furthering the cause of Christ, expressed to me his fervent desire to go to heaven when he died---he was then in his eighties---but that he was afraid that he wouldn’t! One well-known preacher of yore expressed the view that “not a half-dozen out each congregation will go to heaven.” When he was asked years later whether he still felt that way, he replied: “Now I don’t think there will be that many!”

This feeling hinders many in obeying the gospel in the first place, the reasoning being---“I probably can’t make it to heaven, so why even bother?” Further, it is also harmful to those who are Christians, leading to discouragement and a giving up.

I fear that this uncertainty and doubt grow in part out of an over-reaction to the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy which has resulted in the opposite error of the improbability of eternal salvation! I have no use for either of those views, for neither correctly represents the teaching of God’s word.

How different such thinking is from the teaching of the New Testament. Often the reason for our doubts and uncertainties grows out of a misconception of the true bases or grounds of our hope. Peter speaks of “a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet.3:15).

Some Things Not Reasons

1. Good Works. This is the mistake made by the preacher mentioned above. He thought that if he did not do everything good he could do all of the time that he would be lost. Good works are indeed important and we should be busy doing them---Eph.2:10; Tit.3:1. However, we need to remember Tit.3:5 which says that it is “not by works of righteousness which we

have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” We are not saved by our good works in the first place, nor shall we be saved by them in the last place---i.e., in the world to come.

2. Keeping The Law of Moses. Some say---“Just keep the ten commandments and you will be saved.” But the ten commandments are a part of the Old Law (Rom.7:7). That law was a system which emphasized human performance and merit. And as a means of salvation it was doomed to failure due to the weakness of man. Paul speaks of this in Gal.3:10-13.

Of course salvation was not its design. Rather it was given “because of transgressions” and as “a tutor to bring us to Christ” (Gal.3:19,24). Paul then says in the next verse that “we are no longer under a tutor” and in Col.2:14 declares that Christ “has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Christians today must refrain from turning the New Covenant---the gospel of grace---into another law system! As John affirmed in John 1:17: “the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” We cannot trust Christ plus something else!

3. Doctrinal Perfection. I am not minimizing truth or sound doctrine. In fact in my preaching I repeatedly emphasize its importance. But if one is wrong about any doctrinal issue or point, will he be lost?? The only one I know who is right on every issue is myself! (satire intended). Why even my wife differs with me from time to time! And over the years I have differed with myself, in that I have changed my views on certain things

We are commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet.3:18). God does not require perfection, but He does require that we proceed in the right direction until we “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph.4:13---NIV).

4. Sinless Perfection. James says “we all stumble in many things” (Jas.3:2). Solomon wrote that “there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” The apostle John said that “if we say we have (note the tense) no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 Jno.1:8). In Christ’s prayer of example, just as He instructs us to pray each day for our food---“give us this day our daily bread”---He implies that with the same regularity we should ask

God to “forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt.6:11,12).

Men who believe they are sinlessly perfect are not in the company of James, John, and Solomon. Such have a very limited concept of sin. Sin is not just murder, adultery, theft or some other “major” offense! What about loving God with “all” one’s heart, soul, and mind? (Matt.22:37). Do any of us perfectly do this? Even faithful Onesiphorus will be in need of God’s mercy “in that day” (2 Tim.1:18)!!

True Reasons For Assurance

1. Jesus Christ. In one sense this says it all and the additional reasons I shall adduce are embodied or comprehended in Him! He is the sum and substance of all reasons.

In 1 Cor.1:30 we are told that Jesus “became for us wisdom from God---and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” We are further informed that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor.5:21).

Jesus Christ is the reason Christians are righteous! The apostle Paul called this righteousness a “gift” (Rom.5:17). He said to the Philippians: “and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Phil.3:9). See also Rom.10:1-4.

2. His Perpetually Efficacious Sacrifice. This is one point emphasized in the Hebrew epistle by way of contrasting Christ’s sacrifice with those animal sacrifices under the Law. In Heb.9:12,15,26,28 we read: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption---not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another---He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself---so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”

Though He offered Himself but once, that sacrifice is just as beneficial today as it ever was! The blood of

Christ has suffered no loss of power! See 1 Jno.1:7; 2:2.

3. His Continual Intercession in Our Behalf. Not only is Jesus our sacrifice, but He is our High Priest. His work is not all past. Perhaps we so focus on what He has done that we forget what He is still doing! We are told that He has entered heaven “now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb.9:24). “He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb.7:25). The writer is using continuous or progressive verbs in describing Christ’s work. For this reason he draws this conclusion relative to the Christian’s security: “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus---let us draw near--- in full assurance of faith” (Heb.10:19-22).

You see, we have a friend on the “inside” (heaven), and He’s continually “going to bat” for us. He’s working 24/7 in our behalf!

4. The Holy Spirit’s Intercession. In Rom.8:26 Paul tells us that “the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses”—that “the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.” To intercede is to plead in behalf of another. There is no conflict here with the fact of Jesus being “the one Mediator.” The Spirit is described as an intercessor, not a mediator. Even Christians are to be intercessors (1 Tim.2:1). So two of the three who make up the Godhead---the Son and the Holy Spirit---make intercession for us! How’s that for encouragement!!

5. A Forgiving Father. John tells us that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us” (1 Jno.1:9). David prayed: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies” (Psa.51:1). David was not hesitant to ask for God’s pardon, for he knew God’s nature!

In God we have no reluctant forgiver. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father, who represents God, when he saw his son returning---“had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him!” (Lk.15:20). Yes, God runs to His penitent child, eager to forgive and restore.

6. God’s Purpose To Save And To Keep. When God starts something He wants to finish it! Paul says that the Christian is God’s “workmanship” (Eph.2:10). Each of us is truly “a work in progress,” and God will finish that work if we will only give Him the opportunity.

Paul says “it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure” (Phil.2:13). Our attitude should be as follows:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after Thy will,

While I am waiting, yielded and still.

God not only works in us, but He also intends to finish that work! As again we read: “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil.1:6).

It was with this in view that Paul wrote the following words of exhortation and comfort: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore, comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess.5:8-11).

Brethren, we have a lot going for us!! “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom.8:31). “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!” Can you sing these words sincerely, from the bottom of your heart? If not, you should become a Christian by obeying the gospel of Christ. And for those of us who already have---let us rejoice in the Lord and in the assurance He has given us!

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BLESSED

ASSURANCE

by
Foy Vinson

“let us draw near with a true heart
in full assurance of faith.”
(Heb..10:22)

The Bible Has The Answer