

Blessed Assurance

C.H. Spurgeon once said:

It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, "Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you'll never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold on Jesus." All these are thoughts about self, and we will never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that "Christ is all in all." Remember, therefore, it is not your hold on Christ that saves you — it is Christ; it is not your joy in Christ that saves you — it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument — it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to your hope, but Jesus, the source of your hope — look not to your faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. We will never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what *Jesus* is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by "looking unto Jesus." Keep your eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh on your mind; when you wake in the morning look to Him; when you lie down at night look to Him. Oh! let not your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail you.

Unfortunately, not all share Spurgeon's conviction that assurance lies in the finished work of our Savior and not in ourselves.

Dr. R.L. Dabney [1820-1898], a well-known Southern Presbyterian [Covenant] theologian, brought out the difference between the Puritan's Westminster Standards, and the grace-stand of Luther and Calvin.

The cause of this error is no doubt that doctrine concerning faith which the first Reformers, as Luther and Calvin, were led to adopt from their opposition to the hateful and tyrannical teachings of Rome. These noble Reformers. . . asserted that the assurance of hope is of the essence of saving faith. Thus says Calvin in his Commentary on Romans, "My faith is a divine and scriptural belief that God has pardoned me and accepted me."

Calvin requires everyone to say, in substance, I believe fully that Christ has saved me. Amidst all Calvin's verbal variations, this is always his meaning; for he is consistent in his error. . . for as sure as truth is in history, Luther and Calvin did fall into this error, which the Reformed churches, led by the Westminster Confession of Faith, have since corrected. (Discussions of Robert L. Dabney, Vol. I, pp. 215-16)

It seems that Calvin had it right, but unfortunately Calvinists eventually departed from his teachings regarding assurance of salvation.

Ironically, Arminians know they are saved but are afraid they cannot keep it, while Calvinists know they cannot lose their salvation but can never be sure that they are one of the elect!

John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has blessed multitudes of Christians, but his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, is disturbing. He recounts how, in his seemingly endless search for assurance of salvation, he was haunted by the question, "How can I tell if I am elected?"

William Perkins (1558-1602), is often called the Father of Puritanism. Perkins wrote extensively and almost exclusively on the subject of assurance, having devoted 2500 pages to the topic. Unfortunately, the preaching and teaching of Perkins on assurance often had the opposite affect, creating more doubts than were resolved. Ironically, Perkins, like so many other Puritans of his day, died without a clear assurance of his own salvation.

For years, many Calvinist/Puritans in the Scottish Highlands have refused to receive the communion elements because of the lack of personal assurance of their salvation. Although believing that Jesus Christ is the Savior and the Son of God, self-examination fails to yield sufficient evidence of their election to salvation. Fearing that apart from such assurance they may eat and drink in an unworthy manner, and thereby incur the judgment of God, they abstain from receiving the Lord's Supper. How tragic!

Before instituting the Lord's Supper Jesus told His disciples, "with fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you. (Luk 22:15)" He poured out His heart to them in this manner in spite of the fact that they would shortly forsake and deny Him! Were they worthy to receive communion in light of what they were about to do to our Lord? Hardly!

But grace beckons regardless of the believer's unworthiness! With the same compassion, the Lord Jesus pleads with our Scottish brethren, "come and let us eat together", yet sadly they turn their backs on our broken-hearted Savior!

We would all do well to heed the words of C.H. Spurgeon. Read them once again as you contemplate the unfathomable riches that are yours in Christ:

It is ever the Holy Spirit's work to turn our eyes away from self to Jesus; but Satan's work is just the opposite of this, for he is constantly trying to make us regard ourselves instead of Christ. He insinuates, "Your sins are too great for pardon; you have no faith; you do not repent enough; you'll never be able to continue to the end; you have not the joy of His children; you have such a wavering hold on Jesus." All these are thoughts about self, and we will never find comfort or assurance by looking within. But the Holy Spirit turns our eyes entirely away from self: He tells us that we are nothing, but that "Christ is all in all." Remember, therefore, it is not your hold on Christ that saves you — it is Christ; it is not your joy in Christ that saves you — it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that be the instrument — it is Christ's blood and merits; therefore, look not so much to your hand with which you are grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to your hope, but Jesus, the source of your hope — look not to your faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. We will never find happiness by looking at our prayers, our doings, or our feelings; it is what *Jesus* is, not what we are, that gives rest to the soul. If we would at once overcome Satan and have peace with God, it must be by "looking unto Jesus." Keep your eye simply on Him; let His death, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, His intercession, be fresh on your mind; when you wake in the morning look to Him; when you lie down at night look to Him. Oh! let not your hopes or fears come between you and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail you.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

— *Fanny Crosby*