

THE ASSURANCE OF THE BELIEVER

Christians may know a consistent and confident relationship with God. (I John 5:12–13) Children of God can live with the assurance they are God's own and with the confirmed hope they will enter God's eternal reward. Assurance is the privilege of the believer who lives in obedience to God and who walks by faith in a personal living relationship with the creator. Assurance, itself, is not our salvation but the knowledge that we are saved.

John Wesley wrote that *“saving faith — the one faith — implies an assurance that Christ loves me, and gave himself for me. For he that believeth with the true saving faith hath the witness in himself, the Spirit witnesses unto his spirit that he is a child of God.”* (I John 5:10)

SOME CONCLUSIONS REGARDING CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

- It is the believer's privilege to have a daily walk with God in which the strength and warmth of His love and power provide support for each day's events. God never fails us. As a result of this fact, we should want to respond in love and obedience and give a living witness and testimony to all that God has done in us.
- Assurance builds as we “give diligence to make (our) calling and election sure.” (II Peter 1:10) The evidence of our salvation is our consistent faithfulness to him. (I John 3:9-10)
- Assurance is ours as we exercise, in God's strength, the faith He gives us to walk in Christ.

*Adopted by the Board of Directors of the
Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada*

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THE CONTENT OF CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

Assurance of Forgiveness and Salvation

- Believers can be sure their sins are forgiven. This assurance comes through the combination of the witness of the written Word of God and the witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit. God's Word proclaims, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Ephesians 1:7) The Holy Spirit bears testimony of our salvation in and through Jesus Christ. "Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." (1 John 5:10-11)

Assurance in Our Walk With Christ

- Believers can be sure that they are God's children. That assurance comes from the Spirit of God who "testifies with our spirit, that we are God's children." (Romans 8:14)
- Believers can be sure that God will not forsake them. As Paul said, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10)
- Believers can be sure that nothing can wrest them from God's loving care. Paul declared, "if God be for us, who can be against us," and announced that no one can separate us from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:31,35)
- Believers can be sure that God can keep them from falling. He is able "to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy." (Jude 24)
- Believers can be sure that God will forgive them when forgiveness is requested. God has promised in His Word that "if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins..." (1 John 1:9)

Assurance of Resurrection Life

- Believers can be sure that they have resurrection (glorified) bodies as their eternal dwelling place. The scriptural promise of eternal life is far more than an impersonal immortality. God's Word proclaims, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:11)
- Believers can be sure that their eternal life will be lived in Christ's presence. Jesus said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:2-3)

CHECKPOINTS FOR CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

Believers must take into account that they are involved in spiritual warfare. (Ephesians 6:10-18) Since one of the oldest strategies of the enemy is to question the veracity of God's declarations, it can be expected that there will be times when the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) will attempt to raise doubts in believers about the reality of God's saving work in their lives.

Individuals who are lacking assurance should ask themselves a few basic questions:

Do I meet the biblical criteria of a believer?

- There is no sound basis for assurance of salvation unless you have confessed with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and "believed in your heart that God raised him from the dead." (Romans 10:9)

Am I abiding in Christ?

- It can truly be said that the proof of the reality of a salvation experience is its continuance. The Bible

teaches that professing believers can fail to abide in Christ (John 15:6), can be hardened through sin (Hebrews 3:13), and can be overcome by the world (II Peter 2:20-22). To do so is to place oneself in spiritual jeopardy. We are instructed to continue on in faith and obedience, and to keep ourselves in the love of Christ. (Jude 20-23)

Do I share in worship and witness with a fellowship of believers?

- It is possible to be saved and therefore part of the invisible church of Jesus Christ and yet not be part of a local church. However a lack of assurance of salvation may result from neglecting assembly with other believers. "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25) As John said, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers." (1 John 3:14)

Do I have consistent devotional practices?

- Assurance belongs to believers who pray regularly and practice consistent and meaningful Bible study. The apostle John said, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13)

Am I facing circumstances that are adversely affecting my assurance?

- All Christians have times when they don't *feel like a Christian*. When we are physically sick or have failed in some task, we often do not "feel" like a joyous Christian. At such times it is good to remember that assurance results from faith not feeling. When the enemy of our souls uses such times to attack, the believer must raise the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16), remembering that, "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)