



PREFACE

What is assurance of faith? Assurance of faith is the conviction that one belongs to Christ through faith and will enjoy everlasting salvation. A person who has assurance not only believes in Christ's righteousness as his salvation but knows that he believes and that he is graciously chosen, loved, and forgiven by God the Father for the sake of Christ Jesus, who has died for him and continues to pray for him in heaven. Such a person knows the Holy Spirit has regenerated him and continues to sanctify him. In other words, he believes not only the facts of the gospel that Jesus Christ saves sinners by His Spirit merely of grace, but he also believes that these facts apply to him personally – that he has a personal interest in the gospel and that all the blessings proclaimed in that gospel are his.

Such assurance is broad in terminology and scope. It is called 'full assurance of understanding'; 'full assurance of hope'; 'full assurance of faith' (Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11, 18, 19; 10:22). It includes freedom from the guilt of sin, joy in relationship with the triune God, and a sense of belonging to the family of God. James W. Alexander said assurance 'carries with it the idea of fullness, such as of a tree laden with fruit, or of a vessel's sails when stretched by a favouring gale'.¹

Personal assurance of faith is known by fruits such as close fellowship with God, childlike trust, willing obedience, thirsting after God, unspeakable joy and peace in the triune God for Christ's sake, and longing to glorify Him by carrying out the Great Commission.

1) J. W. Alexander, *Consolation in Discourses on Select Topics, Addressed to the Suffering People of God* (reprint, Ligonier, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 138.



KNOWING AND GROWING IN ASSURANCE OF FAITH

Assurance joyfully and prayerfully anticipates the renewal of all things in subjection to an eternal hope; assured believers view heaven as their home and long for the second advent of Christ and their translation to glory (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

I trust that the thrilling joys and abundant fruits of personal assurance of faith immediately show you how important this subject is. You can be a Christian without having assurance of faith, but your witness to Christ will be meager at best. To live the Christian life in a robust and blessed way, you need to have assurance of faith.

I was privileged to study the subject of assurance of faith intensely for several years while pursuing my PhD degree from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. I eventually published my doctoral dissertation as *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (American University Studies, Series VII, Theology and Religion, vol. 89; New York: Peter Lang, 1991). Later, I simplified this work somewhat in my book *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), and wrote several chapters and articles on the subject in various books and journals. Since then I have had numerous requests to write a simpler book on assurance for laypeople. So, when Christian Focus approached me to do just that, I immediately agreed to do so. In this book, though I have drawn from my other writings on this subject without bothering to footnote them often here, I have aimed to deal with this vast subject on a simpler and more practical level.

My prayer is that this book will impact people in a variety of ways: I pray that the strongly assured Christian will have his or her faith strengthened and increased, and will assist other Christians by speaking to them about the importance of obtaining assurance of faith and perhaps giving them a copy of this book! I pray that the weak Christian will cultivate assurance as a result of reading this book and will experience that his assurance is greatly enlarged by the Spirit's grace. I pray that the nominal Christians and unbelievers will realize what they are missing and will flee to Christ alone for salvation, and learn to find all their righteousness only in Him.



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I wish to thank Misty Bourne, Ray Lanning, and John van Eyk for their editorial assistance, and of course, my wonderful queen, Mary, who spoils me by giving me all the love, friendship, encouragement, space, and time that I need to be a compulsive writer for my own soul – since I often feel closest to God when I write – and for the souls of others as well, including yours.

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