

Habits

Biblical Principles

of the

for Growing Christians

Heart

Kenneth C. Crawford

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Assurance

Do you remember your first encounter with God? Maybe it was a marked encounter with Jesus like the apostle Paul had. Or perhaps you responded gradually to the unrelenting influence of the Holy Spirit until you finally surrendered your life to Him. However it happened, you must never forget that encounter with God. Your whole existence in Christ, your spiritual life, must be centered on the assurance of God's love and acceptance from that moment, for that is the core of your peace.*

“Since then it is by faith that we are justified, let us grasp the fact that we *have* peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have confidently entered into this new relationship of grace, and here we take our stand, in happy certainty of the glorious things he has for us in the future” (Romans 5:1, 2, Phillips; emphasis added).

Jesus has called you from this old, sinful world to be a part of

* In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there are two opposing thoughts concerning assurance that have long been a source of confusion for many. For further discussion on the question of a settled salvation in early Seventh-day Adventism, see the appendix.

the kingdom of heaven, and now you are a child of God. Never forget the experience of your spiritual birth, for, in moments of perplexity and doubt, you will go back to that experience, looking for assurance. When God seems far away and you are swept along in a flood of overwhelming trials, look back and remember: “As a father has compassion on [love for] his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him” (Psalm 103:13).

Assurance comes from knowing God’s promises and taking them to heart. Dwight L. Moody, a great spiritual warrior, was once preaching to a capacity crowd at an evangelistic series in Chicago. An older man came to him and asked, “Can I speak with you, pastor?” When they had a few moments alone, the man started with these words: “I struggle terribly with doubt. I know, in theory, that what you are saying is true, but I cannot accept it as a fact in my life. I have been a terrible sinner. I have repented and accepted Christ into my life. But I can’t seem to find forgiveness.”

Pastor Moody opened his Bible to John 5:24 and read: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (KJV). Pastor Moody looked up at the man. “Do you believe these words, sir?”

There was a long pause. “I am trying to, but—”

Pastor Moody stopped the man midsentence. “Sir, you misunderstood my question. God has said this; do you believe it?”

Again, the man began to express his doubts about assurance.

Pastor Moody stopped him again. “Sir! I ask you! God has said it; this is His promise to you. Do you believe and accept it?”

Slowly, light began to dawn on the man. “This isn’t about me!” he stammered. “This is about God! Yes! I believe Him, Mr. Moody! I believe Him!”

The classic Amplified Version of the Bible speaks of peace as “that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly

lot” (Philippians 4:7). This assurance must be the solid rock on which is built the road of your journey to spiritual maturity.

About Abraham’s assurance, Ellen White wrote:

Abraham had a special interest in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. To him it was revealed that in Christ his hopes of eternal life were centered. Through his sacrifice his salvation was complete, and Abraham’s heart was filled with comfort, hope, and assurance, which was to him a firm foundation, a solid rock, upon which he rested in confidence that could not be shaken. The very truth that came down from heaven, was welcomed into his heart. He was not an occasional Christian, and an apparently devout worshiper. God said, “I know him.” He could trust Abraham.¹

Why is assurance so important? Please pause and read the following scripture carefully:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of

God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:1–12).

John says, “Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony” (verse 10). One thing that is evidence of, or witness to, your new birth is the evidence of the Holy Spirit in your heart, speaking to you of the assurance of your salvation. The evidence of your assurance of salvation is found in your own heart. This is an essential truth you must learn to accept in spite of how you may sometimes feel.

Satan’s goal is to convince you that you are not worthy of God’s love and acceptance. He has a thousand ways to do that. One of his most successful methods is to use the wounds of the past to try to convince you. You will find that after you give your heart to Christ, a tape will keep playing in your head. It will continually try to convince you that you are not worthy. There will always be a fight between the doubts that Satan places in your mind and the principle of living by faith. Your great challenge will be to fight the fight of faith and accept God at His word. Rather than listening to these ongoing tapes in your head, claim this promise every morning: “I have written like this to you who already believe in the name of God’s Son so that you may be quite sure [have assurance] that, here and now, you possess eternal life” (1 John 5:13, Phillips).

Ellen White wrote: “Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life.”²

“The Lord would have His people sound in the faith. . . . They are not to look forward, thinking that at some future time a great work is to be done for them; for the work is now complete.”³

Faith in God must be based on the settled question of your salvation. When that question is settled, you will carry the assurance that you are a child of God in spite of your shortcomings.

“It is essential to have faith in Jesus, and to believe you are saved through Him.”⁴

“We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal.”⁵

“Know for a certainty that you are standing under the broad shield of Omnipotence.”⁶

There is nothing you can do—no penance you can make, no maturity you can master, and no depth of spirituality you can obtain—that can change God’s love for you, for His desire is to receive you to Himself as a son or daughter. You are His child, and there is no sweetness in this world like the sweetness of a heart at peace, a heart resting in the assurance of salvation—not because of your worthiness but because of Christ’s immutable righteousness and His power to save to the uttermost. “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever” (Isaiah 32:17, NKJV). There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, and there is nothing you can do to make God love you less.

Knowing God, His love, and His promises makes all the difference: It was the final rehearsal of Handel’s *Messiah*. The director was anxiously watching every note and every shade of expression. When the soprano took up the refrain, “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” she rendered her part beautifully, without flaw—or so it seemed to the choir. Her breathing, her notes, and her enunciation were beyond criticism. Surely the conductor would be pleased. But he wasn’t. Silencing the orchestra, he walked over to the singer and said in a disappointed tone, “You do not know that your Redeemer lives, do you?”

The girl blushed and faltered.

“Go home tonight,” the conductor continued, “and search your heart. Ask God if your Redeemer lives for *you*. Then return and sing

about your experience. *Sing it so that I know that you know!* Sing it so that all who hear you will see that you know the assurance, the power, and the joy of that great truth!”

The girl went home and, alone with God, poured out her heart. She realized that while she had spent her life deeply involved in religion, she had never truly given her heart to Jesus. There in the darkness, she found Jesus and the assurance of her own salvation.

The next week, the conductor raised his baton at the appropriate place, the orchestra played, and the soprano sang her refrain. But this time, the song poured forth from her soul. She sang out of her new experience, and all who heard her wept. After the program closed, the conductor approached her again, his eyes full of tears. He took her hands in his and said, “My dear daughter, you do know Him! Tonight, you have told me.”

Scripture to memorize

In Psalm 37 (NKJV), God has given you some homework that is designed to increase your assurance of salvation. This psalm contains ten instructions (one of which is mentioned twice to indicate its importance) that you should place in your heart as a new Christian. Memorize these instructions, and each new morning, use them as a guide for living.

1. “Do not fret [worry]” (verse 1).
2. “Trust in the LORD, and do good” (verse 3).
3. “Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness” (verse 3).
4. “Commit your way to the LORD” (verse 5).
5. “Rest in the LORD” (verse 7).
6. “Do not fret [worry]” (verse 7).
7. “Cease from anger” (verse 8).
8. “Depart from evil, and do good” (verse 27).
9. “Wait on the LORD” (verse 34).
10. “Keep His way” (verse 34).

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1. Ellen G. White, "What Is the Chaff to the Wheat?" *Gospel Herald*, August 1, 1906, 1.
 2. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1940), 388.
 3. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1958), 394.
 4. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:373.
 5. White, *Desire of Ages*, 331.
 6. Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1955), 192.