

will only serve to land you in hell. You can deceive yourself all is well while not truly trusting and following Christ as only Saviour and Lord, but you can't deceive the Lord Jesus Himself. He knows those who hear His voice and follow after Him. Whoever is not presently trusting and following Christ and continuing in that way can only be assured this absolute truth that you are headed to the place of eternal punishment. But why will you so live and die?

The gospel of Jesus Christ is so blessed, promising full salvation rich and free for whoever comes to the Saviour and trusts and follows Him. Instead of guilt in sin you will be forgiven all your sin, instead of heading for hell you will have a place in heaven, instead of living aimlessly and fruitlessly you will have a full and blessed life here and so much joy and peace and hope and love. Your cup runs over when the Lord is Your Shepherd but to live apart from Him is darkness and death and gloom now and forever.

In II Timothy 1:12 Paul sets before us the words of Christian assurance, the worth of Christian assurance, and the way of Christian assurance. He lived and died in true Christ-focused assurance of faith and gave himself for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ which he knew was and is so reliable and rich as the basis for all our hope and confidence for this life and the next. *"For the which cause"* says Paul, *"I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."*

Faith and assurance of faith are so related. Don't live as if they are not, but live in such a way that others know also from you nothing ever can compare to this blessing. Will you so live by grace through faith in Jesus Christ? Without a doubt that will give you every reason never to be ashamed. What a blessing to trust God and say with assurance of faith like the psalmist as expressed in a song based on Psalm 16:

To Thee, O Lord, I fly –and on Thy help depend;
Thou art my Lord and King Most High; Do Thou my soul defend.
A heritage for me—Jehovah will remain;
My portion rich and full is He—my right He will maintain.
I keep before me still—the Lord Whom I have proved;
At my right hand He guards from ill, And I shall not be moved.
Life's pathway Thou wilt show, To Thy right hand wilt guide,
Where streams of pleasure ever flow, And boundless joys abide.
Indeed, in and through Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners, such is the gospel truth for all who trust and follow Him. Does that include you too? Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



FAITH AND ASSURANCE [2]

Faith and assurance of faith is our topic again this week and we are focusing on the way of Christian assurance of faith. Our main text has been II Timothy 1:12b, where Paul states, *"nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."* This text expresses such assurance of faith and last time from this verse we thought about the words of assurance Paul here expressed and the worth of assurance Paul here showed. Now think with me more about the way of Christian assurance of faith that Paul knew. I will mention five points here about the way of Christian assurance that God through Paul also surely teaches us. You could call this message, 'Helps for assurance of faith'.

One help is to realize clearly that we are never saved by assurance of faith, but only by faith. Faith in the God of salvation, even the weakest faith that links you to Christ is sufficient. By grace through faith you have full and free salvation. You are not saved because you know you are saved, but because you look to Jesus Christ to save also a sinner like yourself. That by itself is so liberating and can help to give so much assurance of faith. If you believe you are not really saved and can't be truly God's child unless you know and are assured that you are, then you will be in the dark many times and depressed in the Christian way. A person is saved by grace alone through Christ alone by faith alone. And assurance of faith is something that is found in more and more grasping this gospel truth. It is a fruit of faith looking to Christ. If you think and will believe you are only saved when you have assurance you are saved, then you are building your salvation on something of yourself or within yourself. A sinner is saved not for self knowledge about being saved but on account of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Just understanding this basic gospel point can promote such assurance of faith.

A second help for assurance of faith is realizing all true assurance of faith comes from the Object of faith, God Triune as revealed in Jesus Christ, and not in and of ourselves ever or whatsoever! Dwell on God Triune as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and as God of salvation in Whom and from Whom is perfect salvation freely promised and freely given to all who call upon Him. Christ's saving work could never and need never be improved on. An abundance of salvation is found with Him. Jesus' shed blood is called precious and it cleanses us from all sin, says the Bible. With Him is plenteous redemption, and the earnest divine invitation to all is, *Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* [Revelation 22:17] The gospel message is that with Christ as the once

crucified and now risen exalted Saviour, there is fullness and completeness, a freeness and sureness to the gospel that is immeasurable, incomparable, and all sufficient for whoever will trust and follow Him. Absolutely all you need for coming to Christ, continuing with Christ, conquering through Christ, and reigning with Him is found in and with Him. The more you look to Him in true faith and depend on Him, the more you can and will discover this for yourself. In this regard isn't it so true what someone wrote in this poem entitled, "If Only I had known YOU!" [N. Spiegelberg & D. Purdy]

Lord,
I crawled
across the barrenness
to You
with my empty cup
uncertain
in asking
any small drop
of refreshment.

If only
I had known YOU
Better
I'd have come
Running
With a bucket!

Are you running to God with a bucket, a bucket of needs and sins and shortcomings and requests? Truly, as one put it, "You don't take a gamble when you believe in Jesus Christ!" Trusting Him, truly there is endless reason to trust Him wholly and forever and with all the confidence in all the world.

This poem leads to a third help to realize about the way of assurance of faith. For assurance of faith in the way of faith, it is so important to be often in the Word of God and under that Word, reading it for yourself and studying it on your own and with others, and listening regularly to the preaching of God's Word. Assurance of faith comes and grows in being Word based and Word saturated, and Word focused again and again. God works faith and assurance of faith through the Word and speaking to us through the Word read and studied, preached and meditated on. "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path*", testified David in Psalm 119:11.

Martin Luther understood this truth well about living by the Bible and out of the Bible also for assurance of faith.

"Someone asked Luther, 'Do you feel that you have been forgiven?' He answered, 'No, but I'm sure as there's a God in heaven. For feelings come, and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving; My warrant is the Word of God, naught else is worth believing.'

'Though all my heart should feel condemned, for want of one sweet token,
There is one, greater than my heart, Whose Word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in His unchanging love, till soul and body sever;
For though all else shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever.'"

A fourth help in the way of assurance of faith is to realize surely God's revealed will is He desires that all His children, as many as trust Him,

not only know Him as Saviour but enjoy Him as Saviour and Lord. God's revealed will is never to keep His people in the darkness and in the way of more doubt and despair than joy and peace through Him. Many texts could be given to show this, but let me simply mention II Peter 1:10-11 where Peter exhorts about being diligent to make your calling and election sure, in other words seeking so to live that you know Whom you have believed and are persuaded with Paul that He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him against that [final] Day. Let no one think God is pleased that anyone always be in the dark, and always never know for sure whether he or she is saved or not. Yes, even the most assured and godly believer can fall into times of darkness and despair sometimes, but never does Scripture uphold that as something usual or normal and even good for the believer. God delights in us when we trust Him truly and He delights all the more, the more you trust Him and place all your confidence in Him. Jesus spoke well of childlike faith which simply and fully trusts Him. Assurance of faith is to be thought of and sought for as something positive, and positively God's will for all His people. Growing in Christian experience that really there is no reason for confidence and assurance in anything or anyone but God, the God of our salvation, can also be a means the Lord uses to increase our faith and assurance of faith in Him.

One last help and point about the way of assurance of faith is to realize that true assurance of faith comes in the way of faith and godliness. If you will live in sin and in any way at all live in conscious, continuous, unrepentant disobedience to any of God's commandments, then it is to be expected and even hoped for that you are without assurance of faith. John writes in this regard in his first epistle, chapter 2:3-5, "*And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, 'I know Him', and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.*"

In this regard it can be said the grace of assurance of faith is a delicate fruit of faith. When you won't live close to the Lord and in constant humble dependency and devotion to Him, you can't truly know the assurance of faith that Paul so speaks of in II Timothy 1:12. We know Paul too was careful in his Christian faith and walk to live godly and to flee from all sin and evil, and not to have always as he says in Acts 24:16, "*a conscience void of [without] offense toward God and toward men.*" True and glowing assurance of faith as Paul showed it and speaks of it in our text doesn't happen apart from understanding the gospel of grace, looking to Christ always, staying with God's Word constantly, knowing His will regarding assurance, and living by His precepts and not in sin and ungodliness.

I hope all believers listening will have, and grow in, assurance of faith knowing this way of assurance just mentioned. At the same time I hope and pray all who will ignore this way of assurance of faith won't deceive yourself thinking everything will be alright with you, and you need not worry. Assurance of faith apart from faith in Christ and living out of and by His Word