**The Marrow of Modern Divinity**

Lesson 11 – The Law of Christ, Pt. 4

**How to Attain Assurance of Faith and the Marks/Evidences of True Faith**

1. Hebrews 6:17-20 is just one of many places in Scripture that uses the language of assurance, “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.  We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
2. When we are weighed down by doubting our salvation, or wonder whether we are truly saved, what can we do, biblically speaking, to be sure that we are truly in the faith? Another way to put it would be, “How do I know that I am justified in Christ?” This is a personal question, not a general question.
3. First, look to the promises of Christ which has never failed anyone and never will.
   1. 1 John 5:13 – “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”
   2. Hebrews 10:22 – “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”
   3. Jeremiah 31:3 – “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”
   4. Hebrews 10:21-22 – “and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”
   5. 1 Corinthians 2:12 – “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”
   6. Romans 5:1 – “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
   7. Isaiah 54:10 – “’For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,’ says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”
4. So, based upon what God promises from these passages and other passages, honestly ask yourself, “Do I have peace with God? Do I know that God loves me with a never-changing love? Do I know God is my Father and not my Judge through Christ Jesus? Is Jesus my high priest? Have I confessed with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believed in my heart that God raised Him from the dead? Do I no longer fear the condemnation of the law and the eternal damnation of hell? Am I resting on Christ alone for my salvation and that I am not sufficient in any way to save myself?
5. When we can say yes to these questions, we can have the objective side of assurance in the promises of God which come to us from outside of ourselves from the God who never lies and never changes. Louis Berkhof writes, “The measure in which he [a believer] trusts in Christ and thus appropriates the promises of the Gospel will, if all other things are equal, also determine the strength or weakness of the feeling of security that fills the heart, and the degree of the consciousness that his sins are forgiven, and that he is an heir of everlasting life.” Thomas Brooks says, “Let thy eye and heart, first, most, and last, be fixed upon Christ, then will assurance bed and board with thee.”
6. Just to clarify though, we are not to look at these questions as if these truths/realities are something we produced for that would be going back to the covenant of works, but we are to see that these truths/realities are evidence that Christ dwells within us by faith. If I call God Father, it is because Christ is in me. If I no longer fear God’s wrath as Judge, it is because Christ is in me. If I have peace with God, it is because Christ is in me. If I know Jesus is my High Priest, it is because He is dwelling within me. In this way, looking to the objective promises of God in Christ Jesus is making use of the covenant of grace.
7. But there is also a subjective side to assurance and Evangelista provides 3 subjective evidences that help provide the subjective aspect of assurance:
   1. When a person truly loves the Word of God and makes right use of it.
      1. Psalm 1:2 – “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” That is, he makes constant, regular use of God’s Word for decision-making, living, interacting with others, theological belief, etc.
      2. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 – “we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God…” That is, we receive the Word of God as the very Word of God and not simply a human collection of books, so that we approach it differently than anything else we read and we use it to correct us and show us where we sin.
      3. Psalm 119:50 – “This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your promise gives me life.” That is, we use God’s Word as our chief comfort in times of affliction
   2. When a person truly loves the children of God above all other sorts of men.
      1. 1 John 5:1 – “…and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.” We love other believers because we see the grace of God at work in them. John delighted that the truth was abiding in the people of the Church (2 John 1:2). We desire to be in the company of God’s people (Psalm 119:63) and strive to do good especially to them (Galatians 6:10).
   3. When a person can truly love his enemies.
      1. Matthew 6:14 – “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,” We are called to do good to our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for them. We do not seek revenge, but seek to overcome evil with good. That is a subjective evidence that Christ is within us and we truly are of the faith.
8. But what if we come to a place in our life where we cannot see these outward and subjective evidences of assurance? What do we do then?
9. The first thing we do NOT want to do is to force ourselves to obey God so that our works bring forth evidence of belief while we are full of doubt. This may seem counterintuitive, but remember that even our obedience must proceed from faith.
   1. Romans 14:23 – “….For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”
   2. Hebrews 11:6 – “And without faith it is impossible to please Him….”
10. When in darkness and full of doubt, we must first go to Christ rather than good works. Evangelista says, “To get your assurance again, is, when all other things fail, to look to Christ; that is, go the Word and promise, and leave off and set aside for a while your analysis of the truth of your faith; and set your heart on believing, as if you had never yet done it…” Thomas Boston writes, “When through deadness and darkness of spirit, whether arising out of some conscience-wasting guilt or otherwise, your faith in the promise fails and you cannot fasten your grip upon it because you see no good in you, embrace Christ again, and the promise of Him, in spite of your seen and felt sinfulness and utter unworthiness. For as the goodness in you was not the ground of the promise, so the evil in you does not overturn it and make it of not effect. The foundation of the promise stands sure in Christ, whatever alterations the frame and condition of a believer’s spirit undergoes.”
    1. Romans 7:24-25 – “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”
    2. 1 John 2:1-2 – “….But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins…”
11. Evangelista then discusses how Christ working His 3-fold office of prophet, priest, and king in each of us is also a sign of union with Christ by faith. Christ as prophet teaches me His covenants and Law from His Word. Christ as priests teaches us that Christ has given Himself as the only absolute and perfect sacrifice for the sins of believers and teaches us that He Himself has now entered into heaven to appear before God on my behalf. Christ as king teaches us that all authority has been given to Him to vanquish all of our enemies (sinful flesh, world, Satan) and has written His own law on our hearts. So Christ exercises His 3-fold office in each of us personally in our heart.
12. So, what does all of this have to do with legalism and antinomianism? Think of the objective and subjective aspects of assurance as a pair of scales. The Bible provides us with the promises of God which is the objective side of the scale. The Bible also talks about fruit as an evidence which is the subjective side of the scale. The Bible holds the objective and the subjective together in pursuing and growing in assurance.
13. However, the legalist puts all of his or her eggs in the subjective side of fruit/works. There is no clinging to the objective promises of God in Christ Jesus because the legalist is attempting to earn salvation apart from Christ. Therefore the “assurance” of the legalist is always going to correspond to the amount/quality of their works. Their false assurance grows with more works or better works. Their false assurance weakens with less works or poor works. And when their assurance is weak they do exactly what Evangelista warns against and tries to resume their works to produce evidence of their salvation.
14. On the other side, the antinomian puts all of his or her eggs in the objective side of fruit/works. There is no producing the subjective works of God through Christ Jesus because the antinomian believes nothing more needs to be done than have faith in Christ. Therefore the “assurance” of the antinomian is going to look like the “dead faith” that James talks about in James 2:14-26. So while they may have the profession of faith in Christ, they do not demonstrate evidence to back up that profession.
15. This antinomian error was reproduced back in 2011 in a book called *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* by Tullian Tchividjian, the grandson of Billy Graham. In this book, Tchividjian argues that all you have to do to grow in sanctification is look back to Christ in your justification. He ends up giving the impression that the Christian life is a passive reflection, remembrance, recognition, and understanding of your justification. For example, he writes, “The hard work of Christian growth, therefore, is to *think* less of ourselves….Sanctification is the daily hard work of *going back to the reality* of our justification.” Tchividjian makes sanctification so synergistic (a divine work only) that all you have to do is think more about what Jesus has done in order to mature as a Christian. In other words, while capturing the objective side of assurance, Tchividjian falls short in moving to the subjective side of sanctification which is expressed well in James 2. To put it in terms of the structure of Paul’s writings, Tchividjian says all you have to do is focus on the indicatives (reality of what Christ has done) while ignoring the imperative (what the reality is to produce in our thinking and actions).