

# Jesus, Our Assurance



## Sabbath Afternoon

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Heb. 6:11, 18-20; 10:19-23, 35; 11:1-6.

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Let us approach 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. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:22, 23, NRSV).

**KEY THOUGHT:** The recipients of the epistle needed assurance, and Hebrews shows them where this assurance can be found.

**M**OST HUMANS HAVE A DESIRE for some level of certainty and assurance in their lives. Who would get on an airplane without some certainty, some assurance, that it was well-maintained and mechanically sound or that the pilots knew how to fly? Who would go to the doctor without some certainty regarding the physician's competency in medicine? Who would seek employment without some assurance that the company would be around for a while? All of us, in one way or another, look for and need a certain level of assurance in the most everyday things of life.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** In what ways does Hebrews present the topic of assurance? How is faith linked to assurance? What conditions are placed on assurance? How do we strike a balance between assurance and presumption?

\*Please study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 13.

## OUR STATUS AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

**T**he book of Hebrews, along with other New Testament writings, offers us certainty in regard to our relationship with God. Assurance is an important theme in this epistle, and in others. How could it not be? After all, we are sinners who daily confront our own weaknesses, faults, and shortcomings. If we didn't have some sort of assurance of salvation and acceptance, who wouldn't eventually give up the faith completely?

**How do each of the following texts give us assurance of salvation in Christ?**

Heb. 2:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 3:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 6:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 9:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 9:28 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 10:14 \_\_\_\_\_

**Dwell specifically on the notion that we are made “partakers of Christ” (Heb. 3:14). What does that mean? How should this experience change our lives? What condition does the author place on this good news?**

Because Jesus has “made purification for sins” (Heb. 1:3, NRSV) and because He has “obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12) for us, we can be accepted by God, even as sinners. Thus, we have assurance of salvation, not from anything in ourselves but because of what God did in Christ, the Son of God, our King, our Brother, our Sacrifice, and our High Priest. Our assurance rests in Him, not in ourselves.

“Christians are holy, sanctified, perfected, cleansed, purified—all terms associated with the sanctuary and its services. They *are* God's people, even now. Now they are ‘clean,’ now have access to God, now have consciences purged, now have Jesus as Heavenly High Priest.”  
—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 155.

**Why is assurance of salvation so important in the Christian life? At the same time, how do we protect ourselves against turning assurance into presumption?**

OUR ASSURANCE FOR TODAY.

Yesterday, we studied some promises made to those who belong to Christ. Most of these promises used verb forms that relate to the past. What about verses that spell out Christ’s ministry in our behalf and how it impacts us now?

What is Jesus doing for His children today?

Heb. 2:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 4:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 7:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 7:25 \_\_\_\_\_

The passages that describe what has been done *in the past* deal with different aspects of our salvation. The passages for today, in contrast, contain some practical aspects of present-day life that, nevertheless, depend on Jesus’ high-priestly ministry.

Jesus makes intercession in our behalf. He sympathizes and deals gently with us. He has suffered in the flesh, as we have suffered in the flesh; thus, He can relate to us as a human to a human in our fleshly sufferings. Yet He never succumbed to sin; and thus He offers us power to overcome sin, as well. As Christians, we never have a good excuse to sin.

We know that God loves us, and we know that Christ is working in our behalf, even now. Yet, we have to be careful how we understand what that means. What it *doesn’t* mean is that life will always be sweet and nice, because we have Jesus as our High Priest ministering in our behalf in heaven.

We can have assurance, we can have hope, we can have peace from the knowledge that not only has Jesus died for our sins, having paid the penalty for them, but that He now ministers in heaven in our behalf, representing us before the Father, not with our own merits but with His own perfect record. Talk about assurance.

But that doesn’t mean that we will never have suffering in this life. On the contrary.

**Read carefully Hebrews 12:6-11. What is the author telling his readers? What reason does he give for what they might be going through? How are they to respond? How have you, in your own life, experienced what the author is talking about?**

OTHER PROMISES.

Hebrews contains texts filled with hope and promise. After each text, write down what that promise means to you and how the hope it expresses has impacted your faith. (For example, for the first one: How have you experienced that promised rest?)

Heb. 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 4:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 8:10-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 10:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 12:28 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 13:5, 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Look carefully at Hebrews 10:22. It talks about the “full assurance of faith.” The Greek word translated “full assurance” means also “to be absolutely certain,” “to be completely sure.” The apostle says that we should draw near to God in full assurance of faith that the promises He has made to us will be fulfilled (vs. 23 says that He “is faithful that promised”). Why do we have this “full assurance”? The three verses before help answer that: Jesus, by His death, is now our High Priest, who has consecrated a new and living way for us to have access to God.

**Notice, however, how the author, though stressing the “full assurance” we can have, also balances it with something that can save us from presumption. What is it? See verse 23. How does this help put all the promises in the right perspective?**

**TERMS DESCRIBING ASSURANCE AND SURETY.**

The topic of surety and assurance is expressed by a number of Greek words used in Hebrews with different shades of meaning: *plrophoria*—full assurance, conviction, certainty; *parrisia*—boldness, confidence, assurance; *hypostasis*—confidence, assurance, conviction; *tharre* —to be full of courage, to act boldly, to be confident; and *asphals*—safe, sure.

**What is the message of those texts that contain the noun “assurance” or “confidence” (some different translations might use different words with the same meaning)?**

Heb. 3:6, 14; 10:35 \_\_\_\_\_

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Heb. 4:16; 10:19 \_\_\_\_\_

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Heb. 6:11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Heb. 10:22; 11:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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These texts can be grouped into four categories. The first group stresses the fact that we with confidence may draw close to God. We have access to the throne of grace in the heavenly sanctuary. We are cleansed and washed. The barriers are removed. Instead of fear, confidence fills our life. The second pair connects assurance and hope and seems to be a call to stay faithful and endure unto the promised end. The third connects assurance and faith. It is by faith that we have the assurances of what Christ has done for us and what He will do, even in those things that are yet unseen. Faith is an indispensable element of our hope, confidence, and assurance. The last category consists of calls to hold fast confidence, not to throw away assurance.

**According to Hebrews, we should have hope, confidence, and assurance. What are things that we confront as believers that daily work against these things? How do we confront those challenges?**

**FAITH AND ASSURANCE.**

The word *faith* (in various forms) appears dozens of times in Hebrews. It comes in clusters. The first use is found in Hebrews 2:17, where Jesus is called a “faithful” High Priest. The next two chapters focus on faith. Another cluster appears in Hebrews 6 and the most extensive one appears at the end of Hebrews 10, running through chapter 11, which discusses the famous heroes of faith.

Perhaps the most explicit and systematic explication of faith appears in Hebrews 11.

**Read the first ten verses of Hebrews 11. Compare them with Hebrews 10:19-23, 35, 38, 39. What’s the main point these texts make? How does it fit in with the overall theme of Hebrews?**

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In Hebrews, the concept of faith and assurance are linked. We’re saved by faith, not works; thus, as long as we cling to the Lord in faith, we have the assurance of the salvation that comes to us by faith.

It’s interesting that Hebrews 4 contains a call to make a decision and believe. However, the book is addressed not to non-Christians but to Christians. Thus, in Hebrews, faith does not simply refer to a decision to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Faith is practical. On one hand, it leads to assurance and provides hope; on the other hand, it has to do with the conduct of life.

Meanwhile, in Hebrews 10:35, the author calls his readers not to throw away their confidence, their assurance. How do they not cast it away? The answer is that they persevere *in faith*. Those who persevere will receive the promise (vs. 36)—the second coming of Jesus (vs. 37) and final salvation (vss. 38, 39).

**Read Hebrews 3:15-19. It seems as if disobedience and unbelief are almost used interchangeably. Why is that so? In what ways are disobedience and unbelief so linked? Notice, too, whom he charged with “unbelief.” What message does that hold for us, as professed followers of Christ?**

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**FURTHER STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White’s statements on faith and assurance in *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531, and *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 287. Study Hebrews 11.

**Note:** “The Sacrifice of Christ assures Christians of two great facts: First, the Act *has been done* that solves the sin problem. They don’t have to strive and stretch, to hunger and thirst, to press and prevail, in the frantic, frenzied—and futile—effort to find cleansing from their sins. By one sacrifice for all time God has utterly dealt with sin. Nothing we might do can add to that or diminish from it. Calvary gives us absolute confidence of the putting away of sins.

“Second, Calvary assures us of our full access to the presence of God. No matter who we might be, we *belong* in Jesus Christ. The gates of the temple stand flung open. All who believe may enter—not cringing, but boldly.”—Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 118.

“We have the assurance of a Saviour who has come—a Saviour who has been crucified, has risen, and has proclaimed over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life.’ In our knowledge of Jesus and his love, the kingdom of God has been placed in the midst of us. . . . We have had presented to us by the messengers of God the richest feast,—the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God in his word, free access to the Father by Jesus Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. We ask, What could God do for us that he has not done in preparing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?”—Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, January 17, 1899.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do some people have problems with assurance of salvation? Why is trust in what Christ has accomplished for us the only place where we can rest our hope of salvation?
2. Though filled with promises of assurance, of hope, Hebrews always balances it with the call to remain steadfast in the faith. Skim over the book and mark out the places (for example, 2:14; 3:6-12) where the apostle exhorts them to persevere. Write down the specific things he says that we need to do in order to maintain this assurance. Do any patterns emerge? If so, what are they?

**SUMMARY:** Assurance and faith are related to each other. By faith we take hold of Christ’s achievements for us and the promises found in them. This assurance allows us to have a better quality of life, to live in hope, and to have a goal that transcends our present life.



## Up From the Ashes

J. H. Zachary

The soldier lined the students up and commanded them to show their identity cards. Then he ordered the Tutsis to move to one side. Rachel stepped from the line and joined the second group. A man carrying a weapon walked down the line telling the students, “You’d better pray; in ten minutes you will be dead.”

As the killer reached the far end of the line, someone pulled Rachel from the line and pushed her toward some bushes to hide. She was spared. Several more times in the days ahead Rachel escaped death when those around her were killed. *Why me?* she wondered.

Some students fled to another city where they thought they would be safe. But they soon learned that there was no safe place. However, again and again the handful of students were spared certain death.

A family took her into their home and hid her. While she was there, Rachel learned that most of her family had been killed. She wanted to turn herself in and die, too, but the family who had protected her begged her to stay. “If the soldiers learn we have hidden you, we will die, too.” Rachel remained with this family for several months.

When travel became safer, Rachel returned to her home village. She stepped off the bus to find that every home in her village had been destroyed. She learned that her father was reading his Bible when an enemy with a large knife struck him down. His last word was “Amen” as he fell on top of his Bible. Her mother and a sister, who were not in the village at the time, were saved. But one of her brothers, who lived in a distant village, was singing Sabbath choruses with his two young sons when they died.

During the terrible days of civil war in Rwanda more than 1 million people were killed, including some 20,000 on the Adventist university campus where they had sought refuge. During those discouraging days Rachel sometimes became overwhelmed with sorrow. How could she serve a God who allowed so many to die? Then she recalled her promise to her father that she would always be faithful to Jesus. “I know that I will meet them again,” she said. “I have forgiven the men who killed my family. I do not want hatred to keep me out of heaven.”

Rachel returned to school and completed her theology training. She is serving as an associate pastor in a church in Rwanda.

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