

“Assurance”
 Pastor Sam Richards
 25 August 2024
 Texts: 2 Peter 1:2-10;

Sometimes people have wondered whether or not they measure up as a Christian. How do I know if I qualify? How do I know if I am saved? And what they are looking for is some sense of assurance that their faith is genuine, that we are indeed called, chosen, or elect. When the role is called up yonder, will their name be mentioned?

Christians are encouraged to test, or judge themselves to establish whether or not they are **in the faith**, or **of the faith** . . . whether they are part of the **family of God**, or just a window-shopper passing by. Fanny Cosby wrote this marvelous hymn about Christ assurance. We should sing it and then ask ourselves how we can, or can't relate to its warmth, joy, exaltation.

1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
 Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
 born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.
 [Refrain:] This is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Savior all the day long.
 This is my story, this is my song,
 praising my Savior all the day long.

2 Perfect communion, perfect delight,
 visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
 Angels descending bring from above
 echoes of mercy, whispers of love. [Refrain]

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest.
 I in my Savior am happy and bless'd,
 watching and waiting, looking above,
 filled with his goodness, lost in his love. [Refrain]

So, where do we go to find assurance? We don't need to ascend to heaven and to read in the Book of Life. No, evidence from our lived experience will suffice for us to make an informed judgment call. 2 Peter 1:2-10 will serve as our scriptural foundation.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who *called us [a]*by His own glory and *[b]*excellence. 4 *[c]*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 *Now for this very reason also*, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral *[d]*excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. ¹

Practice these things? What things? The things which follow v. 5: **Diligence, moral excellence, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.** This list consists of abstract nouns which characterize the lives of those who are truly Christian. Which means that most children under ten and about half of the human race will struggle with what these nouns mean. To be sure, the list ends with an assurance: **practice these things, you will never stumble.** But if we suppose that these qualities are abundantly in evidence in our lives and further assume that “stumbling in our walk is not among our chief concerns,” what else can assure us of our good standing in Christ? Well, those who are His follow him. They are like sheep that run after their shepherd; they hear and respond to his voice and trustingly turn to him. Of course, this is a metaphorical turn of phrase. We’re people, not sheep.

William Gouge offers some offers some practical help here. If you want to know whether you belong to the body of Christ, or not . . . wonder if you actually are a Christian , both called and elect, you can find assuring evidence in your life. If you are part of the mystical body of Christ (the church invisible), you can answer affirmatively to the following:

¹ Footnotes
a. 2 Peter 1:3 Or *to*
b. 2 Peter 1:3 Or *virtue*
c. 2 Peter 1:4 Lit *Through which* (things)
d. 2 Peter 1:5 Or *virtue*

a. Having received grace, forgiveness, freedom and life in Christ (Eph. 4:15-16 **but [a]speaking the truth in love, [b]we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together [c]by what every joint supplies, according to the [d]proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.**

b. To being guided and governed by Christ's word in Scripture John 17:6: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

c. Are seeking to honor Him in all you think, speak and do. John 17:10: **I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.**

d. Are offended and grieved at his dishonor by others. Psalm 139: 20-21: **For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?**

If these four things speak to your spirit, you are assuredly among the members of the mystical body. But there's more, there's evidence from spiritual communion of the saints. Again, four assuring things:

a. You actively love the brethren. 1 John 4:11: **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

b. You are ready to help each other in distress. Matt. 25:40 **The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.**

c. You exhort, encourage and edify each other. Col. 3:16: **Let the word of [a]Christ richly dwell within you, [b]with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

d. Showing mutual sympathy whether rejoicing, or mourning together. 1 Cor. 12:26: **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is [a]honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

These four further pieces of "evidence" testify to the fact that you are in communion with the brethren **in the body of Christ**. The spirit of Christ has been conveyed to you, a member of that body of Christ, in an imperative and lively manner. You are a maturing and growing member of Christ's Body without having to climb to heaven and look into the Book of Life!

Romans *:11: **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies [a]through His Spirit who dwells in you.** Of course, you must be in spiritual union with Christ, our Head, and with one another for this assurance to be known fully! Our religion is an experiential one, we live it to know it.

Amen.