

## The Deficit of Assurance: Why do I lack it?

### 1. Introduction

**WCF 18.3** This assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto....

**WCF 18.4** True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted (SoS 5:2,3,6); as, by negligence in preserving of it (Ps.51:8,12,14), by falling into some special sin, which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation (Ps.116:11; 77:7-8; 31:22), by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance (Ps.30:7), and allowing even such as fear Him to walk in darkness and to have no light (Isa.50:10-11); yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair."

**LC Question 81:** Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it; and, after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted, through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair.

A believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved. I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance. A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten. I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him, — really to be a child of God, — really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt and fear (J C Ryle)

**Job 33:10** Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy,

**1 Samuel 27:1** And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines;

**Psalms 31:22** For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

**Psalms 77:7-10** Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? <sup>8</sup> Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore? <sup>9</sup> Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. <sup>10</sup> And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High.

### 2. Personal Difficulties

### 3. Sinful Difficulties

**Ephesians 4:30** And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

**Song of Solomon 2:16** My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his: he feedeth among the lilies.

**1 Corinthians 12:21** And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

**Hebrews 6:12** That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

**Proverbs 28:14** Happy *is* the man that feareth always

### 4. Theological Difficulties

**Isaiah 32:17** And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

### 5. Devilish Difficulties

I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure, and it was my delight to abound in religious duties. I, with some of my school-mates, joined together and built a booth in a swamp, in a very retired spot, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods where I used to retire by myself, and was from time to time much affected....I am ready to think many are deceived with such affections, and such kind delight as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace (Jonathan Edwards).

## 6. Divine Difficulties

a. God's Wisdom

b. God's Providence

**Romans 5:1-5** Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>2</sup> By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; <sup>4</sup> And patience, experience; and experience, hope: <sup>5</sup> And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

**James 1:2-3** My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; <sup>3</sup> Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

c. God's Sovereignty

**WCF 5.5** The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.