

# Aspects of Assurance

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Mr. Donald M Mackinnon

[ 0 : 00 ] Can we turn again to the passage of Scripture we read together from God's Word, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10, and we pick up the reading at verse 19.

Hebrews chapter 10, and reading again at verse 19. Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 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.

And this evening I want particularly to look at these words at verse 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

And you can see in your Bibles that this section may have a heading, the full assurance of faith. And that's the subject I want to look at tonight.

Aspects of assurance of faith. I don't know how these words find you tonight. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

[ 1 : 47 ] Some, perhaps, have only ever known a full assurance of faith. Some may have known a full assurance of faith, but now may also be conscious at times of a lack of assurance.

And so there are aspects to the assurance of faith. And as I look at it tonight, I want to look at it in three headings, or three aspects of assurance of faith.

So, obviously, we have full assurance of faith. But Scripture also talks to us about a lack of assurance of faith.

And perhaps most solemnly of all, it talks to us about a false assurance. And I feel it's only right to begin with the most uncomfortable of these, which is false assurance.

What is false assurance? And where does Scripture bring that before us? Because, as I say, it is a most disturbing element of assurance of faith.

[ 3 : 04 ] That there is such a thing as a counterfeit, or a false assurance of faith. And for that, I'm just going to read this for you. I'm going to give you an example from the Sermon on the Mount.

And you will recall how the Sermon on the Mount begins. Christ on the mountain, and his disciples, and his congregation there.

And he began with the Beatitudes. And coming down to a level that every individual and the church collectively have been so appreciative of where he began his great discourse.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. And I think it's safe to say that it is only those who have received faith that can know anything of what it is to be blessed as they are poor in spirit.

The promise to them is that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But then as Christ moves through the Sermon on the Mount, he comes to its conclusion.

[ 4 : 24 ] And right at the end, he comes to a section where he teaches us about false assurance. Because in verse 7 and at verse 21, we find these words.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name?

And do many mighty works in your name. And then will I declare to them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. And that is clear, clear, scriptural teaching on false assurance.

[ 5 : 40 ] These people had made a profession of faith. And that's very, very clear from the way that they speak time and time again.

They seek to nail their works as being in your name, in your name, in your name. There is that profession of faith.

But here, Christ exposes them for what they are. Because under the eye of his omniscience, he is declaring in his seven on the mount, that that eye is able to perceive, not outwardly, but inwardly.

As he is able to see right into the hidden recesses of the heart. And it is Christ and Christ alone that is able to make the distinction between there being a profession of faith and a possession of faith.

Because there is the world of a difference between the two of them. We can make a profession of faith.

[ 7 : 02 ] And that profession of faith can carry us the entire length of our earthly pilgrimage.

The entire length of it undetected. Even in the company of the most blessed of the Lord's people.

With all their discernment and with all their gifts, we can make a profession of faith that they are unable to detect. Two examples, one from scripture.

You are familiar with the upper room discourse. How Christ intimated to the disciples. One of you shall betray me. And we know that not one of the disciples had discerned that amongst them.

There was a profession of faith that was void of a possession of faith. To the point where they began to suspect themselves.

[ 8 : 11 ] One after another. Peter, Andrew, Thomas, James. Is it me? Is it me? And all the time, completely unaware of who it was.

And scripture tells us. Even when Christ identified who it was. He went out. And still they didn't discern.

Them thinking at that stage in the evening. That it was something to do with his role. As the treasurer. He had the bag. And still.

And we can only imagine their horror. It's a place where it's good to go and stand there as an onlooker. Just imagine the horror that overtook the disciples.

When in Gethsemane. They beheld. Their brother disciple. At the head of the arresting band who were to take Christ.

[ 9 : 20 ] And then. And only then. Did they fully discern. A false profession of faith. Void of possession. Second example I'm going to give you is from the writings of John Bunyan and Pilgrim's Progress.

If you're familiar with Pilgrim's Progress. You'll recall how he talks about the whole pilgrimage. Of Christian. And right at the end.

He brings up a man. Accompany him. Having come through all the toils and snares that. Christian himself had come through.

And here now. He identifies this man. And he calls him. Ignorance. And as Bunyan was being conveyed. Through the swellings of Jordan.

He looked. And he saw ignorance. Being taken away. What Bunyan calls. Down the back stairs.

[ 10 : 22 ] To hell. And these things. Are tremendously solemn for us. Because these things. Should. Should. Make a search. But I hope as we go on. We'll. Discern more. About. A false assurance.

But let us say this about it. Where there is a profession of faith. And no possession of faith. We can say this.

There is no. Inner. Work. Of grace. There is no. Inner. Work. Of grace. What. So ever.

So let us. Leave that thought. About. A false assurance. And come to. Full assurance. Full assurance.

[ 11 : 25 ] Of course. Is what we are. Reading of here. As the chapter. Has its heading. The full assurance. Of faith. Faith. And I just want to.

Read for you. I think one of the. The greatest summaries. Of assurance. From. A book. I'm sure. Many of you have read. When we started following.

In Stornoway. In the late 1980s. This was the book. That the elders. Recommended us. To go to the bookshop. And buy. Everybody that started. Following. They said. Go to the bookshop.

Ask the man in the bookshop. That you've been sent. To get. Holiness. By J.C. Ryle. And in that book. Ryle. Has a section. On assurance.

And this is what. Ryle says. Now this is very. Very important. And I labour the point. That I really want to. To emphasize. Tonight. So this is Ryle's summary. Of assurance. I lay it down.

[ 12 : 25 ] Fully. And broadly. As God's truth. That a true Christian. May reach. Such a comfortable. Degree of faith.

In Christ. That in general. He shall feel. Entirely confident. As to the pardon. And safety. Of his soul.

Shall seldom. Be troubled. With doubts. Seldom. Be distracted. With fears. Seldom.

Be distressed. By anxious. Questions. And in short. Now listen to this a bit. And in short. Though vexed.

By many. An inward. Conflict. With sin. Shall look forward. To death. Without trembling.

[ 13 : 20 ] And to judgment. Without dismay. And scripture. Gives us. Many. Many. Many.

Examples. Of assurance. Of faith. And we're familiar. With these examples. Of assurance.

Of faith. One that I've heard. Your own minister. Preaching on. In Tulsa. Is the words. From the old testament. From job. And think of how limited.

The scripture he had. Compared to the revelation. We have. That he was able to. Come to. A full assurance. Of faith. And yet. He left us.

These astonishing words. I know. I know. I know. That my redeemer. Liveth. And again.

[ 14 : 20 ] Tonight. We began. Again. With words. From the old testament. David. The psalmist. Great.

Great. Great. Words. Of assurance. The lord. Is my shepherd. But for myself. Where I. Find his assurance.

At its greatest. It's in the very place. Where. Believers. Sometimes. Have their greatest. Struggles. Or their greatest. Fears. And that is. In anticipation. Of that. Point. When they shall. Make the transition.

From time. To eternity. Walking through. Death's. Dark. Veil. And we sing it so often.

[ 15 : 15 ] But do we think of his assurance. Yea. Though I walk through. Death's. Dark. Veil. Yet. Will I fear. Noel. Why?

Because you. Are. With. Me. Me. And there are many. Many. Other examples. That I could give. About.

What it is. To have. Full. Assurance. But perhaps. One of the most. Powerful.

Examples. We have. Of full. Assurance. Is one. That you all know. From the writings.

Of a man. Who had. A very. Very. Powerful. Dramatic. Conversion. And so. Conscious. Was he. Of the work.

[ 16 : 11 ] Of grace. In his life. That he penned. A very. Very. Very. Famous. Hymn. And the tune of it. We sang here.

Tonight. Do you know the words. From John Newton. Amazing grace. One of the greatest. Statements.

Of assurance. Of faith. And Newton. Of course. Begins. Amazing grace. How sweet. The sound.

Now. I don't know. If you've ever stopped. Just think. Of what Newton. Is saying there. He's talking about. The assurance. That.

Grace. Had wrought. In his life. And he begins. By saying. That. For him. His first. Experience. Of it. Was.

[ 17 : 05 ] As a. Sweet. Sound. And so. It is. For every one of us. Because. The faith. That we. Profess.

And the faith. That we. Possess. Came into. Our experience. Scripture. Tells us. Faith. Comes.

By hearing. So for John Newton. Amazing grace. How sweet. The sound. And as he heard. That sound. As the inner ear.

Was opened. It was there. That he heard. The truth. About. Himself. Because friends. We need to realize this.

And this is. A bugbear of mine. I hear so much. Emphasis. Today. Put on. The need for us. In revitalization.

[ 18 : 04 ] And evangelism. And so on. To be going out. With the good news. And I understand that. I know that. You all know that. We need to be going out. With the good news. But friends.

The good news. Is only good news. When you know the bad news. I was preaching in Uist.

A week ago tonight. And I have to say. I was rather troubled. Last Monday evening. As I watched the news. Because in Uist.

I spoke about this. And I said to the congregation. If tomorrow. Every news outlet. Every news broadcast.

Every newspaper. Every online news facility. Is all carrying the same story. That there has been a tremendous breakthrough. In the treatment.

- [ 18 : 59 ] Of a particular cancer. Cancer. That now means. That that cancer. Is now. Entirely. Curable. Well that would be good news.
- For us all. It would be good news. But really. That is only.
- Really good news. For those who have had the bad news. That they have that cancer. For people who have been diagnosed. Who have been told by the doctor. That you have this cancer.
- It's good news for them. It's good news for us all. But it's good news for them. And of course. Last Monday night. I was watching the six o'clock news. There was no introduction. The newsreader simply began.
- There has been an announcement. From Buckingham Palace. And I honestly thought the worst. But. You know what the news was. So. It did. I found it strange.
- [ 19 : 57 ] But anyway. The point I am making. Is this. That. The good news. Is only. Good news. When we know.
- The bad news. And for John Newton. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved. A wretch. Like me. I once was lost.
- But now I'm found. Was blind. But now I see. And you can see the extent of. Newton's assurance there. How he discerned.
- How. That. Process. If you like. Had unfolded the truth. About himself. And then. Unfolded the truth. About. The good news.
- Of the gospel. So that he came. To. The good news. Of the gospel. And so. Having looked at. False assurance. And having looked at.
- [ 20 : 53 ] Assurance. I want to come on. And spend more time. In lack of assurance. Simply because.
- I. Doubt. If there are many. People. Who have not.
- Experienced. At one time. Or another. In their. Earthly. Pilgrimage. A time. Of lack. Of. Assurance. And let me.
- Begin. By returning. To what we were talking about. False assurance. Because there's one thing. That I think.
- It's safe to say. You'll never ever find. Where there is. False assurance. And that is. A lack of assurance. Because if you have. A lack of assurance. It's a very.
- [ 21 : 47 ] Very deep. And a very. Very troubling. Thing. Now. Let me say. At the outset. I could come to Barber's. For every Sunday night. For. I don't know.
- How many months. And we'll never. Exhaust. The reasons. For. There being a lack. Of assurance. In our lives. But let me just. Highlight.
- Some of the ones. That are very. Very. Very. Clear. That bring about. A lack of assurance. Into our experience. And the first. Of these.
- Is. To do with the psalm. That we sung. Because. If we are. Disobedient. Then.
- There is. No doubt. No doubt. Whatsoever. We are going to. Experience. A lack. Of. Assurance. We all know.
- [ 22 : 40 ] The backdrop. To Psalm 51. And we know. The great. Great. Struggle. That had wrought. In. The psalmist.
- My sin. I ever. See. And the distance. He felt. From God. Because of.
- His disobedience. And there can be. No doubt. About it. But where we. Let down. Our discipline.

And our diligence. And our. Keeping of the heart. With all diligence. As we are exhorted. To do in Proverbs. Where we let that down. And where we become. Disobedient.

And where we become. Flagrant. In sin. And so on. Then. It is going to. Cause. A breach. And we are going to be.

[ 23 : 36 ] Powerfully. Conscious. Conscious. Of the distance. That puts. Between us. And the. Comforting. Ministry. Of the Holy Spirit. In our lives.

Don't know. If you've ever. Heard of a poet. I'm sure you have. Of a poet. Called. William Cooper. I never know.

How to pronounce his name. It's spelled. C-O-W-P-E-R. Some people say. Cooper. Some people say. Cowper. Well I'm a leosach. And I've always said. Cowper. Because I just pronounce it. The way it's written.

Now. Cowper. Cowper. Had. Profound. Experiences. Of lack. Of assurance. And he left us.

Words. Where he talks. About that. How his own. Disobedience. Had brought in. A breach. Into his assurance. And. Addressing the spirit.

[ 24 : 33 ] He says. Return. Return. Oh. Holy dove. Sweet. Messenger. Of rest. I. Hate. The sin. That made thee mourn.

And drove thee. From. My breast. And so we need. To understand. That. Our disobedience. Has consequences.

Sin. In the life. Of the believer. Has consequences. Sin. But moving on from there.

Having spoken. About. Disobedience. We can also. Experience. Lack of assurance. Even when we are.

Obedient. For that. I'm going to take my warrant. From the Old Testament. And in the Old Testament.

[ 25 : 36 ] And in chapter 50. We have these words. Who among you. Fears. The Lord. And. Obeys. The voice. Of his servant. So here. Isaiah. Is bringing. Before us. A believer. Who. Fears. The Lord.

We take that. To be. A profession. And a possession. Of faith. And obeys. The voice. Of a servant. There's no disobedience. Here. Let him.

Who walks. In darkness. And has no light. Trust. In the name. Of the Lord. And rely. On. His God.

God. So here. Is a person. Who is. Experiencing. Lack. Of assurance. Because.

[ 26 : 32 ] Of the way. That the Lord. Has appointed. For him. To pass through. When Spurgeon. Preached. To his congregation. From that text.

This is what he said. And I'm quoting. From the very sermon. And this. He's talking here. About the congregation. His own congregation. And this is what he said.

To comfort them. Some. Who might greatly. Love. And esteem. Who are. In my judgment. Among the very.

Choicest. Of God's. People. Nevertheless. Travel. Most of the way. To heaven. By night.

They do not. Rejoice. In the light. Of God's. Countenance. Though they. Trust. In the shadow. Of his wings. They are on the way.

[ 27 : 29 ] To eternal light. And yet. They walk. In darkness. Now. These things.

Are difficult. For us. To discern. Because. That. That. Period. In a. Believer's life. Is appointed. By the Lord. I've known people.

And I'm sure you know people. Who. Passed through a time. Of. Darkness. That can be. Great darkness. I have a dear friend.

Just now. Who is passing through a time. Of spiritual darkness. And it is very. Very difficult. To come alongside. These people. And offer.

Any comfort. Except. To let them know. That you're there. You're praying. But the Lord. Has his own. Purposes. For that. But I've also.

[ 28 : 26 ] Known these people. When they come out. Of that time. Of spiritual darkness. To know a joy. Greater. Than any joy. They have ever known. Before. And it is the Lord.

Who is the Lord. Of our lives. We sung tonight. The Lord is my shepherd. And he shepherds his sheep. Sometimes. In ways. That they would never choose.

But yet. Are appointed. By him. For the means. Of their. Sanctification. A fact.

Inj■■■■ heaven. Justification. But we can. Experience. Lack of assurance. Lack of assurance. But our problem.

Is not so much. With assurance. But with. Justification. Because. We're. Misunderstanding. Justification. justification. I know on your website you've got a link on it to Things Unseen, the daily podcast Monday to Friday by Sinclair Ferguson. If you haven't listened to it, I cannot commend it enough to you. For me, it is spiritual gold dust. It is brilliant teaching. And he himself made reference to this some time ago. He was talking about people who struggle with assurance and he said so often their struggle is not with assurance but rather that they're not grasping justification.

[ 30 : 00 ] What did he mean? Well, let's remind ourselves first of all what the Shorter Catechism says about justification. Justification, and you will have heard this before, we have to put so much emphasis on the opening words. Justification is an act. Sanctification is a work.

Justification is an act. It's done, it's complete, and it happens in your regeneration. Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our iniquities and accepted us as righteous in his sight. Remember we spoke earlier on about false assurance and the omniscience of God, how he could see right in and see there was nothing. Justification after God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all his iniquities and accepted us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

And so we need to grasp there. First of all, it's an act. I give this illustration. Imagine just now if amongst yourselves as a congregation you'd had a 15-year-old girl who had started following and then openly declared to you all that she had had a very dramatic and a very powerful conversion.

And it was evident to all that she had been brought to a possession of faith undeniable. So she's sitting here tonight down there, 15 years of age, and she's justified.

The Lord blesses her with 80 years of life after that, professing and witnessing and following the Lord.

[ 32 : 00 ] At 95 years of age, she's been following the Lord for 80 years. She's not one more ounce justified at 95 than she was at 15.

Though there be that immeasurable amount of sin in her life against light and knowledge from the time she was 15 until the time she was 95, she was justified the moment the work of regeneration began in her.

And we need to grasp that. Because her failure to do so can so often be the means of us having a lack of assurance.

A number of years ago, we were at communion in point on a Monday morning. And the preacher, some of you may have heard him, some of you may remember him. He passed away, I think it was March last year, Professor Edward Donnelly from Ireland, affectionately known as Ted Donnelly.

And it was a Monday morning, and he was talking to us about justification. And he said to us, If my congregation in Ireland understood justification, my pastoral work would be cut by 50%.

[ 33 : 27 ] And then he asked us this most unusual question to hear from our pulpit. He said, Do any of you believe in ghosts?

And he left it hanging like that. And you sort of felt a bit uncomfortable.

Where are you going with this? And then he said, I have many people in my congregation in Ireland who are haunted by ghosts. And that sounded even more strange.

Until he went on to explain what he meant. He had a lot of people in his congregation in Ireland who had been heavily and deeply involved in the troubles.

And they had come to faith, having committed what he called enormous sins. And though they had come to faith, yet what they had done so troubled them that they had a huge and an almighty struggle with assurance of faith.

[ 34 : 39 ] Because they weren't grasping the doctrine of justification. And we have to recognize that at the point of regeneration, we have been justified.

And that's the beauty of going to the shorter catechism and just stopping at these words, justification is an act of God's free grace. wherein he pardoneth all our iniquity and accepteth us as righteous in his sight.

Regardless of what your sight is, it is in his sight. You stand in his sight. Because imputed to you is the perfect righteousness of Christ.

And because we don't grasp that fully, it can affect so powerfully our assurance. When the believer sins against light and against knowledge, they can be so overwhelmed by that, that like Rebecca in the Old Testament, when she was told that she was blessed of the Lord and conscious of the conflict that was going on inside her, representative of the conflict that goes on in the life of the believer, she uttered the famous words, if it be so, why am I thus?

And how many of the Lord's people, so conscious of that bitter struggle at times, have themselves had to say, if I am thine, why am I thus?

[ 36 : 40 ] But not only can we misunderstand our justification, we can equally misunderstand our sanctification.

And for that, I want to show you that by taking you back to what we spoke earlier, the words of John Newton.

His great, great statement of full assurance, amazing grace, by grace that you save through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, lest any man should boast, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was blind, was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. And yet, in the outworking of God in his life, and the sanctifying work of God in his life, the very man who wrote, amazing grace, how sweet the sound, in the very, very beginning of his Christian life, if you want, in the sheltered water of the harbor of his conversion, as his Christian experience took him out of there to experience the storms that come into the life of the Christian.

Remember how it's spoken of in Psalm 107, they mount to heaven. Well, surely, when he wrote amazing grace, he was mounting up to heaven. Then to the depths, they do go down again.



- [ 38 : 24 ] Their soul doth faint and melt away with trouble and with pain. Who would ever have thought that the man who wrote amazing grace would go on to write these words.
- Tis a point I long to know. Oft it causes anxious thought. Do I love the Lord or no?
- Am I his or am I not? If I love, why am I thus? Why this dull and lifeless frame?
- Hardly sure can they be worse who have never heard his name. Sinclair Ferguson in the podcast talks about how when he read Luther's epistle to the Romans, where Luther said that he thought the epistle to the Romans was the greatest, greatest statement of the gospel.
- He said he wanted to jump in a time machine and go back to Luther and say, don't you mean the greatest epistle? But Luther went on to explain that he believed Romans was the greatest statement of the gospel.
- [ 39 : 44 ] I'm just saying this in the passing. Because he believed that while the gospels tell you how to be saved, Romans tells you why you have to be saved.
- But again, taking up Sinclair Ferguson's thought, you always want to jump in the time machine and go back to John Newton and say, Mr. Newton, you are the man who's composed these astonishing words of assurance of faith, amazing grace.
- And now you're saying to us, tis a point I long to know. Am I his or am I no? What has happened to you?
- And in another writing subsequent to that, he tells us what happened. He prayed. And the crushing lack of assurance that he experienced was as a result of prayer.
- I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love and every grace. Might more of his salvation know and seek more earnestly his face.
- [ 41 : 08 ] T'was he who taught me thus to pray and he, I trust, has answered prayer. But it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair.
- I hope that in some favored hour at once he'd answer my request and by his love's constraining power subdue my sins and give me rest.
- And listen to this. Instead of this, he made me feel the hidden evils of my heart and let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part.
- It brought him to this. Lord, why is this thy trembling cried? Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death? And then the answer.
- Tis in this way the Lord replied, I answer prayer for grace and faith. These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free and break thy schemes of earthly joy that thou mayest find thy all in me.
- [ 42 : 36 ] and we need at times to understand that in the unfolding of God's work in our lives and in the unfolding of sanctification and in the journey that faith commences us on as we make these discoveries about ourselves in our sanctification we have to hold on to our justification.
- We need to hold on to our justification and if we don't we can miss out on our assurance.
- Spurgeon has a beautiful comment about restoring us to our assurance. Faith he says is the root.
- there is no assurance in our lives without faith. Faith is the root but assurance is the flower. And there is no flower without the root but you may have the root and no flower.
- Quickly because the time is going. if tonight you are experiencing or you know somebody that is going through a time of lack of assurance and it's good for us all to be aware of this.

[ 44 : 07 ] It's not a pleasant subject to discourse on but one I think that is necessary for us if only though we haven't experienced it ourselves to be able to help others or we may yet experience it.

things that help us to come out of a lack of assurance and one of the greatest points that we need to examine ourselves inwardly and discern is this that whilst there is a counterfeit for every grace that we receive we can have a counterfeit assurance we can have a counterfeit faith we can have a counterfeit love we can have a counterfeit hope but there is no counterfeit for desire the puritans would say that the devil has a counterfeit for every grace but he doesn't have a counterfeit for desire and at times even though we are brought very very low in assurance let us look to our desire my uncle was an elder in can lock some of you here

I know will remember him and he was one day in cromwell street and he met a woman from the congregation who had been struggling for some time with a lack of assurance and she said to him that day when he met her just where the traffic lights are on cromwell street she said Duncan I'm going to go back into the world I can't go on and he said to her well just go down there go into these pubs where you see everybody going in and she just looked at him and said I could never do that and that was the very means of breaking that lack of assurance because it exposed to herself that although she was that low yet there was desire and so although we may be brought very very very very low let us always look to the desire that we have because scripture simply puts it like this the natural heart is at enmity with God and if you are here tonight and your assurance is as low as low if you can point and know that you have a desire the desire itself is that bruised reed and that smoking flax that the

Lord will not quench so your faith be brought that low but as well let us strive strive to recognize that the grace that we have received is a grace that must be fed and we must be found in the means of grace as it is spoken of in this very chapter and let us consider how to stir up one another verse 24 to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some if ever there's a bad habit for the believer that's the worst habit when we're neglecting to meet together because our spiritual life at this point is no difficult to our physical life if we're not giving ourselves the food necessary to support our physical life and how do we expect that our spiritual life is going to prosper if we're not feeding it where do we feed it well what is this tonight you might say well it's our evening service no friends it is a means of grace and amazing grace gives you the desire and the desire needs to be fed by regular disciplined diligent use of the means of grace be here and be here every time and even although you may experience times when you feel well you feel many things about coming here yet come

I'm sure many of you will have the experience of feeling that you were going to get nothing by going to the means of grace and you went home so full having been in the means of grace that experience is one that's repeated many many times but I just want to finish with this for the believer the lack of assurance can take them to the point where they become convinced inwardly and unable to share it with anybody and only with great difficulty with God himself that they are in fact a hypocrite as I say I'm going to finish with this but it's a point I heard one Sunday morning early in the early 1990s the minister that morning was a sabbath morning of communion and the table had been served and he did a post communion address and he spoke to the congregation and this is what he said somebody here today may be powerfully convicted and even possibly convinced that they are in fact a hypocrite and they may have been struggling with that across this whole weekend convinced that as they come to take their place at the

[ 50 : 21 ] Lord's table because of the power and strength of the inner conflict with the flesh against the spirit that they are in fact a hypocrite and that their place is not at the table and then he said these beautiful words my friends if there is a hypocrite at this table today they have had no such thought because the hypocrite is never concerned that he's a Christian but the Christian can be concerned that he is a hypocrite I don't know where you are on your journey with assurance but wherever you are strive to attain to that place that job was able to say

I know that my redeemer liveth grasp the doctrine of justification let his teachings sink right down in and finally for every look you take at yourself take ten looks at the Christ who loved you and gave himself for you may the Lord bless our thoughts let us bow our heads sovereign father in heaven we do give thanks unto thee for the ways in which thou didst hold us up as we traverse the ocean of life and as the psalmist spoke of that journey how they that are thine know what it is to mount to the heavens and also to go down to the depths in the ways that are appointed by thee for drawing us nearer to thyself how we need to be still and to know that thou art

God and to take great comfort and consolation that in the fullness of our earthly pilgrimage thou art the one who will speak to the storm and say be still and bring they that are thine into that haven that they desire to see as we are here one tonight may we yet meet in another place as one and the praise shall be thine forever in Christ amen we'll conclude at this time singing from psalm 73 a great great statement of assurance psalm 73 at verse 25 here the psalmist enjoying the fullness of assurance where he is able to say whom have I in the heavens high but thee o lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none my flesh and heart doth faint and fail but god doth fail me never for of my heart god is the strength and portion forever and so on down to the end of the psalm psalm 73 from verse 25 whom have I in the heavens high but thee o lord alone whom have I in the heavens high but thee o lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none my flesh and heart doth faint and fail but god doth fail me never for all my heart god is the strength and portion forever for though they that are far from thee forever perish shall then thou thou whore in wrong thee go thou hast destroy at all but surely it is good for me that

I draw near to God in God I trust that that all thy work I may declare abroad we'll conclude with prayer now unto thee who art able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before the presence of thy glory with great joy to thee our only God our saviour through Jesus Christ unto thee be glory majesty dominion and authority before all time and now and forever amen and shall have also y oh os may the is shall may