

# Encouragement : Remedy for Unbelief

Hebrews 3:12-13

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## A Practical Exercise for Assurance

If you're lacking assurance—if you're plagued with doubts, have lost your joy, become useless in Christian service, empty in worship, cold in praise, passionless in prayer, and vulnerable to false teachers—whatever the problem, know there is a cure: obeying God's Word in the power of the Spirit.

Take a practical step now by applying an ancient technique to help you think through what God's Word teaches about assurance. It's a question-and-answer process known as a catechism—the Greek word *katacheou* means “to echo back.” So echo back God's truth as you slowly and thoughtfully read the following out loud (partially adapted from Puritan William Guthrie's *The Christian's Great Interest* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982], pp. 193–96):

Question: *What is the essential duty a person has in this world?* Consummating a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is to recognize His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead as the satisfying atonement for sin, and walking in accord with that relationship.

Question: *Do all members of the church have a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?* No, only those who are truly saved.

Question: *How can I be certain I have that saving relationship?* The Lord will have done in your soul His own sovereign will—that of calling you to Himself through a work of conviction and humiliation so you will have discovered your sin and misery, and being so seriously agitated and threatened by it, you long for the Savior.

Question: *How can I know if I've made sufficient discovery and admission of my sin?* By taking salvation to your heart above any other pursuit in life. It will make Christ, your Redeemer, very precious to your soul. It will make you fear sin, repent, and seek to be saved on God's terms.

Question: *What is another way of discerning a saving relationship to Christ?* A strong and serious affection that reaches toward Christ as He is progressively revealed to you in the Gospel. Such love is the product of saving belief.

Question: *Are there other marks of a relationship with Christ?* You are truly saved when you have been made a whole new person, graciously changed and renewed. That is best evidenced by a desire to shun sin and pattern your life in obedience toward God's righteous demands.

Question: *What if I find sin prevailing over me?* Although every sin deserves eternal vengeance, if you regularly confess your sins with unfeigned repentance and shame before God—fleeing to Christ for forgiveness for all known and unknown iniquities—He will grant you mercy and pardon because you stand in grace, and your salvation is forever secure.

Question: *What if my sins are serious and repeated?* Whatever they are, Jesus Christ has paid the price for them so that if you sincerely and earnestly have turned to Him in repentant faith, you will never enter into condemnation. Moreover, His gracious provision for those who believe includes power to overcome sin and live righteously.

Question: *Is faith alone the requirement for salvation?* Yes, it is the only basis upon which God offers peace and pardon to humanity. However, faith—if it is genuine—will not be alone in the soul, but will always be accompanied by true repentance and an eager desire to conform to God's will and way.

Question: *How can I be sure I've settled my eternal destiny with the Lord?* Express with your mouth to God what the Holy Spirit through Scripture has led you to believe in your heart.

Question: *What are the results of a relationship with Christ?* Union and communion with God here, and blessed fellowship and glory hereafter.

Question: *How can I come to full assurance that I have such a relationship?* By affirming the promises of God as revealed in Scripture by the internal witness of the Spirit, and by manifesting real and righteous fruit born out of love for Christ and a desire to bring Him honor and glory.

John MacArthur, *Saved Without a Doubt*, 125-127

## I. Unbelief Illustrated

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## II. Danger of Unbelief

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## III. Need for Encouragement

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## IV. Encouragement Illustrated

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