

# The Problem of Assurance

*What Americans Believe* (Barna, 1991)

99% of Americans  
believe they are  
Heavenbound when  
they die.

## Matthew 7:13-14

**13** “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. **14** For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

**Isn't it ironic?**

The \$64,000 Question:

“How Can I Be  
Sure I Am A  
Christian?”

# Christianity = Certainty, Right?

- We **KNOW** Jesus is the Son of God.
- We **KNOW** He died on the Cross as a Ransom for many.
- We **KNOW** He was Resurrected from the Grave.
- We **KNOW** He offers Forgiveness to all who Believe.

**“Our entire worldview is built on certainties, both historical and theological, and that’s what sets Christianity apart from most other religions...They have enigmas; Christianity has truths.”**



## 1 John 5:13

<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may *know* that you have eternal life.

## Romans 8:38-39

38 For *I am convinced* that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



## Hebrews 6:19

<sup>19</sup> This hope we have as  
an *anchor* of the soul,  
a hope both *sure* and  
*steadfast*...

## Job 19:25

<sup>25</sup> As for me, I *know*  
that my Redeemer  
lives, And at the last He  
will take His stand on  
the earth.

## But If That's The Case...

Why do so many Christians find it so difficult to say with John, Paul, and many others in Scripture, that they know with certainty that they have a saving faith in Christ?

# Causes of Doubt

1. Spiritual Immaturity
2. Sensitivity to Sin
3. Comparisons with other Christians
4. Childhood Conversion

## A Word from Greg Gilbert:

“We are finite creatures, with limited minds and dependent souls. In some shape or form, doubt will always be a part of our experience, and the search for assurance will always be a fight until the day we stand with Christ and our faith is turned to sight.”



**And Yet...**

There are passages of  
Scripture that trouble us...





## 2 Corinthians 13:5

**5** Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

## Hebrews 6:4-6

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance...

**We Read These Verses...**

**And oftentimes we are left  
with more fear than  
confidence, and  
sometimes even terrified  
that we might lose our  
salvation.**



## *C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography*

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**“I felt in that time very weary,  
and very sad, and very heavy  
at heart; and I began to doubt  
in my own mind whether I  
really enjoyed the things  
which I preached to others. It  
seemed to be a dreadful thing  
for me to be only a waiter,  
and not a guest, at the gospel  
feast.”**



# Doubting Assurance

Is **NOT** Unbelief.

“Unbelief is unambiguous in its denial of certain things and clear about where it stands.”

- Donald Whitney

# In Fact...

I submit that if you have a proper:

**Anthropology**

Hamartiology

**Theology Proper**

Then you have probably experienced doubt  
about your salvation.

**So, we must have a proper Soteriology.**



# Many Throw Up Their Hands

- And say: “There can be no assurance of salvation,” which is manifested in two different ways:
  1. **Epistemological:** We can't know for sure
  2. **Objective:** We can lose our salvation



# Two Ditches

## 1. Legalism

- Gain assurance of salvation through a focus on our own works
- Why is this dangerous?

## 2. Antinomianism

- Discount good works entirely as a confirmation of salvation
- Why is this dangerous?

# Why Do We Doubt?



**SIN**



# We Look at Ourselves...

- We see sin still evident in our lives.
- We wonder if a Christian's heart can look like ours do in our weaker moments
- We don't see the growth in holiness we would like
- We don't experience victory over a particular sin
- We don't see fruit, joy, praise, patience, and love that we think ought to mark a Christian

**And We Read 1 John 3:9...**

**9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**

**And we despair...**



# And We Are Not Alone...

- Romans 7:24 –

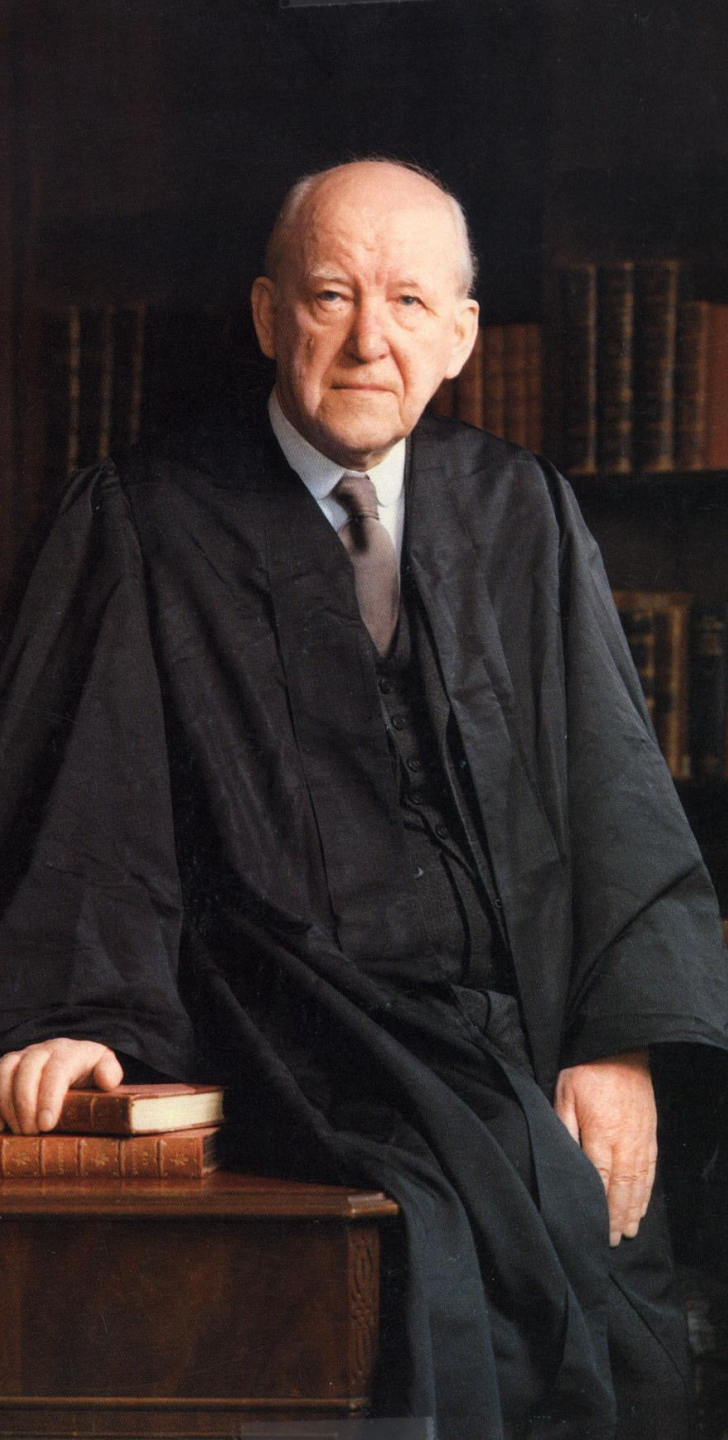
“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”

- Romans 8:1 –

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

## **A Few Things:**

1. Experiencing Chronic Doubts About Salvation is Unusual and Unhealthy
2. **Take All Doubts Seriously**
3. Removing Doubt is Possible



## **Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

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**“Nothing is more important for us than to know that we are indeed the children of God...You can’t really enjoy the blessings of the Christian life unless you’ve got this assurance.”**

**Donald Whitney:**

**“Assurance is a gift of God and will not come by your efforts; nevertheless, it will not come without your efforts.”**



## **4 Main Sources of Assurance**

**1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ**

**2. The Promises of God**

**3. The Witness of the Spirit**

**4. The Fruits of Obedience**

