

Booklet Recommendation: THE GIFT OF ASSURANCE. Author: David Engelmsa. Published by the Evangelism Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 61 Pages

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters

The doctrine of the assurance of our salvation is indeed a very precious doctrine to the Reformed believer. This is because by this doctrine the believer is assured that God in Jesus Christ has forgiven him of all his sins on the cross, inherits eternal life now and in heaven. What a blessed truth!

The author of this excellent booklet is emeritus professor of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. For many years he has taught Hebrew and the Old Testament in the seminary. He introduces this subject by stating that “The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ causes the believing child of God to know his own salvation with certainty. The Spirit gives assurance of assurance. This is an especially vital and precious work of the Spirit” page 6.

He then goes to expose the errors that militate against this biblical doctrine. The Puritans of the late 16th and 17th century among others were guilty of teaching falsely on this subject. This, I believe, is due mainly to their view that the assurance of salvation is not the essence of faith. This implies that believers do not as a rule experience the assurance of salvation but they sometimes receive assurance after many years of searching, longing and working for it. Therefore, the puritans often exhorted “the believers to pray fervently, to work arduously, and to struggle heroically, often for many years, in order at last, by dint of all this spiritual work, to obtain salvation” (page 9).

The author proceeds to the exposition of the assurance of salvation. Firstly, assurance is the sealing of work of the Holy Spirit. He seals the believer. Ephesians 1.13, 14 teach that those who believe in Christ, according to God’s eternal predestination are sealed. Sealing is the work of grace within those who trust in Christ that makes them sure and certain (page 20). And they are subjectively certain of their salvation. And when are they sealed, they are sealed immediately they have trusted in Christ, and not after some time. The author rightly points out that the Authorised Version of the Bible may have misled readers by inserted the word, “after” in the phrase, “In whom ye also trusted, *after* ye have heard the word of truth ...”. The word, “after” is not in the original. And in Ephesians 1.14, teaches that “the earnest is foretaste and pledge of the inheritance of all those who believe in Christ. It is perfect. As foretaste and pledge, the earnest is assurance of salvation,” (page 30).

Secondly, assurance is the witness with our Spirit. Romans 8.15, 16 is the profound explanation of the assurance of the elect believer. “Abba, Father” expresses certainty of salvation. One who knows God as his Father is sure of the love of God for him in Jesus Christ” (page 31). This phrase is expressive of universal certainty which includes all believers, Jews and Gentiles.

Thirdly, assurance is justification by faith. “Inasmuch as justification is the certain fruit and benefit of the activity of believing in Jesus Christ, assurance is of the essence

of faith” (page 33). Justification implies the assurance of salvation on that part of the one who is justified by his faith. And in Luke 18.14, that “the publican returned home leaping and dancing, with gladness on his face and peace and joy in his soul, conscious and assured that God pardoned his sins in mercy for the sake of the sacrifice of the Lamb on his behalf” (page 34)

And finally, the author ends with the needed exhortation:

“Listen to the Spirit’s witness in you by the gospel of grace, and to the witness of your own spirit as the Spirit testifies to your spirit, and be certain – absolutely certain. And cry out, with all believers, young and old, aged saints who have been members of the church all their lives and recent converts, godly parents and godly children, “Abba, Father”.

I pray that this review has whetted your appetite to read this booklet. You can borrow it from our library. I will donate two copies of this booklet with the librarian today. This booklet is also available on-line at http://prca.org/pamphlets/Pamphlet_109.pdf

Blessed Reading.

Pastor Paul Goh