

Faith in Christ vs. Assurance of Salvation

Faith is not about trusting in anything *within* ourself (like a feeling or intellectual confidence), but rather about placing our trust in something *outside* of ourself. The biblical definition of faith emphasizes trust in God, not in personal abilities or positive thinking. It is described as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11.1), indicating that faith is a rock-solid trust in God's promises, which are external to the individual. This trust looks both backward to what God has done in the past—such as the creation of the universe—and forward to what God will do in the future, including the second coming of Christ. Faith is not merely a feeling or a mental acknowledgment; it involves a deep, enduring commitment that goes beyond belief. While belief may be a mental acceptance of truth, faith includes *reliance* and *trust* (acting on what we believe) that endures even in the face of doubt. The OBJECT of faith is crucial—faith is not about the self, but about the reliability of God and His promises. Scripture teaches that faith itself is a gift from God (Eph 2.8), not something generated by human effort, reinforcing that it originates outside of us. Therefore, faith is fundamentally about trusting in something external—God and His word—not in our own power or thoughts.

There is a significant difference between faith and assurance of salvation, though they are closely related. Faith is the act of self-commitment to Christ in all His person and perfection as offered in the gospel, involving a personal union with Him. It is the primary and direct activity of a regenerate heart, where one trusts in Christ for salvation, not based on one's own works or feelings, but on the objective truth of Scripture. **Assurance**, on the other hand, is the conviction that one is no longer in a state of nature but in a state of grace, and the well-grounded persuasion that one is truly saved. It is a reflective act of faith, where one recognizes the reality of their salvation based on God's promises and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

While faith is the means by which salvation is received, assurance is the confident realization of that salvation. Faith is not the belief that one has been saved, but the trust in Christ to save; assurance comes *after* faith, as a result of it. Some theologians emphasize that assurance is not essential to the essence of saving faith, meaning a believer can have faith without immediate assurance, especially during times of spiritual struggle or doubt. However, assurance is still a vital and necessary component of the Christian life, as it brings peace, joy, and strength in obedience.

The Bible supports this distinction. For example, 1John 5.13 states that the purpose of the letter is "that you may know that you have eternal life," indicating that assurance is a *goal* of the Christian life, not a *prerequisite* for faith. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God (Rom 8.16), which is the foundation of assurance. Yet, even when assurance is weak or absent, true faith remains, as it is grounded in Christ's finished work, not in one's emotional state or performance.

In summary, **faith** is the initial trust in Christ for salvation, while **assurance** is the confident knowledge and experience of that salvation, rooted in God's promises and the Spirit's witness.