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Recommended Citation

Moon, Jerry, "Am I Saved? Should I Say So? (Part II)" (2010). *Memory, Meaning & Life*. 44.
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Memory, Meaning & Faith

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July 18, 2010

Am I Saved? Should I Say So? (Part II)

by Jerry Moon

As established in [Part I](#) of this two-part series, Ellen White's counsels on how to find true assurance underscore the truth that the ground of salvation is in the merit of Christ alone. To those seeking to merit salvation, she writes,

It makes all the difference in the world with us spiritually whether we rely upon God without doubt, as upon a sure foundation, or whether we are seeking to find some righteousness in ourselves before we come to Him. Look away from self to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

To others who “seem to feel that they must be on probation, and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed before they can claim His blessing,” she reassures that

these dear souls may claim the blessing of God even now. They *must have His grace, the spirit of Christ to help their infirmities, or they cannot form Christian characters.* Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are,—sinful, helpless, dependent. ([RH April 22, 1884](#), emphasis supplied)

Present Assurance

To those who doubt the availability of *present* assurance, Ellen White cautions,

You are not to look to the future, thinking that at some distant day you are to be made holy; it is *now* that you are to be sanctified through the truth. . . . No one can make himself better, but we are to come to Jesus as we are, earnestly desiring to be cleansed from every spot and stain of sin, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *We are not to doubt his mercy, and say, "I do not know whether I shall be saved or not."* By living faith we must lay hold of his promise, for he has said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." ([ST April 4, 1892](#), emphasis supplied)

Each one of you may know for yourself that you have a living Saviour, that he is your helper and your God. *You need not stand where you say, "I do not know whether I am saved."* Do you believe in Christ as your personal Saviour? If you do, then rejoice. ([GCB April 10, 1901](#), emphasis supplied)

It is God that circumcises the heart. The whole work is the Lord's from the beginning to the end. The perishing sinner may say: "I am a lost sinner; but Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Mark 2:17). I am a sinner, and He died upon Calvary's cross to save me. *I need not remain a moment longer unsaved.* He died and rose again for my justification, and *He will save me now.* I accept the forgiveness He has promised." ([1SM 392](#), emphasis supplied)

On maintaining the experience of assurance, Ellen White declared that

Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go." ([MH 182](#))

Warnings Against False Assurance

Ellen White's frequent concentration on the external evidences of salvation is an expression of her concern that many who think they are saved will find out too late that they are lost ([Matt 7:21-23](#); [8:11-12](#)). In view of this danger she often quotes Paul, “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith” ([2 Cor 13:5](#); FE 214). “Deal truly with your own soul,” she warns. “Be

as earnest, as persistent, as you would be if your mortal life were at stake. This is a matter to be settled between God and your own soul, settled for eternity. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your ruin” (SC 35).

Again, “Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God.” (SC 47-48).

Misconceptions About Ellen White And Assurance

Most of the misconceptions about her concept of assurance spring from a few passages that are clearly warnings against false assurance, particularly antinomianism, but are not denials of true assurance. She warns that “We are never to rest in a *satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, ‘I am saved.’*”

Her opposition here is not against the use of the words “I am saved,” but against an attitude sometimes expressed by those words, that ongoing spiritual life and growth are unnecessary.

When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayers, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. . . . As long as man is *full of weakness—for of himself he cannot save his soul*—he should never dare to say, “I am [eternally, irrevocably] saved.” (1SM 314, emphasis supplied)

Notice that the ground of her warning against a presumptuous claim of assurance is the fundamental gospel fact that man “cannot save his soul.” The one who knows he or she has no basis for salvation except the atonement of Christ will be the most careful not to presumptuously sin against such love.

A similar admonition against false assurance cautions that

Never can we safely *put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation*. . . . Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan's devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. . . . ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.’ 1 Cor. 10:12. Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ. (COL 155, emphasis supplied)

“Saved” is here equated with putting “confidence in self” and feeling that one is “secure against temptation.” But right in the midst of these cautions, occurs the balancing assertion that “when we give ourselves to Christ” we may “know that He accepts us,” showing that her polemic is not against true biblical assurance, but against presumption leading to false assurance.

True Assurance

But the few instances of warning against false assurance do not by any means negate her strong teaching on true assurance. On the contrary, she insisted that “it is *essential* to have faith in Jesus, and to believe you are saved through Him” (RH Nov. 1, 1892, emphasis supplied). Of herself she wrote, “*Jesus has saved me*, though I had nothing to present to Him” (RH July 14, 1891, emphasis supplied).

“The perishing sinner . . . need not remain a moment longer unsaved” (1SM 392). Repentant sinners may “claim the blessing of God even now” (3SM 150). The believer “need not stand where you say, ‘I do not know whether I am saved’” (GCB April 10, 1901). And the one who clings to Christ with present active faith can be “as safe as though inside the city of God” (10MR 175).

In summary, those who come to God in the way that Scripture has prescribed, have every right to claim His salvation, and He will keep them to the end. Ellen White’s strong warnings against the misuse of the claim, “I am saved” were not directed at a true biblical concept of present assurance in Christ, but against the idea of an irreversible guarantee leading to self-confidence, presumption, and casual disobedience. She was equally as forceful when writing about the necessity of true present assurance—understood in the context of justification by faith, daily connection with Christ; and obedience to the known will of God.

For more study download Dr. Moon's lecture notes: [08 Assurance 2009-02-20](#), [08a Assurance, 2003](#)




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