

Weekly Newsletter

4th August 2026



Holyrood
Church

Reflection: Finding Assurance

By Joe Barnard

Assurance of salvation is a miry pit for a lot of Christians. Not a few get stuck in its mud and struggle to find a way out.

Therefore, the topic is of constant relevance. Every church has members who are suffering needless anguish because they are not sure how to escape the question, *Am I a child of God?*

Options to Anchor the Soul

There are various options available to Christians as they try to steady their soul.

One is to take a strictly objective approach to assurance. Assurance, some conclude, is just a matter of putting total trust in the Bible, or the church, or the doctrine of justification.

Now, there is some good in these thoughts. They protect us from a sinister form of pietism. Nonetheless, something – or someone – is missing. In each case, the source of confidence is found in something other than God.

A different option is to take a strictly subjective approach to assurance. Assurance, in this case, is just a matter of searching the heart to see if there is authentic faith, correct spiritual emotions, or some inaudible testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Again, there is some good in these thoughts. The Puritans were not wrong for encouraging Christians to self-examination.

At the same time, as those most given to self-examination are well-aware, the human heart is about as stable as the sea in the middle of a storm. The more we cast our eyes on the wind and the waves of human feeling, the more we tend to lose sight of the only one who can steady the heart, Christ himself.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne was onto something when he advised, "For every one look at self, ten looks at Christ."

Fortunately, there is a third option when it comes to grounding assurance. This we might label a relational approach. Rather than thinking in terms of objectivity or subjectivity, we instead put ourselves in direct relation to God as He reveals himself in the gospel. Here, we may obliquely catch a view of the self from the peripheral vision of our attention. However, our focus is not on the self, but on the Triune God and the way in which He reveals himself through the mission of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.





Standing on the Rock that Is Higher than I

What does this mean in practice?

First, it means reflecting on the Father's great love for sinners. In Romans 8:3, we read, "For God has done what the law...could not do. By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh".

These are amazing words. They tell us that the spring of the fountain of living water is in the heart of the Father himself. The gospel is not the revelation of an implacable judge who is searching for reasons to arraign and condemn Adam's seed. Instead, the Father is the mastermind of redemption. Look along the life of Christ and what you see at the far end is the immeasurable love of the first person of the blessed Trinity.

Second, it means reflecting on the Holy Spirit's perfect enabling. If the path to glory was one that we had to undertake alone, then the chance of completing the journey would be no higher than the chance of holding one's breath and touching the bottom of the ocean floor.

Yet, God has not left us alone. Instead, we have the Holy Spirit empowering us for each step of the way. In Romans 8:26 Paul writes, "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness." Paul then goes on to explain the way in which the Spirit groans in intercession on our behalf with prayers that are perfectly aligned to the will of God.

If, in the words of James, the prayers of the righteous much avail, just think of the power that comes from the Holy Spirit's intercession!

Third, it means reflecting on the inseverable love of Christ. Jesus is not the kind of person who goes halfway with someone and then abandons him mid-journey. The Saviour who died for sinners sticks by them until they are as secure in glory as he is himself.

Paul affirms this point at the end of Romans 8. Paul's answer to the question, what can separate us from the love of Christ? is, in summary, *nothing*. What Jesus starts, he finishes.

Now, consider what all of this means for assurance. The best way to find spiritual peace is not by looking to the church, or the Bible, or to any doctrine. The best way is by turning one's eyes to God himself. The more attention we give to the perfect, steadfast love revealed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the more we will rest like a child in the strong yet tender embrace of everlasting arms.

Prayer Meetings

Over the summer, we are meeting to pray every Wednesday from 7-8pm in person. There will be no online option for July and August. On Wednesday 12th we'll be having a 'Back to School' focus and praying for all our children, young people and teachers.





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Joe's Annual Leave

Joe's off on annual leave from **Tuesday 11th to Friday 21st August** and is over in the US. Please contact one of the elders for any urgent matters while he's away. We're very grateful to Jon Gemmell for taking our services on Sunday 16th August.

Summer Appeal 2026

Our summer appeal is now closed and the final amount will be confirmed next week.

Each year our Summer Appeal goes towards the support of our three Holyrood missionaries – Lorna Ferguson (serving with OMF in Japan), James Stewart (serving with OMF in Singapore) and the Sorsamo Family (serving with Wycliffe in Finland).



Annual General Meeting

Please save the date! The church AGM will take place on **Wednesday 26th August** at 7pm in the building. It would be great if as many as possible could be there.

Act Like Men – Tuesday 25th August



Join us at Hope Church Bingham for an evening men's conference to encourage each other to live for King Jesus in Edinburgh and beyond. This year our Act Like Men evening conferences will focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our next one is on **Tuesday 25th August** from 7:00-8:30pm at Hope Church Bingham. Ben Castaneda will help us understand the hope of The Resurrection of Christ.

For more details and to sign up go [here](https://www.hopebingham.co.uk).





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Enlisted and Deployed, Cross Training Ministries Event – Saturday 12th September

Enlisted and Deployed – from disciple to disciple-maker.

Join us for a training event for men in Edinburgh who are ready to step up. **Saturday 12th September** from 9.30am – 1pm at Holyrood. Speak to Joe for more details.



Celtic Worship – Saturday 8th August

Celtic Worship are hosting 'Then Sings My Soul', a praise event at Charlotte Chapel, on **Saturday 8th August 2026**. For more details and tickets, go [here](#).

Church Calendar

This week for your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting from 7-8pm in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (and livestreamed)
 - Evening Service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching.
- Monday: Youth Discipleship Team Meeting at 7.30pm in the church

