

**FULL ASSURANCE  
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**contents**

[Introduction](#)..... 1  
[Ch 01 Striving After Assurance](#).....2  
[Ch 02 Assurance Forever](#).....4  
[Ch 03 Much Assurance](#).....8  
[Ch 04 Full Assurance of Faith](#).....12  
[Ch 05 Full Assurance of Understanding](#).....16  
[Ch 06 Full Assurance of Hope](#).....20

**Introduction**

In penning the following pages, I have had but one outstanding object before me: to make as plain as I possibly can just how any troubled soul may find settled peace with God. I am thinking particularly of those people who believe the Holy Scriptures to be divinely inspired, and who recognize that salvation is only to be found in Christ, but somehow have missed the "peace of a perfect trust," and though earnestly desiring to know the Lord, are floundering in perplexity of mind, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, in the Slough of Despond, or like the same anxious inquirer in his earlier experience, trembling beneath the frowning cliffs of Sinai.

Consequently, no attempt is here made to prove that the Bible is true, as both the writer and the readers he has specially in view take that for granted. People who are bothered by doubts along that line may find abundant help elsewhere, as there are not wanting plenty of good books, written by sound Christian scholars, that present unanswerable arguments for the inerrancy and the divine authority of the Bible. The trouble is that so many people who profess to want help along these lines are too indifferent to investigate, even when the opportunity is put before them. It is of really earnest seekers after the truth that I am thinking.

For many months I was myself in much doubt and confusion of thought until God by His Holy Spirit showed me through His Word the true ground of peace. That was many years ago, and as I write I find myself living over again the conflict of those days, and recalling, as though it were but yesterday, the gladness that filled my soul when I rested in Christ alone, and entered into a lasting peace with God that has known no disturbance throughout the years.

The clouds may at times veil my sky. Sorrows and difficulties may try my soul. New discoveries of the corruption of my own heart may bring humiliation and repentance. But this peace with God remains unchanged, for it rests not on me, not on my frames of mind or experiences, but on the finished work of Christ and the testimony of the Word of God, of which it is written: "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

## Ch 01 Striving After Assurance.

In a ministry of almost half a century, I have had the joy of leading many to rest in Christ. And I have found that the questions that perplex, and the hindrances to full assurance are all more or less basically alike, though expressed differently by different people. So I have sought in this little volume to set forth, as clearly as I know how, the truths that I have proven specific in meeting the needs of thousands of souls.

I have been told that in days gone by young doctors were in the habit of using a great number of medicines in their endeavors to help their various patients, but that with increasing practice and larger experience, they discarded many remedies which they found were of little use and thereafter concentrated on a few that they had proven to be really worth while.

The physician of souls is likely to have much the same experience, and while this may give a somewhat uninteresting sameness to his later ministrations, as compared or contrasted with his earlier ones, it puts him after all in the immediate succession of the apostles of our Lord, whose viewpoint may be summed up in words written by the greatest of them all: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Here is the sovereign remedy for all spiritual ills. Here is the one supreme message that is needed, whether they realize it or not, by all men everywhere. And this I have tried to proclaim in these unpretending pages.

### As an Itinerant Preacher

For the most of my life I have been an itinerant preacher of the gospel, travelling often as much as thirty to forty thousand miles a year to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. In all these years I only recall two occasions on which I have missed my trains. One was by becoming confused between what is known as daylight saving and standard time. The other was through the passive assurance of a farmer-host, who was to drive me from his country home into the town of Lowry, Minnesota, in time for me to take an afternoon train for Winnipeg, on which I had a Pullman reservation. I can remember yet how I urged my friend to get on the way, but he potted about with all kinds of inconsequential chores, insistent that there was plenty of time. I fumed and fretted to no purpose. He was calmly adamant.

Finally, he hitched up his team and we started across the prairie. About a mile from town we saw the train steam into the station, pause a few moments, and depart for the north. There was nothing to do but wait some five or six hours for the night express, on which I had no reservation, and found when it arrived I could not get a berth, so was obliged to sit in a crowded day coach all the way to the Canadian border, after which there was more room. While annoyed, I comforted myself with the words, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." I prayed earnestly that if He had some purpose in permitting me to miss my train and comfortable accommodations, I might not fail to find it out. When I boarded the crowded, foul-smelling coach, I found there was only one vacancy left and that was half of a seat midway down the car, a sleeping young man occupying the other half. As I sat down by him and stowed away my baggage, he awoke, straightened up, and gave me a rather sleepy greeting. Soon we were in an agreeable, low-toned conversation, while other passengers slept and snored all about us. A suitable opportunity presenting itself, I inquired, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" He sat up as though shot. "How strange that you should ask me that! I went to sleep thinking of Him and wishing I did know Him, but I do not understand, though I want to! Can you help me?"

Further conversation elicited the fact that he had been working in a town in southern Minnesota,

where he had been persuaded to attend some revival meetings. Evidently, the preaching was in power and he became deeply concerned about his soul. He had even gone forward to the mourners' bench, but though he wept and prayed over his sins, he came away without finding peace. I knew then why I had missed my train. This was my Gaza, and though unworthy I was sent of God to be his Philip. So I opened to the same scripture that the Ethiopian treasurer had been reading when Philip met him: Isaiah 53.

Drawing my newly-found friend's attention to its wonderful depiction of the crucified Saviour, though written so long before the event, I put before him verses 4, 5 and 6: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

As the young man read them, they seemed to burn their way into his very soul. He saw himself as the lost sheep that had taken its own way. He saw Christ as the One on whom Jehovah laid all his iniquity, and he bowed his head and told Him he would trust Him as his own Saviour. For perhaps two hours we had hallowed fellowship on the way, as we turned from one scripture to another. Then he reached his destination and left, thanking me most profusely for showing him the way of life. I have never seen him since, but I know I shall greet him again at the judgment seat of Christ.

#### Help for the Needy Soul

Into whose hands this book will fall I cannot tell, but I send it forth with the prayer that it may prove as timely a message to many a needy soul as the talk on the train that night in Minnesota with the young man who felt his need and had really turned to God, but did not understand the way of peace and so had no assurance, until he found it through the written Word, borne home to his soul in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you are just as troubled as that young man, and should by divine providence peruse this treatise at any time, I trust that you will see that it is the Lord's own way of seeking to draw you to Himself, and that you will read it carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully, looking up each passage referred to in your own Bible, if you have one, and that thus you, too, may obtain full assurance.

Be certain of this: God is deeply concerned about you. He longs to give you the knowledge of His salvation. It is no mere accident that these pages have come to your attention. He put it on my heart to write them. He would have you read them. They may prove to be His own message to your troubled soul. God's ways are varied. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

#### The Barber Was Much Concerned

Another personal experience will perhaps accentuate and fittingly close this chapter. One afternoon I was walking the busy streets of Indianapolis, looking for a barber shop. Entering the first one I saw (my attention being attracted by the red and white striped pole), I was soon seated in the chair, and the tonsorial artist began operations. He was chatty but subdued, I thought, not carelessly voluble. Praying for an opening, it soon seemed a fitting time to ask, as in the other case, "Are you acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ?" To my astonishment, the barber's reaction was remarkable. He stopped his work, burst into uncontrollable weeping, and when the first paroxysm had passed, exclaimed, "How strange that you should ask me about Him! In all my life I never had a man ask me that before. And I have been thinking of Him nearly all the time for the last three days. What can you tell me about him?"

It was my turn to be amazed. I asked him what had led up to this. He explained that he had gone to see a picture of the Passion Play, and that it had made an indelible impression on his mind. He kept asking, "Why did that good Man have to suffer so? Why did God let Him die like that?" He had never

heard the gospel in his life, so I spent an hour with him opening up the story of the Cross. We prayed together and he declared that all was now plain, and he trusted the Saviour for himself. I had the joy of knowing, as I left his shop, that the gospel was indeed the dynamic of God unto salvation to him, an uninstructed Greek barber, who had learned for the first time that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him.

To me it was a singular instance of divine sovereignty. The very idea of the Passion Play - sinful men endeavoring to portray the life, death and resurrection of Jesus - was abhorrent to me. But God, who delights not in the death of the sinner, but desires that all should turn to Him and live, used that very picture to arouse this man and so make him ready to hear the gospel. And I could not doubt that He had directed my steps to that particular shop, that I might have the joy of pointing the anxious barber to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. That in many similar instances He may be pleased to own and use these written messages is my earnest desire.

"Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding, Ransomed souls the tidings tell; 'Tis a deep that knows no sounding, Who its length and breadth can tell? On its glories, let my soul forever dwell."

## Ch 02 Assurance Forever.

THERE is a very remarkable statement found in the book of Isaiah, chapter thirty-two, verse 17: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

Assurance forever! Is it not a wonderfully-pleasing expression? Assurance not for a few days, or weeks, or months - nor yet for a few years, or even a lifetime - but forever! It is this blessed assurance that God delights to impart to all who come to Him as needy sinners seeking the way of life.

Two words are employed in this verse that are intimately related - peace and assurance. Yet how many deeply-religious people there are in the world who scarcely know the meaning of either term. They are honestly seeking after God. They are punctilious about their religious duties, such as reading the Scriptures, saying their prayers, attending church, partaking of the sacrament, and supporting the cause of Christ. They are scrupulously honest and upright in all their dealings with their fellowmen, endeavoring to fulfil every civic and national responsibility, and to obey the golden rule. Yet they have no lasting peace, nor any definite assurance of salvation. I am persuaded that in practically every such instance the reason for their unquiet and unsettled state is due to a lack of apprehension of God's way of salvation.

Though living seven centuries before Calvary, it was given to Isaiah to set forth in a very blessed manner the righteousness of God as later revealed in the gospel. This is not to be wondered at for he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Spirit.

The key word of his great book, often called the fifth gospel, is the same as in the Epistle to the Romans - the word, "righteousness." And I would urge the reader to meditate on this word for a little and see how it is used in the Holy Scriptures.

The Dying Lawyer

A lawyer lay dying. He had attended church all his life but was not saved. He was known to be a man of unimpeachable integrity. Yet as he lay there facing eternity, he was troubled and distressed. He knew that upright as he had been before men, he was a sinner before God. His awakened conscience brought to his memory sins and transgressions that had never seemed so heinous as then, when he knew that shortly he must meet his Maker.

A friend put the direct question, "Are you saved?" He replied in the negative, shaking his head sadly. The other asked, "Would you not like to be saved?" "I would indeed," was his reply, "if it is not already too late. But," he added almost fiercely, "I do not want God to do anything wrong in saving me!"

His remark showed how deeply he had learned to value the importance of righteousness. The visitor turned to his Bible and there read how God had Himself devised a righteous way to save unrighteous sinners. The fact is that He has no other possible way of saving anybody. If sin must be glossed over, in order that the sinner may be saved, he will be forever lost. God refuses to compromise His own character for the sake of anyone, much as He yearns to have all men to be saved.

It was this that stirred the soul of Luther, and brought new light and help after long, weary months of groping in the darkness, trying in vain to save himself in conformity to the demands of blind leaders of the blind. As he was reading the Latin Psalter, he came across David's prayer, "Save me in thy righteousness." Luther exclaimed, "What does this mean? I can understand how God can damn me in His righteousness, but if He would save me it must surely be in His mercy!" The more he meditated on it, the more the wonder grew. But little by little the truth dawned upon his troubled soul that God Himself had devised a righteous method whereby He could justify unrighteous sinners who came to Him in repentance and received His word in faith.

Isaiah stresses this great and glorious truth throughout his marvellous Old Testament unfolding of the gospel plan. In unsparing severity, the prophet portrays man's utterly lost and absolutely hopeless condition, apart from divine grace. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and purtrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:5,6). It is surely a revolting picture, but nevertheless it is true of the unsaved man as God sees him. Sin is a vile disease that has fastened upon the very vitals of its victim. None can free himself from its pollution, or deliver himself from its power.

#### A Sure Remedy

But God has a remedy. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, said the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (v. 18). It is God Himself who can thus purge the leper from all his uncleanness, and justify the ungodly from all his guilt. And He does it, not at the expense of righteousness, but in a perfectly righteous way.

"'Tis in the Cross of Christ we see How God can save, yet righteous be; 'Tis in the Cross of Christ we trace His righteousness and wondrous grace. The sinner who believes is free, Can say, the Saviour died for me; Can point to the atoning blood And say, That made my peace with God."

So it is Isaiah who, above all other prophetic writers, sets forth the work of the Cross. He looks on by the eye of faith to Calvary, and there he sees the Holy Sufferer dying for sins not His own. He exclaims, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD (Jehovah) hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5,6).

Have you ever thoughtfully considered these remarkable statements? If not, I beg you to ponder over

them now: It was Jesus that the Spirit of God brought before the mind of Isaiah. He would have you gaze upon Him, too. Take each clause separately and weigh its wondrous meaning:

"He was wounded for our transgressions." Make it personal! Put yourself and your own sins in there. Read it as though it said, "He was wounded for my transgressions." Do not get lost in the crowd. If there had never been another sinner in all the world, Jesus would have gone to the cross for you! Oh, believe it and enter into peace!

"He was bruised for our iniquities." Make it personal! Think what your ungodliness and your self-will cost Him. He took the blows that should have fallen upon you. He stepped in between you and God, as the rod of justice was about to fall. It bruised Him in your stead. Again, I plead, make it personal! Cry out in faith, "He was bruised for my iniquities."

Now go farther: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." All that was necessary to make peace with God, He endured. "He made peace through the blood of his cross." Change the "our" to "my." "He made my peace."

"He bore on the tree The sentence for me, And now both the surety And sinner are free."

Now note the last clause of this glorious verse, "With his stripes we are healed." Do you see it? Can you set to your seal that God is true, and cry exultingly, "Yes, I a poor sinner, I a lost, ruined soul, I who so richly deserved judgment, I am healed by His stripes"?

"We are healed by His stripes, Wouldst thou add to the Word? He Himself is our righteousness made. The best robe of heaven He bids thee put on, Oh, couldst thou be better arrayed?"

#### The Old Account Settled

It is not that God ignores our sins, or indulgently over-looks them; but on the cross all have been settled for. In Isaiah 53:6, He has balanced the books of the world. There were two debit entries:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned every one to his own way."

But there is one credit item that squares the account:

"Jehovah hath laid on him (that is, on Jesus at the cross) the iniquity of us all."

The first debit entry takes into account our participation in the fall of the race. Sheep follow the leader. One goes through a hole in the fence and all follow after. So Adam sinned and we are all implicated in his guilt. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

But the second entry takes into account our individual wilfulness. Each one has chosen to sin in his own way, so we are not only sinners by nature, but we are also transgressors by practice. In other words, we are lost - utterly lost. But "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). By His sacrificial death on the cross, He has paid to outraged justice that which meets every charge against the sinner. Now in perfect righteousness God can offer a complete pardon and justification to all who trust His risen Son.

Thus "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." The troubled conscience can now be at rest. God is satisfied with what His Son has done. On that basis He can freely forgive the vilest sinner who turns in repentance to the Christ of the cross.

"The trembling sinner feareth That God can ne'er forget; But one full payment cleareth His mem'ry of

all debt; Returning sons He kisses, And with His robe invests; His perfect love dismisses All terror from our breasts."

He says to every believing soul, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isa: 44:22). And again, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa. 43:25). You may never be able to forget the years of wandering, the many sins of which you have been guilty. But that which gives peace is the knowledge that God will never recall them again. He has blotted them from the book of His remembrance, and He has done it in righteousness, for the account is completely settled. The debt is paid!

#### Christ's Resurrection Gives Assurance

Christ's bodily resurrection is the divine token that all has been dealt with to God's satisfaction. Jesus bore our sins on the cross. He made Himself responsible for them. He died to put them away forever. But God raised Him from the dead, thereby attesting His good pleasure in the work of His Son. Now the blessed Lord sits exalted at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He could not be there if our sins were still upon Him. The fact that He is there proves that they are completely put away. God is satisfied!

"Payment He will not twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine."

It is this that gives quietness and assurance forever. When I know that my sins have been dealt with in such a way that God's righteousness remains untarnished, even as He folds me to His bosom, a justified believer, I have perfect peace. I know Him now as "a just God and a Saviour" (Isa. 45:21). He says, "I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry" (Isa. 46:13). What cheering words are these! He has provided a righteousness, His very own, for men who have none of their own! Gladly, therefore, do I spurn all attempts at self-righteousness, to be found in Him perfect and complete, clothed with His righteousness.

Every believer can say with the prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels" (Isa. 61:10).

"Clad in this robe, how bright I shine; Angels have not a robe like mine."

It is given only to redeemed sinners to wear this garment of glory. Christ Himself is the robe of righteousness. We who trust Him are "in Christ"; we are "made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). He is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). If my acceptance depended on my growth in grace I could never have settled peace. It would be egotism of the worst kind to consider myself so holy that I could be satisfactory to God on the ground of my personal experience. But when I see that "He hath made us accepted in the beloved," every doubt is banished. My soul is at peace. I have quietness and assurance forever. I know now that only

"That which can shake the Cross, Can shake the peace it gave; Which tells me Christ has never died, Nor ever left the grave."

As long as these great unchanging verities remain, my peace is unshaken, my confidence is secure. I have "assurance forever."

Dear, anxious, burdened soul, do you not see it? Can you not rest, where God rests, in the finished work of His blessed Son? If He is satisfied to save you by faith in Jesus, surely you should be satisfied

to trust Him.

## Ch 03 Much Assurance.

When reminding the Thessalonian believers of the work of God in their city, as a result of which they were saved, the apostle Paul says: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

This is a very striking declaration, and all the more so because it stands out in such vivid contrast with much that goes under the name of evangelical testimony in our days. It is not too much to say of perhaps the majority of sermons preached in our myraids of churches, that one who was in deep spiritual trouble might listen to them year in and year out and be left in as great uncertainty as ever. They give no assurance to the hearers, whereas Paul's preaching was of such a character as to produce much assurance.

Consider the people addressed. Only a few months before at the most, they were for the greater part pagan idolaters, living in all kinds of sin and uncleanness. They had never been trained in Christian truth. A few among them were Jews, and had some knowledge of the law and the prophets. But the great majority by far were ignorant heathen, given to superstitious and licentious practices, and who were without any understanding of the way of life.

To them came Paul and his little company of itinerant preachers - men of God whose lives evidenced the power of the message they proclaimed. In dependence on the Holy Spirit they preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. They bore witness to His resurrection and present saving power, and they declared He was coming back some day to be judge of the living and the dead. It was the same missionary message which has ever proven to be the dynamic of God unto salvation to all who believe. Paul's hearers were convicted of their sin. They realized something of the corruption of their lives. They turned to God as repentant sinners, and believed the gospel they heard preached. What was the result? They became new creatures. Their out-ward behavior reflected the inward change. They knew they had passed out of darkness into light. They did not simply cherish a pious hope that God had received them. They knew He had made them His own. They had much assurance! Could anything be more blessed?

Is it not strange that so much that passes for gospel preaching today fails to produce this very-much-to-be-desired result? Surely something is radically wrong when people can be church-goers all their lives and never get farther than to live in hope of receiving "dying grace" at last!

### The Woman Was Dying

An aged woman was reported to be dying. Her physician had given up all hope of her recovery. Her

minister was called to her bedside to prepare her for the great change. She was in much distress. Bitterly she lamented her sins, her coldness of heart, her feeble efforts to serve the Lord. Piteously, she besought her pastor to give what help he could that dying grace might indeed be hers. The good man was plainly disconcerted. He was not used to coming to close quarters with dying souls anxious to be sure of salvation. But he quoted and read various scriptures. His eye fell on the words, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7).

As he read the words with quivering voice, the dying woman drank in their truth. "Not by works, but justified by his grace!" She exclaimed, "Aye, minister, that'll do; I can rest there. No works of mine to plead, just to trust His grace. That will do. I can die in peace." He prayed with her and left, his own heart tenderly moved and grateful, too, that he had been used to minister dying grace to this troubled member of his flock. He hardly expected to see her again on earth, but was comforted to feel that she would soon be in heaven.

Contrary to her physician's prediction, however, she did not die but rallied from that very hour, and in a few weeks was well again, a happy, rejoicing believer with much assurance. She sent once more for the pastor, and put the strange question to him: "God has given me dying grace and now I am well again; what am I to do about it?"

"Ah, woman," he exclaimed, "ye may just claim it as living grace and abide in the joy of it."

It was well put, but what a pity his preaching throughout the years had not produced assurance long before in the mind and heart of his anxious parishioner.

The Thessalonian believers did not have to wait until facing death in order to enter into the positive knowledge of sins forgiven. Their election of God was a reality to themselves and to others, who saw what grace had wrought in their lives.

And it was what Paul calls "our gospel," and "my gospel," that produced all this. We are not left in any doubt as to what that gospel was, for he has made it very clear elsewhere. He had but one message, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. The import of this received in faith destroyed doubt, banished uncertainty, and produced much assurance.

Of course, back of the witness borne by the lips was the witness of the life. Paul's deportment among them was that of a man who lived in the atmosphere of eternity. A holy minister of Christ preaching a clear gospel in the energy of the Holy Spirit is bound to get results. Such a man is a tremendous weapon in the hand of God for the pulling down of satanic strongholds. But it was not the piety of the messengers that gave assurance to those early believers. It was the message itself which they received in faith.

It is a great mistake to attempt to rest one's soul upon the character of any preacher, however godly he may appear to be. Faith is to rest, not in the best of God's servants but in His unchanging Word. Unhappily, it often transpires that impressionable folk are carried away with admiration for a minister of Christ, and they put their dependence upon him, rather than upon the truth proclaimed.

"I was converted by Billy Sunday himself!" said one to me, in answer to the question, "Are you certain that your soul is saved?"

Mr. Sunday would have been the last of men to put himself in the place of Christ. Further conversation seemed to elicit the evidence that the person in question had been carried away by admiration for the earnest evangelist and mistook the "thrill of a handshake" for the Spirit's witness. At least, there

seemed no real understanding of God's plan of salvation, which Billy Sunday preached, in such tremendous power.

Then it is well to remember that some vivid emotional experience is not a safe ground of assurance. It is the blood of Christ that makes us safe and the Word of God that makes us sure.

### Queen Victoria Decides the Question

There is an apparently authentic story told of the great Queen Victoria, so long ruler of Britain's vast empire. When she occupied her castle at Balmoral, Scotland, she was in the habit of calling, in a friendly way, upon certain cottagers living in the neighborhood. One aged Highland woman, who felt greatly honored by these visits and who knew the Lord, was anxious about the soul of the queen. As the season came to a close one year, her Majesty was making her last visit to the humble home of this dear child of God. After the good-byes were said, the old cottager timidly inquired, "May I ask your gracious Majesty a question?"

"Yes," replied the queen, "as many as you like."

"Will your Majesty meet me in heaven?"

Instantly the royal visitor replied, "I will, through the all-availing blood of Jesus."

That is the only safe ground for assurance. The blood shed on Calvary avails for all classes alike.

When Israel of old were about to leave Egypt, and the last awful plague was to fall on that land and its people, God Himself provided a way of escape for His own. They were to slay a lamb, sprinkle its blood on the door-posts and lintel of their houses, go inside and shut the door. When the destroying angel passed through that night, he would not be permitted to enter any blood-sprinkled door, for Jehovah had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Inside the house, some might have been trembling and some rejoicing, but all were safe. Their security depended, not on their frames of mind, or feelings, but on the fact that the eye of God beheld the blood of the lamb and they were sheltered behind it. As they recalled the Word that He had given concerning it and truly believed it, they would have much assurance.

So it is today! We cannot see the blood shed so long ago for our redemption on Calvary, but there is a sense in which it is ever before the eye of God. The moment a repentant sinner puts his trust in Christ, he is viewed by God as sheltered behind the blood-sprinkled lintel. Henceforth his security from judgment depends, not on his ability to satisfy the righteous demands of the Holy One, but upon "the blessed fact that Christ Jesus satisfied them to the utmost when He gave Himself a ransom for our sins, and thus made it possible for God to pass over all our offences and justify us from all things.

### That Dreadful Night in Egypt

Imagine a Jewish youth on that night in Egypt reasoning thus: "I am the first-born of this family and in thousands of homes tonight the first-born must die. I wish I could be sure that I was safe and secure, but when I think of my many shortcomings, I am in deepest distress and perplexity. I do not feel that I am by any means good enough to be saved when others must die. I have been very willful, very disobedient, very undependable, and now I feel so troubled and anxious. I question very much if I shall see the morning light."

Would his anxiety and self-condemnation leave him exposed to judgment? Surely not! His father might well say to him, "Son, what you say as to yourself is all true. Not one of us has ever been all he should be. We all deserve to die. But the death of the lamb was for you - the lamb died in your stead. The blood of the lamb outside the house comes between you and the destroyer."

One can understand how the young man's face would light up as he exclaimed, "Ah, I see it! It is not what I am that saves me from judgment. It is the blood and I am safe behind the blood-sprinkled door." Thus he would have "much assurance." And in the same way, we now, who trust in the testimony God has given concerning the atoning work of His Son, enter into peace and know we are free from all condemnation.

Perhaps some one may ask, "But does it make no difference to God what I am myself? May I live on in my sins and still be saved?" No, assuredly not! But this brings in another line of truth. The moment one believes the gospel, he is born again and receives a new life and nature - a nature that hates sin and loves holiness. If you have come to Jesus and trusted Him, do you not realize the truth of this? Do you not now hate and detest the wicked things that once gave you a certain degree of delight? Do you not find within yourself a new craving for goodness, a longing after holiness, and a thirst for righteousness? All this is the evidence of a new nature. And as you walk with God you will find that daily the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit will give you practical deliverance from the dominion of sin.

This line of truth does not touch the question of your salvation. It is the outcome of your salvation. First, get this settled: you are justified not by anything done in you, but by what Jesus did for you on the cross. But now He who died for you works in you to conform you daily to Himself, and to enable you to manifest in a devoted life the reality of His salvation.

The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven." The moment they turned to Him they were saved, forgiven, justified, set apart to God in all the value of the work of the Cross and the perfection of the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus. They were accepted in the Beloved! God saw them in Christ. Believing thus, they had much assurance.

This matter settled, they then yielded themselves unto God as those alive from the dead, to serve Him who had done so much for them, and they waited day by day for the coming again of Him who had died for them, whom God had raised from the dead and seated at His right hand in highest glory.

Acceptable service springs from the knowledge that the question of salvation is forever settled. We who are saved by grace apart from all self effort are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

### Not Saved by Good Works

Notice, we are not saved by good works, but unto good works. In other words, no one can begin to live a Christian life until he has a Christian life to live. This life is divine and eternal. It is imparted by God Himself to the one who believes the gospel, as the apostle Peter tells us: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:23-25).

The new birth, therefore, is by the Word - the message of the gospel - and the power of the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." These were our Lord's words to Nicodemus. The one thus regenerated has eternal life and can never perish. How do we know? Because He has told us so.

Weigh carefully the precious words of John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"; and link with this verse John 10:27-30, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all;

and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Observe that in the first of these passages there are five links, all of which go together: "Hearth" - "Believeth" - "Hath" - "Shall not" - "Is passed." Study these terms carefully and note their true connection. They should never be dissociated. In the longer passage pay careful attention to what is said of Christ's sheep:

a - They hear His voice; b - They follow Him; c - They possess eternal life; d - They shall never perish; e - None can pluck them from the hands of the Father and the Son.

Could there be greater security than this and could any words give clearer assurance of the complete salvation of all who come to God through His Son? To doubt His testimony is to make God a liar. To believe His record is to have "much assurance."

Do you say, "I will try to believe"? Try to believe whom? Dare you speak in this way of the living God who will never call back His words? If an earthly friend told you a remarkable tale that seemed hard to credit, would you say, "I will try to believe you"? To do so would be to insult him to his face. And will you so treat the God of truth, whose gifts and promises are never revoked? Rather look up to Him, confessing all the unbelief of the past as sin, trust Him now, and thus know that you are one of the redeemed.

Some years ago in St. Louis, a worker was dealing with a man who had expressed his desire to be saved by going into the inquiry room upon the invitation of the evangelist. The worker endeavored to show the man that the way to be saved was by accepting Christ as his Saviour and believing the promise of God. But the man kept saying: "I can't believe; I can't believe!" "Who can't you believe?" replied the worker. "Who can't I believe?" said the man. "Yes, who can't you believe? Can't you believe God? He cannot lie." "Why, yes," said the man, "I can believe God; but I had never thought of it in that way before. I thought you had to have some sort of feeling."

The man had been trying to work up a sense of faith, instead of relying upon the sure promise of God. For the first time he realized that he was to take God at His word, and as he did so, he experienced the power and assurance of salvation.

"Not saved are we by trying; From self can come no aid; 'Tis on the blood relying, Once for our ransom paid. 'Tis looking unto Jesus, The Holy One and Just; 'Tis His great work that saves us - It is not 'try' but 'trust'!

"No deeds of ours are needed To make Christ's merit more: No frames of mind or feelings Can add to His great store; 'Tis simply to receive Him, The Holy One and Just; 'Tis only to believe Him - It is not 'try' but 'trust'!"

## **Ch 04 Full Assurance of Faith.**

In the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verses 19 to 22, are found the words which we will consider together as the theme of this present chapter. Read the entire passage very thoughtfully:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22).

Do you notice that remarkable expression, "full assurance of faith"? Does it not thrill your soul as you read it? "Full assurance!" What could be more precious? And it is for you if you want it, only you must receive it by faith. For observe carefully, it is not the full assurance of an emotional experience, nor the full assurance of a carefully reasoned-out system of philosophy. It is the full assurance of faith.

The little boy was right who replied to his teacher's question, "What is faith?" by exclaiming, "Faith is believing God and asking no questions." That is exactly what it is. Faith is taking God at His word. This is the real meaning of that wonderful definition given by inspiration in Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." God tells us something beyond human ken. Faith gives substance to that. It makes unseen things even more real than things that the eye beholds. It relies in unquestioning certainty upon what God has declared to be true. And when there is this complete reliance upon the promise of God, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth, so that the believer has the full assurance of faith.

Faith is not, however, mere intellectual acceptance of certain facts. It involves trust and confidence in those facts, and this results in the word of faith and the work of faith: Faith in Christ is not, therefore, simply accrediting the historical statements revealed concerning our blessed Lord. It is to trust one's self wholly to Him in reliance upon His redemptive work. To believe is to trust. To trust is to have faith. To have faith in Christ is to have full assurance of salvation.

Because this is so, faith must have something tangible to lay hold of, some definite worth-while message to rest upon. And it is just this that is set forth in the gospel, which is God's well-ordered plan of salvation for sinners who otherwise are lost, helpless and hopeless.

When, for instance, we are told four times in our Bibles that "the just shall live by faith," it is not simply that we live in a spirit of optimism, a faith or hope that everything will come out all right at last. And when we speak of the doctrine of justification by faith, it is not to say that he who maintains a courageous heart will thereby be declared righteous. Faith is not the savior. Faith is the hand that lays hold of Him who does save. Therefore the folly of talking of weak faith as opposed to strong faith. The feeblest faith in Christ is saving faith. The strongest faith in self, or ought else but Christ, is but a delusion and a snare, and will leave the soul at last unsaved and forever forlorn.

And so when we are bidden to draw near to God with true hearts in full assurance of faith, the meaning is that we are to rest implicitly on what God has revealed concerning His Son and His glorious work for our redemption. This is set forth admirably in the former part of this chapter in Hebrews where our verse is found. There we have set out in vivid contrast the difference between the many sacrifices offered under the legal dispensation and the one perfect, all-sufficient oblation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note some of the outstanding differences:

1. They were many and often repeated. His is but one, and no other will ever be required.
2. They did not have the necessary value to settle the sin question. His is of such infinite value, it has settled that problem forevermore.
3. They could not purge the consciences of those who brought them. His purges all who believe, giving a perfect conscience because all sin has been put away from under the eye of God.
4. They could not open the way into the Holiest. His has rent the veil, and inaugurated the new and living way into the very presence of God.

5. They could not perfect the one who offered them. His one sacrifice has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

6. In them there was a remembrance again of sins from year to year. His has enabled God to say, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

7. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should put away sin. But Christ has accomplished that very thing by the sacrifice of Himself.

Here then is where faith rests, on the finished work of Christ. It will help us greatly to understand this, if we glance at what is revealed concerning the sin offering of the old dispensation.

Consider the Troubled Israelite

Let us imagine that we stand near the altar in the temple court, as a troubled Israelite comes with his sacrifice. He leads a goat along to the place of the oblation. The priest examines it carefully, and finding it without any outward blemish he commands it to be slain. The offerer himself puts the knife to its throat, after laying his hand on its head. Then it is flayed and cut in pieces, and all its inward parts carefully inspected. Pronounced perfect, it is accepted and certain parts are placed upon the fire of the altar. The blood is sprinkled round about the altar and upon its four horns, after which the priest pronounces absolution, assuring the man of his forgiveness.

This was but "a shadow of good things to come," and could not actually put away sin. That unblemished animal typified the sinless Saviour who became the great Sin Offering. His blood has made full and complete expiation for iniquity. All who come to God through Him are eternally forgiven.

If the Israelite sinned against the Lord, on the morrow he required a new sacrifice. His conscience was never made perfect. But Christ's one offering is of such infinite value that it settles the sin question eternally for all who put their trust in Him. "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." To be sanctified in this sense is to be set apart to God in all the value of the atoning work and the personal perfections of Christ. He is Himself our sanctification. God sees us henceforth in His Son. Is not this a wonderfully precious truth? It is something man would never have dreamed of. God alone devised such a plan. He who believes His testimony regarding it has full assurance of faith.

He does not know he is saved because he feels happy. But every true believer will be happy to know he is saved. Confidence based upon an emotional experience would leave one in utter bewilderment when that emotion passed away. But assurance based upon the Word of God abides, because that Word is unchangeable.

The Old Gentleman Had No Peace

Many years ago I was holding a series of evangelistic meetings in a little country schoolhouse some miles out of Santa Cruz, California. One day I was out driving with a kindly old gentleman who was attending the services nightly, but who was far from being sure of his personal salvation. As we drove along a beautiful, winding road, literally embowered with great trees, I put the definite question to him, "Have you peace with God?" He drew rein at once, stopped the horse, and exclaimed, "Now that's what I brought you here for. I won't go another foot until I know I am saved, or else know it is hopeless to seek to be sure of it."

"How do you expect to find out?" I inquired. "Well, that is what puzzles me. I want a definite witness, something that I cannot be mistaken about."

"Just what would you consider definite, some inward emotional stirring?"

"I can hardly say, only most folks tell us they felt some powerful change when they got religion. I have been seeking that for years, but it has always eluded me."

"Getting religion is one thing; trusting Christ may be quite another. But now suppose you were seeking salvation, and suddenly there came to you a very happy feeling, would you be sure then that you were saved?"

"Well, I think I would."

"Then, suppose you went through life resting on that experience, and at last came down to the hour of death. Imagine Satan telling you that you were lost and would soon be beyond hope of mercy, what would you say to him? Would you tell him that you knew all was well, because you had such a happy emotional experience years before? What if he should declare that it was he who gave you that happy feeling, in order to deceive you, could you prove it was not?"

"No," he answered thoughtfully, "I couldn't. I see that a happy feeling is not enough."

"What would be enough?"

"If I could get some definite word in a vision, or a message from an angel, then I could be sure."

"But suppose you had a vision of a glorious angel, and he told you your sins were forgiven, would that really be enough to rest on?"

"I think it would. One ought to be certain if an angel said it was all right."

"But if you were dying and Satan was there to disturb you, and told you that you were lost after all, what could you say?"

"Why, I'd tell him an angel told me I was saved."

"But if he said, 'I was that angel. I transformed myself into an angel of light to deceive you. And now you are where I wanted you - you will be lost forever.' What then could you say?"

He pondered a moment or two, and then replied, "I see, you are right; the word of an angel won't do."

"But now," I said, "God has given something better than happy feelings, something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given His Son to die for your sins, and He has testified in His own unalterable Word that if you trust in Him all your sins are gone. Listen to this: 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' These are the words of God spoken through His apostle Peter, as recorded in Acts 10:43.

"Then here in 1 John 5:13, which says, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.' Are these words addressed to you? Do you believe on the Name of the Son of God?"

"I do, sir, I do indeed! I know He is the Son of God, and I know He died for me."

"Then see what He tells you, 'Ye may know that ye have eternal life.' Is not this enough to rest upon? It is a letter from heaven directed expressly to you. How can you refuse to accept what God has told you? Can you not believe Him? Is He not more to be depended on than an angel, or than aroused emotions? Can you not take Him at His word and rest upon it for the forgiveness of your sins?"

"Now suppose that as you are dying Satan comes to you and insists that you are lost, but you reply,

'No, Satan, you cannot terrify me now. I rest on the Word of the living God and He tells me I have eternal life, and also the remission of all my sins.' Can you not do this now? Will you not bow your head and tell God you will be saved on His terms by coming to Him as a repentant sinner and trusting His word concerning His blessed Son?"

The old man dropped his eyes, and I saw that he was deeply stirred. His lips were moving in prayer. Suddenly he looked up and touching the horse lightly with his whip, explained, "Giddap! It's all clear now. This is what I've wanted for years."

That night at the meeting he came to the front and told the audience that what he had sought in vain for half a lifetime, he had found when he believed the message of God's word about what Jesus had done to save sinners. For several years he was a regular correspondent of mine until the Lord took him home - a joyous saint whose doubts and fears had all been banished when he rested on the sure Word of God. His was the full assurance of faith.

### Emotional Element in Conversion

And please do not misunderstand me. I do not discount the emotional element in conversion, but I insist it will not do to rely upon it as an evidence that one has been forgiven. When a man is awakened by the Spirit of God to realize something of his lost, undone condition, it would be strange indeed if his emotions were not aroused. When he is brought to repentance, that is, to a complete change of attitude toward his sins, toward himself, and toward God, we need not be surprised to see the tears of penitence coursing down his cheeks. And when he rests his soul on what God has said, and receives in faith the Spirit's witness, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," it would be unthinkable but that, like Wesley, his heart should be strangely warmed as he rejoiced in God's salvation.

But what I am trying to make plain is that assurance is not based upon any emotional change, but whatever emotional experience there may be, it will be the result of accepting the testimony of the Lord given in the Scriptures. Faith rests on the naked Word of God. That Word believed gives full assurance. Then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the believer's heart and to conform him to Christ. Growth in grace follows naturally when the soul has trusted Christ and entered into peace with God.

"Soon as my all I ventured On the atoning blood, The Holy Spirit entered And I was born of God."

## **Ch 05 Full Assurance of Understanding.**

WHEN writing to the Christians at Colosse, who had been saved largely through the ministry of Epaphras, that man of prayer and devotion, the apostle Paul said: "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:1-3). The expression I desire to draw particular attention to is found in the second verse: "the full assurance of understanding."

The initial question of salvation having been settled, one is not to suppose that there will never arise any further doubts or perplexities. The child of God is a stranger and a pilgrim passing through an unfriendly wilderness-world, where he is beset by many foes who will seek in every way possible to impede his progress. He still has an enemy within: the old fleshy nature which is in constant warfare with the spiritual nature imparted in new birth.

Then outside, our adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We are called upon to resist him, being steadfast in the faith. He knows he can never destroy the life hid with Christ in God, but he will do everything that satanic ingenuity can suggest to hinder the believer's progress in spirituality and retard his growth in grace. By fiery darts of doubt and incitements to carnal pleasure, he will endeavor to hinder communion with God and so to destroy the Christian's happiness and annul his testimony. Therefore the need of being built up on our most holy faith and nurtured in sound scriptural instruction. "Through thy precepts," says David, "I get understanding."

As soon as one knows he is saved, he should begin, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, a careful, regular, systematic study of the Word of God. The Bible is our Father's letter to us, His redeemed children. We should value it as that which reveals His mind and indicates the way in which He would have us walk. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16,17). The study of the Word will instruct me in the truth, it will show me what needs to be rectified in my life and walk, it will make clear how I may get right with God, and it will guide me in paths of uprightness. No Christian can afford to neglect his Bible. If he does, he will be stunted and dwarfed in his spiritual life, and will be a prey to doubts and fears, and may be carried about by every wind of doctrine.

#### The Newborn Irishman

As newborn babes require milk, so the regenerated soul needs to be nourished on the Word. I wonder if you have heard the story of the Irishman who was converted through reading the New Testament. Rejoicing in his new-found treasure, he delighted to pore over its sacred pages whenever opportunity permitted.

One day the parish priest called to see him and found him perusing the precious volume that had brought such blessing to his soul.

"Pat," he asked sternly, "what book is that which you are reading?"

"Sure, yer riverance," was the reply, "it's the New Testament."

"The New Testament! Why, Pat, that's not a book for an ignorant man like you to read. That is for the clergy who go to college and learn its real meaning and then give it to the people. But unlearned folks like you will get all kinds of wrong ideas from it."

"But, yer riverance," said Pat, "I've just been reading here, and it's the blessed apostle Peter himself that says it, 'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,' and sure it's just a babe in Christ I am, and it's the milk of the Word I'm afther, and that's why I am reading it fer meself."

"That's all right, Pat, in a way, but the Almighty has appointed His priests to be the milkmen, and when you want the milk of the Word you should come to me and I will give it to you as you are able to bear it."

"Oh, sure, yer riverance, you know I kape a cow o' my own out there in the shed, and whin I was sick I hired a man to milk her fer me, and I soon found he was shtearin' half the milk an' fillin' the bucket up

with wather. But whin I got well I discharged him and took to milkin' me own cow, and now it's the rich cream I'm gettin' all the time. And, yer riverance, whin I depended on you fer the milk of the Word, man it was the milk an' water stuff ye gave me, so now I'm milkin' me own cow in this case, too, and it's the rich cream o' the Word on which my soul is feedin' every day."

Nothing will make up for lack of this diligent study of the Bible for yourself. You cannot get the full assurance of understanding without it. But as you search the Scriptures you will find truth after truth unfolding in a wonderful way, so that doubts and questions will be banished and divinely-given certainty will take their place.

### Discouraged Christians

Many uninstructed believers become discouraged because of their own failures and Satan takes advantage of these to inject into their minds doubts as to whether they are not deceiving themselves after all in supposing they are Christians. But a knowledge of the truth as to the believer's two natures will often help here. It is important to understand that sin in the flesh, inherent in the old nature, is not destroyed when one is born again. On the contrary, that old sin-principal remains in the believer as long as he is in the body. What takes place at new birth is that a new and divine nature is communicated. These two natures are in conflict with each other.

But the Christian who walks in the Spirit will not fulfil the desires of the flesh, even though at times those desires may be manifested. In order to so walk, one must take sides with God against this principle of evil which belongs to the old Adamic nature. God reckons it as executed at the cross of Christ; for the Lord Jesus died, not only for what we have done but for what we are by nature. Now faith accepts this as true, and the believer can exclaim, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh (that is, in the body) I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Carefully consider what is taught here: I, the responsible I, the old man, all that I was as a man in the flesh, including my entire sinful nature, - "I have been crucified with Christ." When was that? It was when Jesus died on Calvary's tree nineteen hundred years ago. He was there for me. I was there in Him. He was my representative, my substitute. He died the death I deserved to die. Therefore in God's eyes His death was my death. So I have died with Him.

Now I am called upon to make this real in my personal experience. I am to reckon myself as dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God (Rom. 6:11). The old nature has no claim upon me. If it asserts itself and endeavors to bring me into bondage, I am to take sides with God against it. He has condemned sin in the flesh. I must condemn it too. Instead of yielding to it, I am to yield myself unto God as one alive from the dead, for I have been crucified in Christ's crucifixion, but I live anew in His resurrection. I am quickened together with Christ, who Himself lives in me. He then is my new Master. He is to take charge of me and to control me for His glory. As yielded to Him, I am freed from sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). The sweet, constraining power of grace leads me to present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, my intelligent service (Rom. 12:1).

Actually, I am still in the body, but I belong to the new creation of which the risen Christ is the Head. It is only the failure to recognize and act upon this that will keep me from a life of victory.

Paul was eager for the Colossian and Laodicean believers to realize their place and responsibility in this new creation. He tells them that he literally agonized in spirit that they might apprehend this truth, and so by heart occupation with Christ find complete deliverance from the power of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He shows them that Christ Himself is the antidote for human philosophy, legality, ritualism, and asceticism, to all of which man is prone to turn when seeking deliverance from the power of sin, but none of which are of any real use against the indulgence of the flesh.

It is occupation with a risen, glorified Saviour, our exalted Head in heaven, that gives the victory we crave. As risen with Him, we are exhorted to seek the things which are above, where Christ sits on God's right hand. "For ye died, and your life (your real life as a new creature) is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3, R.V.).

Another Irishman Shouts "Glory"

I have told of one Irishman who found his joy in the Word of God. Let me tell you of another who got the full assurance of understanding when he learned the truth I have been trying to unfold. He had been soundly converted. He knew he was saved and for a time was filled with joy thereby. But one day the awful thought came, "What if I should sin in such a way as to lose all this, and be lost myself after all?" He felt it would be unspeakably dreadful to have once known the Lord and then to fall from that high place of privilege, and so be overwhelmed in eternal woe. He brooded on this day and night, and was in great distress. But one evening in a meeting he heard the words read from Colossians 3:1-4, to which I have referred. I give them in full here: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

As these precious verses fell on his ears and he followed them with his eyes, something of their blessed certainty gripped his soul, and forgetting he was in a public gathering, he shouted aloud to the astonishment of those about him, "Glory to God! Whoiver heard of a man droundin' wid his head that high above water!"

You may smile at his apparent crudity of conception, but he had seen the truth that gives the full assurance of understanding. He realized his union with Christ, and saw that since his Head was already in heaven he was eternally secure. Oh, what a soul-delivering truth this is! How it frees from self-occupation and how it glorifies Christ!

The practical outcome of it is seen in the verses that follow (Col. 3:5-17), where we are exhorted to mortify (that is, to put in the place of death, practically) our members which are upon the earth, judging every unclean and unholy propensity as having no place in the new creation, and therefore not to be tolerated for a moment as that which is ignoble and base. Then we are told what habits and behavior we are to put off, as discarded clothes that are unworthy of the new man; and we are directed what to put on as properly characteristic of a man in Christ. Please read the chapter for yourself.

The Lord Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." How necessary then for His redeemed ones to study His Word in dependence upon His Holy Spirit, that they may be delivered both from the fears that are the result of ignorance of His truth and the pride that is a result of self-confidence. The liberating Word alone will give to the honest, yielded soul who searches it prayerfully, in order that it shall have its sway over his life, the full assurance of understanding, for it is written: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

Go On! Go On! Go On!

And so as one goes on in the Christian life, and various problems and perplexities arise, it will be found that the Word of God will give the answer to them all, so far as it is His will that we should understand them down here. There will always be mysteries beyond our comprehension, for God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. But the trusting soul learns to be content with what He has revealed, and so to quietly leave the rest to be unfolded in that coming day when we shall behold Him as He is, and in His light shall see light, and know even as we ourselves are known of Him.

"When I shall wake in that fair morn of morns, After whose dawning never night returns, And with whose glory day eternal burns, I shall be satisfied."

"When I shall meet with those that I have loved, Clasp in my arms the dear ones long removed, And find how faithful Thou to me hast prov'd, I shall be satisfied."

Until then, the Word is to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, whereby we walk safely and securely through a world where sin and sorrow reign, and where there are inscrutable mysteries on every hand, unsolvable by human intelligence, knowing that all is well for those who are known of God and are the called according to His purpose of grace as revealed in Christ Jesus. Enough has been set forth in His Word to give our hearts rest, and to keep our souls in peace as we enjoy the "full assurance of understanding." The rest we can leave to Him who doeth all things well, and who loves us with an everlasting love.

"I am not skilled to understand What God hath will'd, what God hath plann'd; I only know at His right hand Is One who is my Saviour!"

"I take Him at His word indeed: 'Christ died for sinners,' this I read; For in my heart I find a need Of Him to be my Saviour!"

## **Ch 06 Full Assurance of Hope.**

ONE of the literati of this world has told us that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." Regarding some phases of life this may be true, but concerning the eternal future the Word of God tells us that in our unregenerate state we were in a hopeless condition. In Ephesians 2:11, 12, we read: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

But when one trusts in Christ all this is changed. From that moment on, the believer has a "good hope through grace." In Romans 8:24, 25, we are told: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Note, this does not say we hope to be saved, but we are saved by, or perhaps more properly, in hope. He who has the full assurance of faith and of understanding, and knows on the authority of the word of Him who cannot lie that he is already justified and eternally saved now, has the hope set before him of the redemption of his body at the return of the Lord Jesus, when he will be conformed fully to the image of God's Son. This hope buoys him up as he faces the manifold trials and vicissitudes of life, and gives him courage to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

The opening section of the fifth chapter of Romans may be pertinently quoted here (verses 1-5): "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

We have already seen that our assurance is not based upon an emotional experience, but on a “Thus saith the Lord.” But we should by no means belittle experience. The renewed man enjoys true Christian experience which is produced by the knowledge of Christ as the One who undertakes for him in all the varied trials of the way. These are designed by God to work together for the perfecting of Christian character. It is therefore a great mistake to shrink from trouble, or to pray to be kept free from tribulation.

### Praying for Patience

The story has often been told of the younger Christian who sought the counsel and help of an older brother, a minister of Christ. “Pray for me,” he entreated, “that I may be given more patience.” Down on their knees they dropped and the minister pleaded with God, “O Lord, send this brother more tribulations and trials!” “Hold,” exclaimed the other, “I did not ask you to pray that I might have tribulations but patience.” “I understood you,” was the reply, “but we are told in the Word that ‘tribulation worketh patience.’”

It is a lesson most of us are slow to learn. But note the steps as given in the passage above: tribulation, patience; experience, hope; and so the soul is unashamed, basking in the enjoyment of the divine love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit who dwells within.

With this before us, it ought to be easy to understand what is meant when in Hebrews 6:10-12 we read of “the full assurance of hope.” “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

As one walks with God, and learns to suffer and endure as seeing Him who is invisible, eternal things become more real than the things of time and sense, which are everything to the merely natural man. Thus there comes to the heart a trustful calm, a full assurance, based not alone upon the revealed Word but upon a personal knowledge of communion with God, which gives implicit confidence as to this present life and all that lies ahead.

One was once asked, “How do you know that Jesus lives —that He has actually been raised from the dead?”

“Why,” was the answer, “I have just come from a half-hour’s interview with Him. I know I cannot be mistaken.”

And this testimony might be multiplied by millions who, through all the Christian centuries, have borne witness to the reality of the personal companionship of Christ Jesus by the Spirit, drawing out the heart in love and devotion, and answering prayer in such a way as to make it impossible to doubt His tender care.

### The Young Man Convinced

The late Robert T. Grant told me that on one occasion, while travelling, he was sitting in the Pullman reading his Bible, and he noticed the people around; many with nothing to do. He opened up his bag and got out some gospel tracts, and after distributing them he sat down again. A young man left his own seat and moved over to the preacher, and asked, “What did you give this to me for?” “Why, it is a message from heaven for you, to give you rest in your soul,” replied Mr. Grant.

The young man sneered and said, “I used to believe in that stuff years ago, but when I went to school and got educated, I threw it all overboard. I found out there’s nothing to it.”

“Will you let me read to you something I was going over just a moment ago?” Mr. Grant asked. “‘The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.’ Is there nothing in that, young man? I have known the blessedness of that for many years. Is there nothing in it?”

The young man replied, "Go on, read what comes next."

“‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.’ Is there nothing in that?”

“Pardon me, sir, let me hear some more,” said the young man.

“‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’ Is there nothing in that?”

Then the young man cried, “Oh, forgive me, sir, there is everything in that! My mother died with those words upon her lips and besought me to trust her Saviour, but I have gotten far away from Him. You have brought it all back. Tell me more.”

And as God’s servant opened up the truth as to the way of salvation, the young man who had been so careless and unbelieving was convicted of his sin, and led to trust in Christ and confess Him as His own Saviour right there in that Pullman car.

Yes, there is everything in the blessed companionship of Christ, the Lord, both in life and in death, and it is this that gives the full assurance of hope.

But, unhappily, this assurance may become clouded and in a measure lost by spiritual negligence and carelessness in regard to prayer and feeding upon the Word. Therefore the need of such an exhortation as we have before us, which urges us to “show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

### The Unhappy Backslider

Peter speaks of some who through waywardness have gotten so far out of fellowship with God that they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This is a sad state to be in. It is what is commonly called in the Old Testament “backsliding.” And “the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own devices” (Prov. 14:14). An old preacher I knew as a boy used to say, “Backsliding always begins in the knee.” And this is very true indeed. Neglect of prayer will soon dull the keen edge of one’s spiritual sensibilities, and make it easy for a believer to drift into worldliness and carnality, as a result of which his soul’s eyesight will become dimmed and he will lose the heavenly vision.

The backslider is short-sighted. He sees the things of this poor world very vividly, but he cannot see afar off, as he could in the days of his former, happy state. To such comes the exhortation, “Anoint thine eyes with eye- salve, that thou mayest see.” Get back to your Bible and back to your knees. Let the Holy Spirit reveal to your penitent heart the point of departure where you left your first love, and judge it definitely before God. Acknowledge the sins and failures that have caused eternal things to lose their preciousness. Cry with David, as you confess your wanderings, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” And He who is married to the backslider will give you again to know the blessedness of fellowship with Himself, and once more your peace will flow as a river and the full assurance of hope be yours.

As you walk with God your faith will grow exceedingly, your love unto all saints will be greatly enlarged, and the hope laid up for you in heaven will fill the vision of your opened eyes, as your heart is occupied with the Lord Himself who has restored your soul.

For it is well to remember that He Himself is our hope. He has gone back to the Father's house to prepare a place for us and He has promised to come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also.

This is a purifying hope. In I John 3:1-3 the Spirit of God tells us so: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The third verse has been translated, "Every man that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself, etc." As we are occupied, not with the signs of the times, or simply with prophetic truth, but with the coming One who is our Hope, we must of necessity become increasingly like Him. We shall learn to hate the things that He cannot approve, and so, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we shall seek to be perfected in holiness as we await His imminent return.

"So with this hope to cheer us, And with the Spirit's seal That all our sins are pardoned Through Him whose stripes did heal;

As strangers and as pilgrims, No place on earth we own, But wait and watch as servants Until our Lord shall come."

This hope will be the mainspring of our loyalty to Him whom we long to see. We are exhorted to be "like servants who wait for their Lord" and are occupied for Him, that whether He come at morn, at noon, or at night, we may be ready always to meet Him, and so not be ashamed before Him at His coming. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matt. 24:46).

No wonder this is called a "blessed hope," as in Titus 2:11-14: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

### The Great School of Grace

It is not merely that we are now saved by grace, but we are also in the school of grace, here to learn how to behave ourselves in such a manner as to have the constant approval of Him who has made us His own. And so grace is here presented as our instructor, teaching us the importance of the denial of self, and the refusal of all that is contrary to the mind of God, in order that we may manifest by clean and holy lives the reality of the faith that we profess, while we have ever before our souls that blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

At His first coming He died to redeem us from all lawlessness, that He might purify us unto Himself a people of His own possession, zealously engaged in all good works. At His second coming He will redeem our bodies and make us wholly like Himself in all things. What a wonderful hope this is, and as we live in the power of it what assurance we have of the unchanging love of Him whose face we soon shall see!

Often when the dead in Christ are being laid away, we are reminded that we commit their precious bodies to the grave "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection." And this is a most blessed truth. For when the hope of the Lord's return is realized, the saints of all past ages who died in faith will share with those who may be alive upon the earth at that time, in the wonderful change that will then take place when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so

shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16,17). How bright a hope is this and who knows how soon it may be realized! Let us not falter, nor give way to doubt or unbelief, but give diligence in maintaining "the full assurance of hope" until it gives place to full realization.

Often we may feel that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," but the consummation is sure. Meantime let us be busy in our Master's service, and particularly in trying to win others, bringing them to share with us in the joy of God's salvation. When at last our little day of service here is ended, not one of us will feel that we have given up too much for Christ, or be sorry that we have labored too earnestly for His glory; but, I fear, many of us would then give worlds, were they ours, if we could only go back to earth and live our lives over again, in sincerity and unselfishness, seeking alone the honor of Him who has redeemed us.

It is better to be saved so as by fire than not to be saved at all, but surely none of us would desire to meet our Master empty-handed, but the rather to "come with rejoicing" into His presence, when our hope is fulfilled, bringing our sheaves with us. Let us then remember that we have

"Only a little while to tell the wondrous story Of Him who made our guilt and curse His own: Only a little while till we behold His glory, And sit with Him upon His throne."

And so may we ever heed His command, "Occupy till I come."