

THE TRUE POSITION OF ASSURANCE

NO. 592

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:
in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”
Ephesians 1:13.*

MANY sincerely seeking souls are in great trouble because they have not yet attained to an assurance of their interest in Christ Jesus—they dare not take any comfort from their faith because they suppose that it has not attained to a sufficient strength. They have believed in the Lord Jesus, and they have His promise that they shall be saved, but they are not content with this—they need to get assurance, and then they suppose they shall have a better evidence of their salvation than the bare Word of the Savior. Such persons are greatly mistaken; but as that mistake is a very painful one, and exercises the most injurious influence upon them, we will spend this morning in trying, as God shall help us, to clear up their difficulty, and to let them see that if they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, even though they should not have attained to the precious grace of full assurance of faith, yet nevertheless, they are saved, and being justified by faith, may rightfully enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Their mistake seems to me to be this—they look for ripe fruit upon a tree in spring, and because that season yields nothing but blossoms, they conclude the tree to be barren. They go to the head of a river—they find it a little rippling brook, and because it will not float a “Great Eastern,” they conclude that it will never reach the sea, and that in fact, it is not a true part of the river at all. They look upon themselves as being little children, and such they are; but because they cannot speak plainly on account of having been so newly born, they therefore conclude that they are not the children of God at all. They see strong men in Christ Jesus performing great exploits; and because, they as yet are but young and feeble, they conclude that they are not in the family of grace. They compare themselves with giants in the Church of God, and then, because they rightly perceive the difference between themselves and these mighty ones, they imagine that they are not saved—that they cannot be numbered among the faithful, and have no part or lot in this matter. They put the last things first. They make comforts essentials. They consider that which is the fruit of grace to be the root of grace, and herein they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Perhaps they will not fall into this error again if they get a right understanding of the text before us.

The apostle Paul here explains the process by which sealing—the sealing of assurance—is obtained. There are three steps by which the hallowed elevation is reached. The first is *hearing*—they heard first the preaching of the word. The second is, *believing*; and then, thirdly, “after that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

I. To begin then, faith comes by HEARING.

The preaching of the gospel is God’s soul-saving ordinance. It has pleased God by the “foolishness of preaching” to save those who believe. In every age God raises up men who faithfully proclaim His Word, and, as one departs, another arrives. Elijah ascends to glory, but his mantle falls upon Elisha. Paul dies not until Timothy is in the field. This true apostolic succession is continued evermore, for when we know not where to find ministers, we may rest assured that in nooks and corners, the Lord is preparing men for His work.

The true preacher has a claim upon men’s attention. If God has sent him, men should receive him. If he comes as an ambassador from the King of kings, let his commission be proved, and he has a right to receive the careful and prayerful attention of all who come in his way. No, more—God’s true ambassador not only claims a hearing, but he *wins* it, for there is an attractiveness in his theme which holds men by the ears—“I, if I am lifted up,” said Christ, “will draw all men unto Me,” and among the other drawings there is this peculiar fact that men are drawn to hear where Christ is preached. He who preaches Christ has golden chains coming from his mouth with which he binds men’s ears, if not their hearts; they

are not all bound to salvation, but bound somehow they shall be—the savor shall go forth even though it should be a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life. The preacher claims a hearing and he wins it.

What is that message which we are to hear in order to the attaining of faith, and, through faith, of full assurance? Our text is very expressive, for it tells us, “You heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” It is of little use to hear that which is not *the word of truth*, no, it is worse than useless, for by error we shall soon be misled. And if the preaching is not concerning *the word of truth*, even though it should be *a word of truth*, yet it can be of no value to the getting of faith—it must be *the word*—*the word* peculiarly above all others having truth and substance in it. There is no doubt that the expression here is a Hebraism for “the true word,” “you heard the true word.” O brethren, how joyous it is for us to know God’s Word to be true. We have proved it in our own souls and thus can bear our witness to you concerning it. If we speak not according to the true Word of God, reject us, for that which will bless you must have a, “Thus says the Lord” to support it, and must be based upon the revelation of the Most High—otherwise it cannot be of saving service, seeing it is not the word which is infallibly true!

No doubt that the expression signifies the highest truth, truth as much *the truth* among other truths, as the Bible is *the book* above all other books. What I must hear to my salvation is not an important doctrine which may or may not be believed, but *the word* without which men must perish in their sins. We may also remind you that the “*word of truth*” is a phrase peculiar to the contradistinction to the law. Compare the revelation of Christ with that of Moses—Moses revealed much gospel truth, but it was in shadows, not by a plain *word* of teaching; and therefore we now declare that the law was given by Moses, but grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ. Christ is the substance of all those shadows which Moses had to bring before the people’s minds; and therefore there is an emphasis about the gospel as being not metaphorical truth, but solid truth—the essential truth of God. As the mountain towers high above the surrounding plain, so the great truth that, “God was made flesh, and dwelt among us”—the faithful saying that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save sinners,” towers above all other truths of God, and demands our first and our best thoughts. And as the sun outshines all other lights, even so the manifestation of truth in the gospel of Christ excels all other revelations. It is *the word of truth*.

But the text also adds, “The gospel”—“the gospel of your salvation.” You are to listen to *the gospel*—to that which is good news—to a something totally *new* to the world’s natural religion—a something which came fresh from God—God’s great novelty—something *good*—good in the deepest sense—infinitely good—good for your soul’s best interests—good in answering the craving appetite of your poor hungry spirit.

It must be good news—it must be evangelical doctrine, to which you must listen if you would get faith. Faith does not come by *seeing*. Men do not get faith by looking at a priest manipulating bread and wine, or sprinkling drops of baptismal water. The symbols of the Church of Rome do not beget faith. They may beget attention; they may please the fancy and delight the taste, but they do not beget the faith of God’s elect. It is the gospel—the *gospel* preached and heard which does this through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not get faith through ordinances—no matter if God Himself prescribed them; they are not the channel through which faith comes. The apostle expressly declares that, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” It is not through eye-gate, but through ear-gate, that salvation comes to us. God may, and doubtless does, infuse grace into us by channels other than the sense of hearing; but, at any rate, the usual way in which grace comes streaming into the soul is by hearing—and that is the hearing of the gospel—not the hearing of tradition; not the hearing of supposition; not the hearing of poetic imaginations; but the hearing of that old gospel, which was first proclaimed by Jesus on the mount, and afterwards by His apostles, and to this day is still proclaimed with trumpet-tongue, by those who know its quickening power. You must *hear the gospel*—and observe, it is called *the gospel of your salvation*. You will never get faith, dear friends, unless you look upon the gospel as the great means of *your* salvation; not of another man’s, but of *your* salvation. I cannot say to every unconverted man, “This gospel *will* save you,” but I can say this, that, if you receive this gospel, it certainly will, and that the moment it is accepted by the heart it is the gospel of *your* salvation. Reject it—it will be a savor of

death unto death to you; but if the Holy Spirit shall come with it, and command your will and win your assent and consent, then it is indeed the gospel of *your* salvation.

Are you a sinner? “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Inasmuch as this is worthy of all acceptance, it is worthy of *your* acceptance, and is in a sense, *even now*, the gospel of your salvation. We know that Christ came to “seek and to save that which was lost.” Are you lost? Then in a sense it is the gospel of your salvation, seeing that you are lost. If you can grasp that cheering word with the hand of faith, you will say, “Yes, lost as I am, I believe Christ came to save the lost, and I trust Him alone to save me”—then it is the gospel of *your* salvation in a very high and special sense, seeing that now you have been saved by it! The great end, it seems to me, of the preaching of the gospel is just this—the preacher should always be aiming so to preach it that he may find out those souls to whom this is the gospel of their salvation; so laboring to bring it home, both by persuading by the terrors of the law and by the love of Jesus, that men shall—through the Spirit of God accompanying the word—be led, through hearing, to lay hold upon Christ and so to be saved. Thus I have set forth what you have to hear. May I beg you carefully to judge every preacher, not by his gifts, not by his elocutionary powers, not by his status in society, not by the respectability of his congregation, not by the prettiness of his church, the grandeur of the ceremonies, or the peculiar beauty of his vestments, but by this—does he preach the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation? If he does, your sitting under his ministry may prove to you the means of getting faith; but if he does not, you cannot expect God’s blessing, for you are not using God’s ordinance but the ordinance of man.

The hearing of the gospel involves the hearer in responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel. You may smile and think there is nothing very great in it. The damned in hell know. Oh, what would they give if they could hear the gospel now?—If they could come back and entertain but a shadow of a hope that they might yet escape from the wrath to come? The saved in heaven estimate this privilege at a high rate, for, having obtained salvation and eternal life through the preaching of this gospel, they can never cease to bless their God for calling them by His Word of truth. O that *you* knew it! On your dying beds the listening to a gospel sermon will seem another thing than it seems now. Now you may come out of curiosity, and go away and forget it; but when grim death and you shall stand face to face, you will find it quite another thing to have had God’s Word spoken to you, and you will hear such a word as this, “You stumbled at the word because you were disobedient, and therefore woe has come upon you to the uttermost.”

I must also add that if hearing is really so gracious an ordinance, it becomes Christian men and women to pray the Lord to send forth laborers into His vineyard, to entreat Him to bless all efforts used to train our young ministers for future conflict. I beg you not to forget to aid our Pastor’s College, both with your gifts and your prayers. It should bring afresh to the thoughts of all of you the duty of praying for those who are engaged in preaching the word, for their preaching is nothing, except as the Spirit goes with it; and though, when the Spirit goes with it the shout of the King is heard in our camps, let Him withdraw, and there is nothing but disappointment and dismay in the hosts of God. Pray for us, brethren! We trust we have a good conscience and endeavor to free ourselves of the blood of souls. We need our hearers to pray for us and hold up our hands, as Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses on the mount. Be diligent in hearing the word. If you are saved, still listen to it for your soul’s health; if you are not saved, neglect no opportunities of listening. Lie at this pool of Bethesda—who can tell but you may yet step in when the angel moves the waters, or Jesus Himself may come and walk through those five porches, and bid you take up your bed and walk? Waste no Sunday in going where you cannot hear the gospel; but when you hear the gospel, hear it with both your ears; give your whole soul to it—as the thirsty earth drinks in the descending showers, so drink in the Word of God. As new-born babes receive the unadulterated milk of the word, so receive that which is able to save your souls; and through hearing may faith come, and through faith may you gain the assurance which you so earnestly desire.

II. After hearing came BELIEF.

We know that believing does not always immediately follow hearing. There is a case told of Mr. Flavel having preached a sermon which was blessed to a man, I think 85 years afterwards, so that the seed may lay long buried in dust; yet, had not that man heard that sermon, speaking after the manner of men, he had not received the quickening Word of God. You may have heard the gospel long in vain, and

it should be to you a source of very serious inquiry if you have done so—it should set you trembling lest the word should never be the savor of life unto you, but at the same time, do not renounce the hearing because up to now you have had no blessing, for faith comes by hearing. Continue to listen; continue to search the word; and if your soul desires faith, God denies not faith to any in whom He has really implanted a desire after it. Faith will yet, we trust, come while you are hearing.

This belief, you observe, is called *trusting*. Kindly, look at the verse—“In whom you also *trusted*.” The translators have borrowed that word “trusted,” very properly, from the 12th verse. Do not, because you see it in italics, think that it is not properly there. It is not in the original, but being in the 12th verse it is very rightly understood here. Believing then is trusting. If you want it summed up in the shortest word, it is just this—trusting Christ.

A message comes to me upon good authority—I believe it; believing it, I necessarily trust it. My receiving of the message is so far good, but the essential act, the act essential to salvation is the trusting—the trusting Christ. The process of faith may be thus illustrated. You know a friend of yours to be perfectly reliable—you are in debt. He tells you that if you will trust him to pay the debt, he will give you on the spot a receipt for it. Now, you look at him, you consider his ability to pay it; you consider the probability that he means what he is saying. Having once made up your mind that he is truthful, you could not then say, “I cannot believe you.” If you once know that person to be truthful, I utterly deny that you can hold any argument about your power to believe him. So, if Jesus Christ declares that He, “came into the world to save sinners,” and, if He tells me, as He does tell me, that “whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”—if I am already enabled by God’s Spirit to believe in the perfect truthfulness of Christ, I would be lying unto my own soul if I said I had not power to believe in Him. Understand, power to believe in Christ is *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. But the Holy Spirit has given that power to all men who know the perfect truthfulness of Christ. It must be so, if you just look at it for a moment—it must be so. If I know the perfect truthfulness of a man, I lie if I say to him, “I cannot believe you.” Why, it follows, as a matter of course that I must believe if I am convinced that he is worthy of credit. Just so, when I am assured of Christ, that His testimony is worthy of my belief, I have no right then to plead that I cannot believe Him. Mark, I am only speaking to those who have got as far as that, and there are hundreds of you who have; when you tell me you cannot believe, I reply, “My dear friend, you can believe. In the Holy Spirit’s giving you enough enlightenment to know that Christ is faithful and true, that enlightenment, is your power to believe.” And this is according to the rules of common sense as well as according to the rules of experience. Do not stand, therefore, and say, “I cannot believe what Christ says.” Do you believe Him to be true? “Yes,” you say, “I dare not say otherwise.” Then you can believe what He says. But do you really believe that Christ is true? I fear you do not. I believe that John discovered the secret of your unbelief when he said, “He who believes not has made God a liar, because he has not believed on His Son.” That is the bottom line. You really do think God is a liar! Do you shrink from that charge? Ah, but I must bring it against you again, for if you know God to be true, I insist upon it, and your own reason tells you it is so—that you cannot help believing in a person you know to be true! I fear that you are making God a liar; and if you deny that charge, then I arrest you at the other point at once, and demand of you that you do now exercise faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is trusting Christ that saves the soul.

Now, a few remarks about believing. *Faith in Christ is the work of God’s Holy Spirit*. In proof of this we have many Scriptures. No man did ever yet believe in Christ until the Holy Spirit had quickened him and illuminated his understanding, so that he perceived the truthfulness of Christ’s character and was then led to trust Him. But in the next place, although faith is the work of the Spirit, *it is the act of man*. The Holy Spirit does not believe for me—there is nothing for Him to believe. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit does not repent—He has nothing to repent of. He works in me to will and to do, but I will and I do—He does not will nor do, what I ought to will and do. If I have a person here who is ignorant and I teach him, when he acquires knowledge, that knowledge is my gift to him and my work in him—at the same time *he* acquires that knowledge himself, and it would never have been his if he had not yielded up his faculties to be taught. Man *believes*, and whenever persons say to you, “Well, if it is the work of the Holy Spirit, how can it be the duty of man?” remind them, that while it is the work of the Holy Spirit, it is not the *act* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not be-

lieve—it is the man who believes. The Spirit moves upon us and by His mysterious agency, takes away the natural unbelief of the soul, and then we believe; but man is not passive in the act of believing. A dead man does not believe, the man is quickened, and then his quickened spirit lays hold of the revealed truth of God.

Observe this, further, that *faith is due to Christ*. The faithful and true witness demands of me that I should believe what He says. Sinner, this is the unkindest cut you can give to Christ—to doubt Him. I tell you that all His sufferings on the cross, do not insult Him as much as when you say, “I cannot trust You.” What? Not trust the eternal arm on which the earth hangs? Not trust the bleeding hands which have opened the gates of heaven for the very chief of sinners? Not trust the streaming side, out of which there gushes blood and water to cleanse the guilt and the power of sin? Not trust God’s own Son, the Mighty God, and the Redeemer of Men? It is due to Him that you should, with your whole heart, lean upon Him and give Him all your confidence.

This faith is essential to salvation. Assurance is not essential, but no man can be saved unless he trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may get to heaven with a thousand doubts and fears; you may get to heaven without some of those graces of the Spirit which are the ornaments of the believer’s neck, but you cannot get there without the life-giving grace of faith. You must have that, and as long as you continue to say, “I will not trust Christ; I want dreams, visions, experiences, revelations; I want terrors of conviction; I want this, I want the other”—you shut yourself out of peace. Till you set your seal to God’s Word, God will never set His seal to your faith.

Remember, again, this *faith is not required in any particular degree*. In order to salvation, it is not declared in Scripture that you are to believe to a certain strength, but if you have faith as small as a grain of mustard seed—if that is a mountain-moving faith, surely it shall be a soul-saving faith! Faith is not to be estimated by its quantity but by its quality. If you have no more faith than a smoking flax has of fire, yet He will not quench you—if you have no more power of faith than a bruised reed has of strength, yet He will not break you! If you are not a man, but an infant in grace—no, if you are scarcely a healthy infant, if there is but faith in you, though you are cast out as unwashed, yet He passes by and looks upon you! Can you but trust Him? THAT is the thing. If you do but trust Him as a drowning man clutches a rope; if you look to Jesus, as it were, out of the corner of your eye, though there are so many tears in your eyes that you cannot see Him as completely as you desire—though you cannot see Him at all to your comfort, yet you see Him to salvation! If you have received Him, desire great faith, but remember that little faith will carry you to heaven through Jesus Christ.

Observe, further, *that this faith is very variable, but it is not perishable*. Faith may go to an ebb, as the tide does, but it will come to a flood again. When faith is at its flood, the man is not, therefore, more saved; and when faith is at its ebb, the man is not, therefore, less saved; for, after all, salvation does not lie in faith, but in *Christ!* And faith is but the connecting link between the soul and Christ. Faith may take Christ up in its arms, like Simeon, and it is true faith; but, on the other hand, faith may only venture to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment, and that faith makes men whole. Some of us can look the Savior in the face, and even kiss Him with the kisses of our mouth, and others may only venture to come behind Him in the throng, all timid and afraid—but faith, if it is faith, let it change as it may, still saves. Faith—if it is faith—let it sink as it may, never can drown—it may live in the flames, but it shall never be burned. He, who once gets this incorruptible seed, shall find it lives and abides in him forever.

This faith is *worked in us by the Spirit of God, according to the laws of the mind*. When God works upon matter, He works according to the laws of matter. I do not find, apart from miracles, that God violates gravitation—that He breaks any of the great laws with which He has stamped matter; and when the Spirit of God comes to work on man, He does not break the laws with which He regulates the mind. Now, it seems to be one of the laws of the mind, that a man should believe a thing, not by trying to believe it, but by force of evidence. If you now sit down, for instance, and try to believe in the explosion of the powder magazines yesterday, if you have any doubt about it, you may try, as long as you like, to believe it—you cannot do it by trying. You must go through another process. You cannot pump faith up from your own mind. How do I get to believe in the explosion of the powder mills? There are certain newspapers—I have confidence in those newspapers, and as I read the account, I believe it. Or I meet with certain persons who either heard the explosion, or saw some of the effects produced thereby, and

now I believe without any effort at all—I cannot help believing. Belief comes necessarily from my having confidence in those who tell me so. Now, the Spirit of God, when about to produce faith, frequently leads men to think about Christ. Christ is set forth before them crucified. They perceive that, “Here is a great wonder—God clothed in human flesh to suffer for human sin!” The mind thinks, “There is something here which meets my conscious needs. I can see how God can be just, for He punishes His Son—and how He can be gracious, for He forgives sin. I find it stated that if I trust myself in this Son of God, who suffered as man and now pleads His infinite merits before the throne of God—if I trust in Him I shall be saved. I cannot trust in Him by simply saying I will try to do it, but I look at the Bible—is that true? I look at the thing itself—does it look like truth? I ask friends who have tried and proved it, and they tell me that they have tasted that He is gracious. Upon this evidence, and specially upon perceiving the power of this truth of God in my own soul, I believe the Word of God. The Spirit of God, working thus, leads me from the evidence given, to believe the testimony borne, and I believe it.”

Dear friends, if you want to get faith, it must come through the Spirit of God; but it usually comes in this way—if the word is not blessed to you in hearing it, and meditating upon it at home; think much of Christ and His great work. Now what you have been doing is this—you have been thinking of only your sins—but what would you think of a judge who sat upon a bench, and who would listen to all the complaints against a criminal, but as soon as the advocate arose to plead his cause, would say, “No, I do not intend to listen to that”? You have been doing that. Your poor soul stands on trial, and you have been listening to the accusations of Satan and your own sins, but the moment Christ gets up to show you His great atonement, the moment the promise is quoted, you say, “It is presumption for me to hope.” My dear friends, it is never presumption to listen to the truth of God! If it is true that in due time Christ died for the ungodly; if it is true that he who comes to Him He will in no wise cast out; if it is true that He has said, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool,” if it is true that He has said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins,” why not listen to that as well as the other? Surely you must look at the fair side as well as the foul; and while your ears are hearing of the work of Christ and the promise of God, you will be able to cry—

***“I do believe, I must believe,
That Jesus died for me!”***

“I could not have thought it; oh, it melts me; I have been trying to get a soft heart and could not get it, but I have it now all through this. Here have I been hurrying to and fro, looking after faith and assurance instead of looking to the cross for it, but now I see it all and I am saved, for I trust in Jesus Christ alone!”

I have said as much as may be needed this morning upon faith. I have tried to be brief upon each point, and packed as many things as I could into the time. Now we are to have a few words about assurance.

III. The text says, “*You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*” I cannot take the 14th verse, except to hint at it—we will try and preach on that this evening.

Sealing, which is another name for assurance, for the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit—that we are born of God, *is evidently distinct from faith*—please observe that—for the text says, “*After that you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*” Believing, then, is not this sealing; and assurance, although it is akin to believing, is not, believing. There is a distinction between the two things. I want you to notice the distinction. In faith the mind is active. The text uses verbs which imply action—“you trusted,” “you believed.” But when it comes to sealing it uses quite another verb—“you were sealed.” I am active in believing—I am passive when the Holy Spirit seals me. The witness of the Spirit is a something which I receive, but faith is a something which I exercise as well as receive. In faith my mind *does* something, in being sealed my faith *receives* something. If I may say so, faith writes out the document, there she labors, but the Holy Spirit stamps the seal Himself, and there is no hand needed there except His own. He stamps His own impression to make the document valid. Notice the difference between the activeness and the passiveness. Then, again, man is commanded to believe in Scripture in many places, but he never was commanded to be sealed. Faith is a duty as well as a privilege, but assurance is only a privilege. I never find any man exhorted to get the sealing of the Spirit. I believe that every Christian should pray for it and seek it, but I know of no command. It is a gift, a price-

less gift, and, unlike faith, it does not constitute a subject or command. Again, we read in Scripture, that men are saved by faith and live by faith, but neither salvation, nor living, are ever imputed to sealing or to assurance. We are not saved by assurance; we do not even live by assurance. The vital principle is couched in faith. That is the shell which holds the kernel of the inner spiritual life. I may be saved though I never had assurance; but even if I fancied I had assurance, I could not be saved if I had not faith. To faith we say salvation is promised, but to assurance such a promise is not given.

It is clear from the context that *assurance follows faith*—“after that you believed.” The apostle does not say how soon. I believe that many souls get full assurance with faith. I have known converts who have been as certain of their interest in Christ as though they had been 70 years experientially walking with Him. But mark you, this, is not always the case—perhaps not often. Brookes gives the case of a Mr. Frogmorton, who was one of the most valuable ministers of his day, but was 37 years without any assurance of his interest in Christ. He trusted Christ, but his ministry was always a gloomy one, for he could not read his title clear to mansions in the skies. He went to the house of a dear friend, Mr. Dodd, to die, and just before he died, the light of heaven streamed in—he not only expressed his full assurance of faith, but triumphed so gloriously, that he was the wonder of all round about him! He also tells us of one Mr. Glover, who had been for years without assurance of his interest in Christ; but when he came to the fire to be burnt, just as he saw the stake, he cried, “He is come! He is come!” And instead of being heavy of heart as he had been in prison, he went to the stake with a light step! Three martyrs were once chained to the stake, two of them rejoicing; but one was observed to slip from under the chains for a moment and prostrate himself upon the firewood and wrestle with God, and then coming back to the stake, he said, “The Lord has at last manifested himself to me, and now I shall burn bravely.” And so, indeed, he did, bearing his witness for his Lord and Master. So it seems there are some of God’s saints who do not get assured till even the last moment, and I will not say that there are not some of them who even, like some children, are put to bed in the dark. Christ went up to heaven in a cloud, Gideon saw the angel ascending in the smoke of the incense, and many a good man ascends with clouds of darkness round about him, but still he goes to heaven! I hope these cases are very few; still we bring them forward to show you, that assurance is not to be looked for *before* faith. You might as well look for the pinnacle before the foundation; for the cream before the milk; for the apples before you plant the tree; for the harvest before you sow the seed. Assurance *follows* faith.

Observe in the next place—and it is worthy of your notice—that *assurance is to be found where faith was found*. Do observe those two words, “in whom”—“in *whom* you also trusted”—“in whom you were sealed.” So that, as I get my faith out of Christ, so I must get my assurance, out of Christ. The virtual means of my faith is Christ Himself, and the virtual means of my assurance must be the same. As I think of what He did for me, I believe in Him; as I continue to meditate upon that same thing, I have assurance of interest in Him. You must feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ if you would grow into strong men or women in Christ Jesus. A touch of Christ will heal you from all disease, but you must hold Him fast if you would enjoy spiritual health perpetually. To believe in Christ will save you from hell; to be assured of your interest in Christ will give you a heaven upon earth. Do not be content with faith—be thankful for it, rejoice in it—but ask to have more; and when you need to have more, go to Christ for it, for the same fountain, which first quenched your thirst, must be that which shall quench it till you are taken up to drink of the river of life, which flows through the midst of Paradise—which is no other than the presence of Christ as a refreshment to His people.

This assurance, like faith, is the work of the Spirit of God. “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” He does this in various ways. Sometimes we get the seal of the Spirit through experience. We know that God is true because we have proved Him. Sometimes this comes through the hearing of the word—as we listen our faith is confirmed. But there is doubtless, besides this, a special and supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, whereby men are assured that they are born of God. You will observe in one place the apostle says, “The Spirit also bears witness with our spirit, that we are born of God,” so that there are *two* witnesses—first, our spirit bears witness, that is, by evidences—I look at my faith, and see myself depending upon Christ, and then I know, because I love the brethren, and for other reasons, that I am born of God. Then there comes over and above, the witness of evidence, faith and feeling—the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit. Have you not felt it? I cannot describe this to you, but you who

have felt it know it. Did you not the other day, feel a heavenly calm as you meditated upon your state and condition in Christ? You wondered where it came from. It was not the result of protracted devotion, but it stole over you, you knew not how it was, you were bathed in it as in sunlight, and you rejoiced exceedingly. You rejoiced in Christ—that was your basis of confidence, and that confidence came through the Spirit bearing witness with your spirit! And this has occurred, sometimes in the midst of sharp conflicts, just when dark despair seemed ready to overwhelm you. You may have enjoyed this comfort under peculiar trials, and losses of friends, and you may expect to have it when you come to die. Then, if ever in your life you should be able to say, “I will fear no evil, for You are with me (in a special sense), You are with me.” The Holy Spirit, then, must give it to us, and we must wait upon Him to set His seal.

And so, to conclude, this is desirable to the highest degree, for it is the earnest of the inheritance. It is a part of heaven on earth, to get an assurance worked by the Spirit. It is not merely a pledge, for a pledge is given back when you get the thing itself, but it is an earnest; it is one cluster from the vines of Eshcol—one shekel of the eternal wage—money of the free-grace reward. What if I say it is a stray note from the harps of angels? It is a drop of the spray from the fountains of life; it is one ingot of gold from the pavement of heaven; it is one ray of heavenly light from the eternal Sun of righteousness. O Christian, if you have ever known assurance, you will pant till you have it again! You can never, after seeing the sunlight, put up with the candle light of your doubts and fears in the dungeon of despondency. But if assurance is gone, still hang onto Jesus—

*“When your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold onto Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel’s God your peace shall be.”*

If you cannot feel His love in your heart, still trust Him. Oh, it was grand of Job—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Truly, the vitality of faith is such that if He should spurn me from His presence—if He never gave me another look of love this side of heaven—if He gave me up to the lowest depths, and bade all His waves and billows go over me, yet is He such a faithful God, and so true, that I dare not, even then, doubt Him. Blind unbelief would do so, but victorious faith says, “Never! He cannot lie. Let God be true and every man a liar.” When faith is at her very worst, she is glorious, and sparkles like a jewel in the dark mine; and God will come and take her up out of all the depths and set her in His own crown as a precious jewel. “Your faith has saved you,” says Jesus. No, Lord, it is not faith that has done it, it is You. He takes the crown royal of salvation’s glory, lifts it right off from His own head, and puts it on the head of the poor feeble woman’s faith. “Your faith has saved you: go in peace.” And so will God do with your tempest-tossed and exercised faith—He will put the crown upon it, and that faith of yours shall sing in heaven! Do not tell me that we shall have no faith in heaven—nonsense! “Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” We shall find faith to be our sweet companion there. Shall I not believe God when I get to heaven? Shall I give up trusting my God when I get there? No, I shall trust Him for my resurrection body; I shall trust Him for the millennial splendor; I shall trust Him for the gathering of the elect; trust Him for an eternity of bliss; trust Him for my safe standing where He has brought me; and so, happy faith, imperishable faith, shall live and reign, when sense and sight are gone past recall. The Lord give you faith to hear the word, to believe in it, and afterwards to be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

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