Blessed Assurances

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I want to put before you some blessed assurances from God's Word, which truths, I trust, you will remember through the years as a staff of support in time of trouble, and will carry in your memory as long as life lasts. How blessed is it that we are in possession of things that are unshakable! Nothing is more apparent in our time than the lack of restfulness and repose. We are living in the most nervous, strange, uncertain day of the world's history. Jeremiah, speaking by the Spirit of God, prophesied that toward the end of the age the wicked would be like the troubled sea which could not rest; in our day it is a restless multitude that greets our gaze.

One cannot walk along the streets of any great city without noting that many human faces are marked with anxiety and restlessness. Even in the house of God where we gather to worship Him who said, "Be careful for nothing," one sees faces marked by depression and fear. We live in a rush, constantly apprehensive of danger, and this spirit of the age has its effect upon the hearts and minds of many of God's people.

This same spirit of restlessness characterizes the religious world. Many are in a quandary, not knowing what to believe. The spirit of doubt and skepticism pervades our institutions of learning, and many young men and women are asking the question: Can we be sure of anything in regard to God and destiny? Therefore, it is good for us to note some of the blessed assurances God's Word brings to us—the unshaken and the unshakable pillars of our Christian faith. Over against the skepticism and unbelief of the atomic age I want to ring the changes on the word know. This was a great word with the apostle Paul and with other writers of the New Testament. Paul was a know-so Christian, as were all believers who down through the centuries had a ringing testimony for God.

Let us then consider four passages of Scripture which contain four great assurances for the Christian: 1 John 3:5; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 5:1; and 1 John 3:2.

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE OF THE VICARIOUS SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST TO EXPIATE SIN

In 1 John 3:5 we read: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." This pillar of faith which sets forth the purpose of Christ's coming into the world is as steadfast as ever, despite the storms of hell that have raged against it for nearly two thousand years.

The emissaries of the infernal world have set themselves to destroy it and everything that expresses it to mankind. Take for instance William Cowper's wonderful hymn:

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

No lines have ever been so caricatured, abused or assailed as these. Sir Edward Arnold, author of The Light of Asia, stated that these words were absolutely shocking to his mind. Matthew Arnold described the hymn as "The language of an unbalanced dreamer." On the other hand, it has been used of God to lead thousands to Christ. The number of lives which have been changed by its message is greater than the number of people who have heard about the Arnolds. I would rather have written those words than to have been the author of all of the books of all of the Arnolds and their kind! To these enemies of the cross, the blood of Jesus Christ is of no more value to the immortal soul than the blood of Paul or any other martyr. But in the midst of this babel of sounds and speculation about the purpose of the coming of Christ into the world, every believer can say triumphantly, "We know why He forsook a throne in glory and went to the cross with its ignominy and shame—we know that He was manifested to take away our sins!"

I once stood by the bedside of a young man and watched his life ebb away. He was greatly concerned about his soul. I said, "Laddie, let me read this verse to you: 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor. 5:21)." I explained that Jesus Christ came into the world to be a sin bearer, that He went to the cross to give His blood as a ransom for sinners, and that God is going to take to heaven all those men and women who put their trust in this Son of God, who was manifested to take away sins. That young man looked away to the cross and believed that the death of Christ was for him—a death in his stead. God gave the lad assurance of the forgiveness of all his sins, and he passed into the valley of the shadow of death without a question, without a fear. He is in the glory now because he knew that Christ was manifested to take away sins.
My friends, do you know this truth? No matter what else you know, if you do not know Christ as an atoning Saviour, you will never reach the Father’s blessed home above. But, praise God, if you do know this blessed truth, it matters little what else you do not know; all will be well. Is the blood of Christ the ground of your hope of eternal salvation? God save me from ever preaching, and you from ever believing a bloodless theology!

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE OF GOD’S UNFAILING PURPOSE

We examine another wonderful verse: “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” (Rom. 8:28). How strange are some of God’s ways with us! Very often we cannot understand why He deals with one man this way, and another that way. He may take away that man’s health, and leave this one well; He may allow one Christian $20,000 a year and another not a penny! What strange and inexplicable things occur in the providences of God!

Some time ago a Christian friend and I were recounting our experiences over a period of twenty-five years. Among other things, this friend told me that before the great depression of 1929, he had supported ten missionaries. But when the collapse came, his entire fortune was swept away, and many a day he and his wife sat at the breakfast table, drinking coffee without cream or sugar because they did not have sufficient money to buy them!

My friends, never try to find out reasons for the providences of God. If you do so, your soul will get into darkness. Just trust God, and you will learn some day that all the tears and heartaches were just as essential for the building of your Christian life as were the days of gladness and sunshine. Poor Jacob cried, “All these things are against me,” when he heard that Benjamin was wanted in Egypt after Joseph had been taken away from him. But he learned later that the very things that were against him worked for his good, and for the preservation of his whole family. So, my friends when you stand on the glory side and look at the pathway along which you have come, you will thank God for the loving heart that planned and for the pierced hand that led you on life’s way. Let us say with the Apostle Paul in triumphant assurance that we too know that all things work together for good!

Some years ago, when I was a pastor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I had in my congregation a woman who had spent the last ten years of her life upon a sickbed. She scarcely knew a day without pain, and yet she gave herself to the giving of thanks to God for the very thing through which she was passing. She was assured that her multitude of physical woes was preparing her for some service in the glory. After her triumphant death, her husband found the following poem in her Bible. At the funeral service he requested that I read it to the congregation. I pass it on to you because it may help you understand the meaning of your tears. The title of it is* The Weaver:

*The Weaver:

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me:
I cannot choose the colors;
He worketh steadily.
Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow,
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I, the under side.
Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver’s skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

And so, in joy or sorrow, in sickness or health, in riches or in poverty, in life or in death, our testimony is to the assurance of God’s unfailing purpose: “We know that all things work together for good.”

He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice with Him.

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE OF IMMORTAL LIFE

We turn to another heart-warming verse: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

The worldly wise man speaks of nature’s two great mysteries, life and death, and they are mysteries so far as human philosophy is concerned, for the world’s wisdom and science return no complete answer to the
question, from the *whence* to the *whither* written over every cradle and every grave.

The ancient Greeks used to symbolize a life terminated in death by a broken column. The firmly set foundation, the sculptured base, and the fluted shaft, were there, but when the eye, craving completeness, followed the flowing lines upward, expecting to see a crown, there was no crown—just a sharp fracture. The ancient Greeks thus expressed a life terminated in death because they did not know whether or not it continued on beyond this earthly veil. Three thousand years have passed since the Grecian philosophers speculated concerning the life beyond this earthly pilgrimage, and, while the world has progressed in many ways, the centuries have not brought one added flicker of light upon the mystery of death. It is very significant that Robert G. Ingersoll, the agnostic, on the occasion of the death of his brother, put into English the uncertain feeling expressed by the ancient Greeks in their carvings upon their broken marble shafts. He said, “Life is a narrow veil between the barren peaks of two eternities. We cry aloud, and the only answer to our cry is the echo of our wail.”

My friends, put over against the uncertainties of ancient and modern philosophers concerning a future life the blessed assurances of the Apostle Paul: “We know.” Further on in this same chapter, while still referring to death, Paul states: “We are confident.” This is the meaning of death for the Christian. Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, has lifted the veil that conceals the future, so that we may boldly say, “We know.” We are not hoping this may be true! We are, rather, proclaiming the glorious certainty and the divine assurance. I protest with all my soul against paganizing the joyous, blessed Christian doctrine of death. Read the inscriptions left by the early church in the catacombs of Rome: “Alexander lives beyond the stars”; “Clement triumphs.” Compare this joyous feeling of victory with the modern conception of death with its ghastly paraphernalia of woe. This does not come from the catacombs but from the cloisters.

A young man who was in school with me was called away because of his mother’s serious illness. He arrived at her bedside five minutes before the dissolution of her body and soul. Knowing she had come to the end of life, and that heaven was opening before her, she took her boy in her arms, and, as she kissed him, she said, “Percy, I am leaving you now, but I will meet you in the morning.” At that moment, she closed her eyes to earthly scenes to open them in the presence of the King and to behold the glories of Immanuel’s land. What an assurance and what a staff of support in time of sadness this is—the assurance of immortal life. We know!

This is an assurance in regard to the resurrection of the human body. What is it that gives us the confidence in the resurrection and immortality of the body? It is none other than Christ’s own resurrection. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:14: “God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own power.”

The open grave of the Lord becomes the pledge of the Son of God that enables us to say, “I know.” This body, though it be returned to the dust, will be revived and rebuilt and moulded into a new and perfect form.

In the laboratory of Faraday, the great chemist, a man accidentally knocked a silver cup into a jar of acid. The cup was consumed by the powerful solution. When Faraday, that stalwart confessor of Christ, heard of the disappearance of the cup, he threw some chemicals into the acid. Soon the dissolved particles of silver were precipitated, the metal was reclaimed, sent to a silversmith and recast into a graceful cup.

My friends, if a chemist can perform this miracle of reconstruction, surely Almighty God will be able to gather the particles of our bodies, though they be scattered to the four winds, and change that which was sown a natural body into a body glorious in beauty and power—even like unto His glorious body. Here is our Lord’s own promise: “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

D. L. Moody once said, “Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. Right then I will be more alive than I ever was down here.” And some day you may read the news that Louis T. Talbot is dead. No, my friends, I will not be dead, either; I will be alive for evermore.

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE OF CONFORMITY TO CHRIST’S IMAGE

Again we look at another powerful verse, “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” (1 John 3:2).
To be conformed to the image of God’s Son is the destiny of every child of God. When the son of the Duke of Hamlin lay dying, and dying triumphant in Christ, he called his younger brother to his side, and said, “Douglas, I am dying now; I am leaving you. In a little while you will inherit Father’s property and the homestead. And that isn’t all, Douglas; you will also inherit Father’s title; and by and by they will call you the Duke of Hamlin. But, Douglas, when you are the Duke, I shall be a king.” That is truly the destiny of every child of God, whether he lives in a palace or a poorhouse. There is a crown awaiting his head. I believe that there is a crown for my head that wouldn’t fit your head; it is made on purpose for me. And, friends, there is another one made for you. But wonderful as is this prospect of being a king and sharing Christ’s sovereignty over this earth, there is nothing far more wonderful than that. It is expressed in this fourth great assurance: “But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.”

When the sainted Andrew Bonar was advanced in years, he received a letter from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, asking that he send him his photograph. Mr. Spurgeon explained that he wanted to add it to his collection of photographs of men of God. Dr. Bonar complied with some hesitation, writing these words on the reverse side of the photograph: “Dear Spurgeon: I am sorry that you asked for my picture. This photograph is the very best I can do while I am in this mortal body. My physical form is rapidly going the way of all flesh. But one day you will see a better likeness—one which I shall be proud for people to behold; I shall be like Him, for I shall see Him as He is.”

What a prospect and what a hope! We shall be like Him—spirit, soul, and body! What a day that will be! I do not believe that the day is far distant. The signs that speak of Christ’s coming are multiplying daily. We may well obey our Lord’s injunction: “Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Let us carry these assurances in our hearts until at last we see our Lord in person and worship at His blessed feet. May His blessing be our portion.

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