

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HELPS TO FULL ASSURANCE.

A Sermon

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“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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”—1 John v. 13.

How very simple this all is! John had an eagle's wing with which to soar aloft, and an eagle's eye with which to penetrate into great mysteries; and yet of all the writers of the Old or New Testament he is one of the simplest. He never endeavours to show you the greatness of his mind or the grandeur of his rhetoric; on the contrary, he speaks as a child to those who are children in the school of love. I would that all of us who try to teach others would remember this, and sink ourselves in our lesson.

It is equally notable how practical John is. When he writes he always has a worthy intent in every line; “These are written,” saith he, and he explains the design with which he penned the record. These epistles are not written to dazzle you, nor to lead you into speculation, nor to gratify your curiosity; but these are written “that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” The practical object may seem to the high-soaring votaries of modern thought to be commonplace; but John had a deep veneration for matters which moderns despise. The commonplaces of theology are the greenest of the pastures wherein the sheep of God feed and lie down. It is infinitely more to our benefit to know that we have eternal life than to be able to predict the future of empires or to forecast the destiny of kings. It is of more practical importance for us to know that we have eternal life than to be able to explain all mysteries, or to speak with tongues. John acts according to his loving heart when he writes to lead his brethren into the assured knowledge of their personal possession of eternal life.

When he tells us his design, it is that he may help to accomplish his purpose; for by informing men of understanding what he is writing for, he stirs them up to see his purpose and to fall in with it. “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, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” Dear friends, if this be the design of the inspired

apostle, let us not be slow to co-operate with him ; but let us pray this morning for the full assurance of faith, that we may know of a surety that eternal life is pulsing in our hearts. May you who have not believed in Jesus feel a fervent desire within your spirits to take that preliminary step, and become believers in the Son of God.

Come, then, to the text, and with us consider, first, *to whom it was written*,—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ;" secondly, *to what end it is written*,—"That ye may know that ye have eternal life." This will lead us, thirdly, to consider *how that which was written in this epistle conduces to this blessed confidence* : and then, lastly, I shall have to call your attention to *an added matter which is never forgotten* by John, even when he writes with the design of promoting the highest form of Christian attainment,— "That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." They did already believe on the sacred name ; yet it remained a part of his design to confirm them in that faith, and conduct them to higher degrees of it.

May the Holy Spirit make our meditation profitable.

I. First, then, briefly, **TO WHOM WAS THIS WRITTEN?** It is important to observe the direction of a letter ; for I may be reading a communication meant for somebody else, and if it should contain good tidings, I may be deceiving myself by appropriating the news.

This epistle, and this particular text in it, were written *for all those who believe on the name of the Son of God*. In part of the epistle he says, "I write unto you, little children" ; then he says, "I write unto you, young men" ; further on he says, "I have written unto you, fathers" ; but now he writes to babes, to young men, and to fathers under the one comprehensive description of those who have believed on the name of the Son of God. Our discourse is, therefore, for all of you who are believers in Christ. Little child, you who have just begun the spiritual life, we would have you attain to the confidence that you have eternal life. Young man, sternly battling with sin, we would have you strengthened for your conflict by knowing that you have eternal life. And you fathers, let us hope you have not come so far without this knowledge ; but whether you have or not, these things are written that you in your mature years may rise to the full conviction that the life of God is strong within you. No person, young or old, is excluded from this text, unless he is an unbeliever.

To unbelievers this text is not written : it is for all who trust in Jesus ; but it is for none beside. If you enquire why it is not addressed to unbelievers, I answer, simply because it would be preposterous to wish men to be assured of that which is not true. John never wished that a man who had not believed in Jesus Christ should even think that he had eternal life ; for it would be a fatal error. "He that believeth not shall not see life ;" how, then, could he have an assurance of possessing it ? Faith is a necessary preliminary to assurance ; you must have the blade of faith before you can have the ripe corn of assurance. Dear friends, do not dream of being sure that you are saved apart from making sure that you have trusted yourselves with the crucified Saviour. The atonement presented by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gives assurance of salvation to all who trust in it, but to none besides. It would be taking things out of their due order, it would be doing you real and perhaps

fatal mischief if we should lead you to presume that you have eternal life before you have unreservedly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." I speak, therefore, to all of you who have come to Christ, however imperfect and undeveloped your spiritual life may as yet be; but I invite none beside to the banquet of joyous confidence. As with a drawn sword of fire, John's words guard the way like the cherub at the gate of Paradise: his words, "these things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God," keep back every man who has not believed in Jesus from dreaming that he has eternal life. What hast thou to do with the rest, and the peace, and the blessedness of full assurance, unless thou hast received the appointed Saviour into thy heart's trust?

We may gather from this address being made to all the people of God and to none beside, that *there are some believers in the world, and true believers too, who do not know that they have eternal life.* A very large number of true believers do not know this cheering fact. For instance, certain Christians believe that even if they are now saved they may yet be lost: that even if they have the life of God in them, that life may die out. Beloved, I pray for you that you may know that you have *eternal* life, and not a temporary life. The life which the Holy Spirit imparts to the believer is not a thing of days, and weeks, and months, and years: its dwelling-place is in the region of eternity. It is practically a divine life which God puts into us, whereby we are made "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." We were begotten again unto a lively or living hope in the day of our regeneration. The new birth from above by the Spirit of God is a birth to an endless life. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Our Lord at the well of Samaria gives us another figure: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Many imagine that this spring can fail. How much comfort God's dear children lose by not apprehending the absolute immortality of the new life I will not venture to say; but this much I will declare—that to me it is the very crown and glory of the gospel, that if I receive Jesus into my soul, and the Holy Spirit imparts to me the new life, I have received an everlasting blessing. Has not Jesus said "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"?

Again, a large number of Christ's people who may be perfectly sound in the doctrinal view of the nature of this life do not know that they possess it at this present moment if they are believers. I find even the commentators, when they try to write upon this text, and most of the preachers who have left us printed sermons upon it, read the text as if it said, "that ye may know that ye *shall have* eternal life." They speak about the full assurance that we shall one day enter into glory. I beg their pardon, the text does not say anything of the kind: it is, "that ye may know that ye *have* eternal life," even here, at this present hour. The spiritual life which is in the believer at this moment is the same life

which shall be in him in heaven. The grace-life is the glory-life in the bud : the same life, only less developed. We shall not in the article of death receive another life than that which we have while we are sojourning here below. Death sets a seal on that which is, but it produces nothing. There is to be a very palpable change wrought upon the body ; but as to the spirit, the life of God which is in it now is the life which will dwell in it throughout eternity. Our believing life is eternal life. We want children of God who believe in Jesus to feel that the holy flame which kindles their lamp to-day is the same fire which will shine forth before the throne of God for ever : they have begun already to exercise those holy emotions of delight and joy which will be their heaven : they already possess in measure those perceptions and faculties which will be theirs in glory. Let us recollect this, and know that, as believers, we have eternal life.

Yet again, there are some Christians who believe all this, and are perfectly right in theory, but yet they each one cry, "I want to know that I have eternal life. I want a fuller assurance of salvation than I have already obtained." That is also our desire for you ; for if you know you have believed in Jesus you certainly are quickened with eternal life, and ought to know it.

But it is only to you that have believed that the text speaks. If you have not believed in the glorious name of the Well-beloved, then come at once and put your trust in him. This is the gospel to every unbeliever: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." For "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned." An unbeliever may have an assurance that he will be lost, but he cannot have an assurance that he is saved, or ever will be. First, believe on the name of the Son of God, who is manifested to take away sin. Trust in his glorious Person, in his finished work, in his accepted sacrifice, in his prevailing intercession, and in his glorious advent which is yet to be. Look unto him, and be ye saved. Rest alone upon the one foundation which God has laid in Zion, and then to you will the word of this consolation be sent, but not till then.

II. So, secondly, I have now to mention TO WHAT END JOHN HAS WRITTEN.

When he says, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life," I think his first meaning is *that you may know that everybody who believes in Jesus Christ has eternal life*. This is not a fact about you and a few others only, but it is a general truth—every man that believes on the name of the Son of God has eternal life. We may not doubt this ; it is not a matter of inference and deduction, but a matter of revelation from God. You are not to form an opinion upon it, but to believe it, for the Lord hath said it. Listen to these words. 1 John v. 1: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Thus saith the Spirit of God, and so it must be. We do not need any further evidence : if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. The Spirit of God bears witness to this, and as the Spirit is truth, his witness is certainly true : accept you his witness and ask for no other. It is written (1 John v. 12), "He that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." This is the unvarying testimony of the whole of Scripture, and specially of the writings of the

apostle John. How many times over he insists upon it that the believer has eternal life! I beseech you, never question the statement. Settle it in your mind; for if you have any doubt about it you have undermined the gospel, and rejected the witness of the Lord, and denied the Holy Ghost. You will not behave thus wickedly; therefore glorify God by believing his testimony.

I think that John in this passage meant, and we will consider him as meaning, something more—namely, *he would have us know that we personally have eternal life by having us know that we do personally believe in Jesus.* It is one thing to know that every believer has eternal life; but it is quite another thing to know that I am a believer so as to have eternal life myself. I have read of one who fell into the water, and as he was sinking he saw a rainbow in the sky above him. "Ah," thought he, "God has made a covenant not to destroy the earth with a flood, and yet it is no comfort to me, for I fear I shall be drowned." The largest provisions of grace avail us nothing unless we have a personal interest in them. It is true that every believer has eternal life, but what if I am not a believer?

It is a very singular thing that people should not know whether they believe in Jesus or not: for it is an ascertainable piece of knowledge. I know whether I think; I know whether I resolve; I know whether I doubt; I ought, therefore, to know whether I believe. But you see human nature received a terrible twist at the Fall, and it has fallen into a very foggy region, so that the eyes of the understanding are all askew, and the air around is very dank. Perhaps you ask me to speak for myself, and I assure you that I do so; but at the same time I do not hesitate to say the same of you. You, my clever friend, who are so wonderfully clear-headed, I should not wonder but what you are the foggiest and blindest of the whole company. The worst darkness is that which so blinds a man that he thinks he can see better than other people. We are all by nature in such a mixed up state that we need not wonder at any strange statement or feeling. When you hear brethren assert that a person who is not assured that he believes must necessarily be an unbeliever, you may say to yourself, "That friend does not know everything." There is no estimating the possible inconsistency and contradiction of the human mind. I have been in a state of mind in which I have questioned the possibility of there being a grain of grace in me, and yet I have clung to Jesus with a death grip. At such times my mind has worked morbidly, and its way has been turned upside down. Bunyan speaks of being "much tumbled up and down in his thoughts;" and that nearly hits my mental condition. It is very possible for a man to be a very strong believer and yet to question whether he has a spark of faith. I have heard ministers ridicule this state of inward questioning; and, indeed, it is ridiculous to all but those who are in it. If you once become a sufferer under this wretched complaint, the absurdity of your disease will not lessen its painfulness. Our mental distresses need not be logical; they can be full of anguish, and yet be most unreasonable. You probably know some people who are excessively nervous: they are afraid the skies will fall or the earth will crack: this is very stupid, but the agony caused thereby is very real. There is little of the Christian spirit in the man who can increase mental torment by

turning it into jest. This is not to pour oil into the wound, but to rub salt into it. No doubt, the doubts which many have of their personal safety are very unreasonable; but a servant of God is not therefore to scorn the subject of them, for the Lord Jesus Christ had compassion on the ignorant. He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, nor must we. I am personally taught to be tender of poor doubters, for I have often been one myself. I would sometimes give all that I have to be able to feel myself to be even the least in the Lord's family. Just now I enjoy a full assurance, but I am not always on the mount; and therefore I have bowels for others because I am myself compassed with infirmity. We may not judge harshly, as if things were as we would theoretically arrange them, but we must deal with things as they are; and it cannot be questioned that some of the best believers are at times sorely put to it to know whether they are believers at all. The prayer of John is that such people, yea, and all believers, may know of a surety beyond all doubt that they have eternal life.

So far is human nature out of joint that it is necessary for me to say what it seems superfluous to say—that full assurance of our possessing eternal life is possible. The Church of Rome teaches that no man can be assured that he has eternal life, except some few to whom supernatural revelations may be given. That sort of doctrine lingers in the air of Protestantism; many people think the same, though they do not say so. Impossible to know that you are quickened! It ought to be impossible to have any doubt about it. Rationally, a living man should know that he is alive. No man should give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids while he has a doubt about his eternal state.

It is possible, and if it is possible it is very desirable; for when a man knows that he has eternal life, what a comfort it is to him! What gratitude it produces in his spirit! How it helps him to live above the world! With what holy ardour does he pursue the service of God, knowing that he has an eternal reward! He has not to waste time in calculating evidences, and perpetually examining himself; for he has examined himself, and he has cast himself upon Christ, and he knows that he has eternal life. With what rapidity does he make progress, for he leaves the first principles and goes on towards perfection! No longer questioning, he shows holy daring, and goes from strength to strength in rapturous fellowship and ecstatic enjoyment: he advances from glory to glory, his faith making substantial to him, even while he is here below, the joys which are laid up for the redeemed. I say again, if full assurance be possible, it is eminently desirable.

And I go a little further: it is our duty to obtain full assurance. We should not have been commanded to give diligence to make our calling and election sure if it were not right for us to be sure. I am sure it is right for a child of God to know that God is his Father, and never to have a question in his heart as to his sonship. I know it is right for a soul that is married unto Christ to know the sweet love of the bridegroom, and never to tolerate a cloud of suspicion to come between the soul and the full enjoyment of Christ's love. Wherefore, I would urge you onward to know that you have eternal life. My brethren, John, being dead, yet speaketh out of this Book: he calls upon you to know

that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and that we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. He bids us as believers firmly repose our souls upon the promise of our faithful God.

I sorrowfully remind certain of you that, as you have not believed, you have neither part nor lot in this matter, and the beloved disciple speaks not to you.

III. Thirdly, I come to where I would lay the stress of the discourse this morning,—WHAT HAS JOHN SAID IN THIS EPISTLE WHICH CONDUCTS TO OUR FULL ASSURANCE? How does he help us to know that we are believers, and consequently to know that we have eternal life? I cannot attempt a full *résumé* of this most blessed epistle; but I shall select a few items from very many. An exposition of this epistle, written to show how it enables men to know that they have eternal life, would be a very valuable thing; and I feel confident that without the slightest forcing of a single sentence it could be shown that the whole letter bears upon assurance. The wish of the apostle that all believers might know that they have eternal life is the silken thread upon which his pearls are strung. Now believers ought to know that they have eternal life, and they ought never to doubt it, for God's own word assures them that it is so. Remember that word of the Lord Jesus in John vi. 47—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Will you doubt the Lord's "Verily, verily"? Christ's word unsupported by any external evidence is quite enough to satisfy every gracious mind. "Let God be true, but every man a liar,"—yea, let every circumstance be a liar. Everything that we have looked upon as evidence should be regarded as a lie if it denies the declaration of the Lord. Out of this simple faith in God comes assurance naturally, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the heart. Take pure and unadulterated milk, and let it stand, and you will soon get cream. Faith is the milk, and full assurance is the cream upon it; and when faith has stood long enough, you may see the rich cream of holy confidence upon the top of it. The witness of God is true, and therefore to be believed, yea, to be believed with full assurance. According to all right principles, assurance should increase by the lapse of time during which faith occupies itself upon the sure promise. I have trusted my soul on Christ, therefore I have eternal life. How do I know? I know, because the Spirit of God has so declared it in the Word of God. Thus has he spoken—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." I believe in the Son, and, therefore, I have eternal life. Do friends assure me that they see the life in me? I am very much obliged to them, but I do not need their evidence. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." When the Holy Spirit has made a statement, it is something like impertinence either to ask or to offer any further evidence upon the point. Therefore, that matter is not my subject. I take it, we must not offer you any other argument to prove the eternal life of believers beyond this,—God has said it.

The matter which may be argued about is this—"Do I believe in Jesus? Am I a believer in such a sense that I have eternal life?" Let us look at the epistle for help in this enquiry.

You will find, first, that John mentions as an evidence *truthful dealing with God, in faith and confession of sin*. Naturally men walk in darkness or falsehood towards God ; but when we have believed in Jesus we come to walk in the light of truth. Read in the first chapter of the epistle from verse 6 to 9. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth : but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The believer does not attempt to deal with God as if he had no sin ; for that were to make Christ useless, seeing there would be no need of his blood to cleanse. He does not say that he now lives without sin ; for that were to make his cleansing a thing of the past, whereas the Spirit teacheth that it is a present matter, concerning our present walk with God. To claim to live without sin is to walk in the dark ; for the claim is a false one. The man who walks in the light comes before God as a sinner, whom the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. So, then, you may take this as an evidence that you are a saved man, if you deal truthfully with God : if you confess your guilt before God, if your only hope of being cleansed from it lies in the blood of Jesus Christ, then you have come to act towards God on the line of truth, and he accepts you. You that are not a believer in Christ may try to forget that you have any sin, or by forms and ceremonies to offer some kind of palliation of your sin : but when you are brought into the honest light you will make a clean breast of it, and cease to act a borrowed part. Your cry will be, "Search me, O God, and try me," and your appeal will be to the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Be sure that you are a child of God when sin is confessed, and faith is looking to Jesus for the removal of it. "Father, I have sinned," is the cry of a true-born child. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," is the prayer of the man who goes down to his house justified. We can repeat with rapture the words of Paul to the Romans, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Next, John gives us *obedience* as a test of the child of God. Look to the second chapter, and begin to read at the third verse : "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Come, then, beloved brethren, do you obey the will of the Lord from your heart ? Is holiness the aim and object of your life ? Do you strive to do as Jesus bids you ? Do you set your clock by the heavenly sun ? Do you try to order your ways and your steps according to the law of the Lord ? Do you delight yourself also in the law of God after the inner man ? Do you press forward after perfect holiness ? Then his servant you are whom you obey. Rest assured beyond all

question that you are one of Christ's sheep, for he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." If grace has made you obedient it has given you eternal life.

Follow me as I call attention, next, to the evidence of *love* in the heart. In the second chapter read at the ninth verse: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." Then go on to the fourteenth verse of the third chapter. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." This will greatly help you to decide your case. Do you hate anybody? Are you seeking revenge? Are you unforgiving? Then you are not dwelling in the light: you are of Cain and not of Christ. Do you feel that you love your enemies, and that, in fact, you are no man's enemy, because love is the principle of your life? "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." We must feel a general benevolence towards all men, and a still more intense love and complacency towards all who are in Christ. This love must be practical, and lead us to help and succour our brethren. Have you this love? Do you feel a delight in the company of the brethren because they belong to Christ, however poor or illiterate they may be? You would not feel love reigning in your spirit if true faith had not come to dwell there. A loving spirit evidenced by a loving life is a true sign that you belong to God, whose name is love. Be of good courage and enter into full assurance, O ye whose bosoms glow with the sacred flame of fervent love to God and men.

Next to that comes *separation from the world*. Read in the second chapter at the fifteenth verse: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is backed up by the first verse of the third chapter: "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Have you met with opposition from the ungodly? Have you discovered that Ishmael still mocks Isaac? Do you find when you go out to work that your shopmates who used to drink with you are inclined to avoid you? Are you pointed at as a hypocrite because you are a Christian? Then there is a difference between you and others, and the world can see it. The serpent's seed will hiss at the seed of the woman: God has put an enmity between the two; do not therefore be surprised at it. Did not our Lord say, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"? Thus slander, abuse, and other forms of persecution may turn to your comfort by showing that you are of that sect which is everywhere spoken against.

Next to that, in the second chapter, we have the evidence of *continuance in the faith*. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is

the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." The longer a Christian man is enabled to persevere in holiness, the more confident may he become that his religion is the work of the Spirit of God in his soul. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Perseverance in holiness is a sure mark of election. It is the righteous who hold on their way; but mere pretenders are as wandering stars and fading flowers. That which comes and goes is not of God: the Holy Spirit abides permanently in true believers.

The next evidence you will find in the third chapter, the third verse, namely, *purification*. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Do you every day endeavour to keep clear of sin; and, when you have sinned, do you at night go with bitter repentance to God, and beg to be delivered from it? Are you fighting against your besetting sins? Do you contend against the customs of the world? Have you come to be a warrior against evil? Let that be an evidence that there is in you a new spirit which was not there by nature, and let that prove to you that you are quickened into newness of life. Conflict and victory are evidences of grace. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Again, in the twenty-first verse of the third chapter, we meet with another blessed evidence, and that is *a clear conscience*,—"If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." They say of us that we seek ourselves, or that we are hypocrites; but if we can lay our hand upon our heart and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," we have the best ground for full assurance. A conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God is one of the seals of the Holy Ghost upon that epistle which he has written in our hearts. This divine witness is a privilege which none possess but the regenerate. Prove yourself clear in the court of conscience that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

Furthermore, we find an evidence in *answers to prayer*: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Does God hear your prayers? then you are pleasing in his sight. Are you in the habit of speaking with him, and does he reply to you? then you are agreed with God. Does he grant you the desire of your heart? Is it not because you delight in him? He heareth not those who wilfully live in sin; but if any man doeth his will him he heareth. You may look upon every answered prayer as another token of the love of God toward you in Christ Jesus your Lord.

Adherence to the truth is another help to full assurance. Read the whole fourth chapter: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In the sixth verse he says, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." I

read in a certain learned divine the other day a declaration that the evangelical doctrine which we preach is not Christianity, but Paulinism. By that utterance this divine condemned himself. John saith, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." He who hears not the apostles hears not their Master. He who dares say that Paul has not given us the gospel is not of Christ: for Jesus saith, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." The testimony of the Holy Ghost by apostolic lips is as sure as the testimony by the Son of God himself; and it is flat rebellion against the Holy Ghost to graduate his utterances, whether they be through prophets, apostles, or the Christ himself. He who makes this to be true and that to be false, or this true and that truer still, has disparaged the Spirit of God, who speaketh as he pleases, but is always infallible. He that questions what the Spirit saith hath not the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. If you have taken Scripture to be your guide, and hold fast by the truth of God, you are one of Christ's sheep, of whom he saith, "A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Against the detestable spirit of this age, and against everything else that would corrupt the gospel of Christ, it is the mark of the true seed to stand opposed. If you bear witness to the truth, the truth bears witness to you. Blessed are those who are not removed from the hope of their calling.

One of the best evidences of true faith, and one of the best helps to full assurance, is a *holy familiarity with God*. Read in the fourth chapter the sixteenth verse: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us." Oh, beloved brother, if you have come to speak with God as a man speaketh with a man, if you dwell in him, if every day you say more to God than you do to men, and if you find more joy in fellowship with God than you do in all the world beside, then you are one of his. God never made a man to know him and love him, and then cast him away. Eternal life is surely in you if you have entered into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. When you have no longer that slavish fear which makes you stand back, but that childlike confidence which draws you nearer and yet nearer unto God, then are you his child. The spirit of adoption is one point of sure witness from the Spirit of God. He who can call God his exceeding joy is among the living in Zion.

IV. I would now finish, only I dare not leave out the last point—**THE APPENDIX TO JOHN'S DESIGN**. The apostle puts it, "That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." I think he means this—you are never to get into such a state that you say, "I have eternal life, and therefore I need not trust simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Years ago I was born again, and so I can now live without the daily exercise of faith." "No," says the apostle, "I

am writing this to believers, and I tell them that while they may have full assurance, it cannot be a substitute for habitual faith in the Lord Jesus." Personally, I wish to say,—it is some thirty-four years since I first believed in the Christ Jesus, and then I came to him as having nothing in myself, and I took him to be my all. At this moment I possess a comfortable and clear assurance that I have eternal life ; but my ground of confidence to-day is exactly what it was when first I came to Christ. I have no confidence in my confidence, I place no reliance upon my own assurance. My assurance lies in the fact that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and that "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life": I do believe in him, and therefore I know I have eternal life. Brethren, do not stir beyond that. Keep to your first faith. However far you go in other directions, stand fast in your undivided faith in Jesus. If you think it wise to examine these signs and evidences which I have given you, do so ; but if you think to get food out of them you will find a bare cupboard. If you think you can live without Christ, on what you have known in the past, you are greatly mistaken. It is like trying to live on stale manna. None of you would have done that in the wilderness ; you would soon have turned up your noses at it. When it was more than a day old it "bred worms and stank." Everything you look to apart from Christ will rot in due time, so that you will loathe it. Beloved, every vessel, whether it be a great flagon or a little cup, must hang upon the one nail which is fastened in a sure place. If you get from Jesus, you wander into a land of darkness and of the shadow of death.

Whether I be a child of God or not is a question I will not discuss to-day. I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and they that trust in him are saved. Therefore I trust him ! Therefore I am saved ! The Word of God declares it. Blessed be his name for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 549, 193.
