

The Blessing of 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 5:13](#).

JOHN wrote to believers "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." It is worthy of note that all the epistles are so written. They are not letters to everybody, they are letters to those who are called to be saints. It ought to strike some of you with awe when you open the Bible and think how large a part of it is not directed at you. You may read it, and God's Holy Spirit may graciously bless it to you, but it is not directed to you. You are reading another man's letter: thank God that you are permitted to read it, but long to be numbered with those to whom it is directed. Thank God much more if any part of it should be used of the Holy Ghost for your salvation. The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks to the churches and to believers in Christ should make you bow the knee and cry to God to put you among the children, that this Book may become your Book from beginning to end, that you may read its precious promises as made to you. This solemn thought may not have struck some of you: let it impress you now.

We do not wonder that certain men do not receive the epistles, for they were not written to them. Why should they cavil at words which are addressed to men of another sort from themselves? Yet we do not marvel, for we knew it would be so. Here is a will, and you begin to read it; but you do not find it interesting: it is full of words and terms which you do not take the trouble to understand, because they have no relation to yourself; but should you, in reading that will, come upon a clause in which an estate is left to you, I warrant you that the nature of the whole document will seem changed to you. You will be anxious now to understand the terms, and to make sure of the clauses, and you will even wish to remember every word of the clause which refers to yourself. O dear friends, may you read the Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ as a testament of love to yourselves, and then you will prize it beyond all the writings of the sages.

This leads me to make the second remark, that as these things are written to believers, believers ought especially to make themselves acquainted with them, and to search into their meaning and intent. John says, "These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God." Do not, I beseech you, neglect to read what the Holy Ghost has taken care to write to you. It is not merely John that writes. John is inspired of the Lord, and

these things are written to you by the Spirit of God. Give earnest heed to every single word of what God has sent as his own epistle to your hearts. Value the Scriptures. Luther said that "he would not be in paradise, if he might, without the Word of the Lord; but with the Word he could live in hell itself." He said at another time that "he would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." The Scriptures are everything to the Christian's meat and his drink. The saint can say, "O how I love thy law!" If we cannot say so, something is wrong with us. If we have lost our relish for Holy Scripture, we are out of condition, and need to pray for spiritual health.

This much is the porch of my sermon, let us now enter more fully into our subject, noticing, first, that *John wrote with a special purpose*; and then going on to assert, secondly, that *this purpose we ought to follow up*.

I. First, JOHN WROTE WITH A SPECIAL PURPOSE. Men do not write well unless they have some end in writing. To sit down with paper and ink before you, and so much space to fill up, will ensure very poor writing. John knew what he was at. His intent and aim were clear to his own mind, and he tells us what they were.

According to the text the beloved apostle had one clear purpose which branched out into three.

To begin with, *John wrote that we might enjoy the full assurance of our salvation*. "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."

Many who believe on the name of Jesus are not sure that they have eternal life; they only hope so. Occasionally they have assurance, but the joy is not abiding. They are like a minister I have heard of, who said he felt assured of his salvation, "except when the wind was in the east." It is a wretched thing to be so subject to circumstances as many are. What is true when the wind is in the soft south or the reviving west is equally true when the wind is neither good for man nor beast. John would not have our assurance vary with the weather-glass, nor turn with the vane. He says, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life." He would have us certain that we are partakers of the new life, and so *know* it as to reap the golden fruit of such knowledge, and be filled with joy and peace through believing.

I speak affectionately to the weaker ones, who cannot yet say that they know they have believed. I speak not to your condemnation, but to your consolation. Full assurance is not essential to salvation, but it is essential to satisfaction. May you get it at once; at any rate may you never be satisfied to live without it. You may have full assurance. You may have it without personal revelations: it is wrought in us by the Word of God. These things are written that you may have it; and we may be sure that the means used by the Spirit are equal to the effect which he desires. Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, John so wrote as to attain his end in writing. What, then, has he written with the design of making

us know that we have eternal life? Go through the whole Epistle, and you will see that it all presses in that direction; but we shall not at this present have time to do more than glance through this chapter.

He begins thus: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you believe that Jesus is the anointed of God? Is he so to you? Is he anointed as your prophet, priest, and king? Have you realized his anointing so as to put your trust in him? Do you receive Jesus as appointed of God to be the Mediator, the Propitiation for sin, the Saviour of men? If so, you are born of God. "How may I know this?" Brethren, our evidence is the witness of God himself as here recorded. We need no other witness. Suppose an angel were to tell you that you are born of God, would that be a more sure testimony than the infallible Scripture? If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. John has thus positively declared the truth, that you may know that you have eternal life. Can anything be more clear than this?

The loving spirit of John leads him to say, "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Do you love God? Do you love his Only-begotten Son? You can answer those two questions surely. I knew a dear Christian woman who would sometimes say, "I know that I love Jesus; but my fear is that he does not love me." Her doubt used to make me smile, for it never could have occurred to me. If I love him, I know it is because he first loved me. Love to God in us is always the work of God's love towards us. Jesus loved us, and gave himself for us, and therefore we love him in return. Love to Jesus is an effect which proves the existence of its cause. Do you love Jesus? Do you feel a delight in him? Is his name as music to your ear, and honey to your mouth? Do you love to hear him extolled? Ah, dear friends! I know that to many of you a sermon full of his dear name is as a royal banquet; and if there is no Christ in a discourse, it is empty, and vain, and void to you. Is it not so? If you do indeed love him that begat and him that is begotten of him, then this is one of the things that is written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

John goes on to give another evidence: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." Do you love God? and do you love his children? Listen to another word from the same apostle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." That may appear to be a very small evidence; but I can assure you it has often been a great comfort to my soul. I know I love the brethren: I can say unto my Lord,

"Is there a lamb among thy flock
I would disdain to feed?"

I would gladly cheer and comfort the least of his people. Well, then, if I love the brethren, I love the Elder Brother. If I love the babes, I love the Father; and I know that I have passed from death unto life. Brethren, take this evidence home in all its force. It is conclusive: John has said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren";

and he would not have spoken so positively if it had not been even so. Brethren, never be content with sentimental comforts; set your feet firmly upon the rock of fact and truth. True Christian assurance is not a matter of guesswork, but of mathematical precision. It is capable of logical proof, and is no rhapsody or poetical fiction. We are told by the Holy Ghost that, if we love the brethren, we have passed from death to life. You can tell whether you love the brethren, as such, for their Master's sake, and for the truth's sake that is in them; and if you can truly say that you thus love them, then you may know that you have eternal life.

Our apostle gives us this further evidence: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the grand test of love. If you are living after your own will, and pay no homage to God, you are none of his. If you never think of the Lord Jesus as your Master, and never recognize the claims of God, and never wish to be obedient to his will, you are not in possession of eternal life. If you desire to be obedient, and prove that desire by your actions, then you have the divine life within you. Judge yourselves. Is the tenor of your life obedience or disobedience? By the fruit you can test the root and the sap.

But note, that this obedience must be cheerful and willing. No doubt some for a while obey the commands of God unwillingly. They do not like them, though they bow to them. They fret and grizzle because of the restraints of piety; and this proves that they are hypocrites. What you wish to do you practically are doing in the sight of God. If there could be such a thing as holiness forced upon a man, it would be unholiness. O my hearer, it may be that you cannot fall into a certain line of sin; but if you could, you would: your desires show what you really are. I have heard of Christian people, so called, going to sinful amusements, just, as they say, to enjoy a little pleasure. Ah well, we see where you are! Where your pleasure is, your heart is. If you enjoy the pleasures of the world, you are of the world, and with the world you will be condemned. If God's commands are grievous to you, then you are a rebel at heart. Loyal subjects delight in the royal law. "His commandments are not grievous." I said to one who came to join the church the other day, "I suppose you are not perfect"? and the reply was, "No, sir, I wish I might be." I said, "And suppose you were"? "Oh, then," she said, "that would be heaven to me." So it would be to me. We delight in the law of God after the inward man. Oh, that we could perfectly obey in thought, and word, and deed! This is our view of heaven. Thus we sing of it:

"There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin;
There from the rivers of his grace
Drink endless pleasures in."

We would scarce ask to be rid of sorrow, if we might be rid of sin. We would bear any burden cheerfully if we could live without spot we shall also be without grief. His commandments are not grievous, but they are ways of pleasantness and peace to us. Do you feel that

you love the ways of God, that you desire holiness, and follow after it joyfully? Then, dear friends, you have eternal life, and these are the sure evidences of it. Obedience, holiness, delight in God never came into a human heart except from a heavenly hand. Wherever they are found they prove that the Lord has implanted eternal life, for they are much too precious to be buried away in a dead soul.

John then proceeds to mention three witnesses. Now, dear hearers, do you know anything about these three witnesses? "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Do you know "the Spirit" ? Has the Spirit of God quickened you, changed you, illuminated you, sanctified you? Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? Do you feel his sacred impulses? Is he the essence of the new life within you? Do you know him as clothing you with his light and power? If so, you are alive unto God. Next, do you know "the water," the purifying power of the death of Christ? Does the crucified Lord crucify your sins? Is the water applied to you to remove the power of sin? Do you now long to perfect holiness in the fear of God? This proves that you have eternal life. Do you also know "the blood"? This is a wretched age, in which men think little of the precious blood. My heart has well-nigh been broken, and my very flesh has been enfeebled, as I have thought upon the horrible things which have been spoken of late about the precious blood by men called Christian ministers. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." Beloved friends, do you know the power of the blood to take away sin, the power of the blood to speak peace to the conscience, the power of the blood to give access to the throne of grace? Do you know the quickening, restoring, cheering power of the precious blood of Christ which is set forth in the Lord's Supper by the fruit of the vine? Then in the mouth of these three witnesses shall the fact of your having eternal life be fully established. If the Spirit of God be in you, he is the earnest of your eternal inheritance. If the water has washed you, then you are the Lord's. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." But ye are washed, and therefore the Lord's. If the precious blood has cleansed you from the guilt of sin, you know that it has also purchased you from death, and it is to you the guarantee of eternal life. I pray that you may from this moment enjoy the combined light of these three lamps of God "the spirit, and the water, and the blood," and so have full assurance of faith.

One thing more I would notice. Read the ninth verse: the apostle puts our faith and assurance on the ground that we receive "the witness of God." If I believe that I am saved because of this, that, and the other, I may be mistaken: the only sure ground is "the witness of God." The inmost heart of Christian faith is that we take God as his word; and we must accept that word, not because of the probabilities of its statements, nor because of the confirmatory evidence of science and philosophy, but simply and alone because the Lord has spoken it. Many professing Christians fall sadly short of this point. They dare to judge the Word instead of bowing before it. They do not sit at the Master's feet, but become doctors themselves. I

thank God that I believe everything that God has spoken, whether I am able to see its reason or not. To me the fact that the mouth of God hath spoken it stands in the place of all argument, either for or against. If Jehovah says so, so it is. Do you accept the witness of God? If not, you have made him a liar, and the truth is not in you; but if you have received "the witnesses of God," then this is his witness, that "He hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I say again, if your faith stands in the wisdom of men, and is based upon the cleverness of a preacher, it will fail you; but if it stands on the sure Word of the Lord it will stand for ever, and this may be to you a special token that you have eternal life. I have said enough upon this subject; oh that God may bless it to you! May we be enabled, from what John has written, to gather beyond doubt that we have the life of God within our souls.

Furthermore, *John wrote that we might know our spiritual life to be eternal.* Please notice this, for there are some of God's children who have not yet learned this cheering lesson. The life of God in the soul is not transient, but abiding; not temporary but eternal. Some think that the life of God in the believer's soul may die out; but how, then, could it be eternal? If it die it is not eternal life. If it be eternal life it cannot die. I know that modern deceivers deny that eternal means eternal, but you and I have not learned their way of pumping the meanings out of the words which the Holy Spirit uses. We believe that "eternal" means endless, and that if I have eternal life, I shall live eternally, Brethren, the Lord would have us know that we have eternal life.

Learn, then, the doctrine of the eternality of life given in the new birth. It must be eternal life, because it is "the life of God." We are born again of the Spirit of God by a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. We are said to be "made partakers of the divine nature." Surely, this means, among other things, that we receive an undying life; for immortality is of the essence of the Life of God. His name is "I am that I am." He hath life in himself, and the Son hath life in himself, and of this life we are the receivers. This was his purpose concerning his Son, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. If it be the life of God which is in a believer and certainly it is, for he hath begotten us again then that life must be eternal. As children of God, we partake of his life, and as heirs of God, we inherit his eternity. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ calls the life of his people eternal life. How often do I quote this text! It seems to lie on the tip of my tongue: "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And again, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." It is not temporary life, not life which at a certain period must grow old and die, but everlasting life. "It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is the life of Christ within the soul. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." If our life

is Christ's life, we shall not die until Christ dies. If our life is hidden in him, it will never be discovered and destroyed until Christ himself is destroyed. Let us rest in this.

Mark again how our Lord has put it: "Because I live, ye shall live also." As long, then, as Jesus lives, his people must live, for the argument will always be the same, "Because I live, ye shall live also." We are so one with Christ that while the head lives the members cannot die. We are so one Christ that the challenge is given, "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" A list is added of things which may be supposed to separate, but we are told that they cannot do so, for "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Is it not clear, then, that we are quickened with a life so heavenly and divine that we can never die? John tells us in this very chapter, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." He does not go back to his old sin, he does not again come under the dominion of sin; but, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Beloved, I entreat you to keep a hard and firm grip of this blessed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. How earnestly do I long "that ye may know that ye have eternal life"! Away with your doctrine of being alive in Christ to-day and dead tomorrow. Poor, miserable doctrine that! Hold fast to eternal salvation through the eternal covenant carried out by eternal love unto eternal life; for the Spirit of God has written these things unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.

Once more, according to the Authorized text, though not according to the Revised Version, *John desired the increase and confirmation of their faith*. He says, "That ye might believe on the name of the Son of God." John wrote to those who believed, that they might believe in a more emphatic sense. As our Saviour has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly, so does John write, that having faith we may have more of it. Come beloved, listen for a moment to this! You have the milk of faith, but God wills that you should have this cream of assurance! He would increase your faith. May you believe more extensively. Perhaps you do not believe all the truth, because you have not yet perceived it. There were members of the Corinthian church who had not believed in the resurrection of the dead, and there were Galatians who were very cloudy upon justification by faith. Many a Christian man is narrow in the range of his faith from ignorance of the Lord's mind. Like certain tribes of Israel, they have conquered a scanty territory as yet, though all the land is theirs from Dan to Beersheba. John would have us push out our fences, and increase the enclosure of our faith. Let us believe all that God has revealed, for every truth is precious and practically useful. Perhaps your doctrinal belief has been poor and thin. Oh that the Lord would turn the water into wine! Many of you live upon milk, and yet your years qualify you to feed on meat. Why keep the babes' diet? You that believe are exhorted to "go in and out, and find pasture"; range throughout the whole revelation of God.

It will be well for you if your faith also increases intensively. Oh that you may more fully believe what you do believe! We need deeper insight and firmer conviction. We do not half believe, as yet, any of us. Many of you only skim the pools of truth. Blessed is the wing which brushes the surface of the river of life; but infinitely more blessed is it to plunge into the depths of it. This is John's desire for you, that you would believe with all you heart, and soul, and strength.

He would have you believe more constantly, so that you may say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." It is not always so with us. We are at times chicken-hearted. We play the man today, and the mouse tomorrow. Lord have mercy upon us: we are an inconsistent people, fickle as the wind. The Lord would have us abide always in him with strong and mighty confidence, being rooted and built up in him.

He would have us trust courageously. Some can believe in a small way about small things. Oh for a boundless trust in the infinite God! We need more of a venturesome faith: the faith to do and dare. Often we see the way of power, but have not the faith which would be equal to it. See Peter walking on the sea! I do not advise any of you to try it, neither did our Lord advise Peter to do so: we do well enough if we walk uprightly on land. But when Peter had once taken a few steps on the sea, he ought to have known that his Lord could help him all the rest of the way; but alas! His faith failed, and he began to sink. He could have walked all the way to Jesus if he had believed right on. So is it with us: our faith is good enough for a spurt, but it lacks staying power. Oh, may God give us to believe, so that we may not only trip over a wave or two, but walk on the water to the end! If the Lord bids you, you may go through fire and not be burned, through the floods and not be drowned. Such a fearless, careless, conquering faith may the Lord work in us!

We need also to have our faith increased in the sense of its becoming more practical. Some people have a fine new faith, as pretty as the bright poker in the parlour, and as useless. We want an everyday faith, not to look at, but to use. Brothers and sisters, we need faith for the kitchen and the pantry, as well as for the drawing-room and the conservatory. We need workshop faith, as well as prayer-meeting faith. We need faith as to the common things of life, and the trying things of death. We could do with less paint if we had more power. We need less varnish and more verity. God give to you that you may believe on the name of the Son of God with a sound, common-sense faith, which will be found wearable, and washable, and workable throughout life.

We need to believe more joyfully. Oh what a blessed thing it is when you reach the rest and joy of faith! If we would truly believe the promise of God, and rest in the Lord's certain fulfillment of it, we might be as happy as the angels. I notice how very early in the morning how the birds begin to sing: before the sun is up or even the first grey tints of morning light are visible, the little songsters are awake and singing. Too often we refuse to sing until the sun is more than up, and noon is near. Shame on us! Will we never trust our God? Will we

never praise him for favours to come? Oh for a faith that can sing through the night and through the winter! Faith that can live on a promise is the faith of God's elect. You will never enjoy heaven below until you believe without wavering. The Lord give you such faith.

II. Thus I have gone through my first head, and taken nearly all the time. I must now come to push of pike, as the old soldiers used to say. We must drive our teaching home. THE PURPOSE WHICH JOHN HAD IN HIS MIND WE OUGHT TO FOLLOW UP. If he wished us to know that we have eternal life, brothers and sisters, let us try to know it. The Word of God was written for this purpose; let us use it for its proper end. The whole of these Scriptures were written that "we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing we might have life through his name." This Book is written to you who believe, that you may know that you believe. Will you suffer your Bibles to be a failure to you? Will you live in perpetual questioning and doubt? If so, the Book has missed its mark for you. The Bible is sent that you may have full assurance of your possession of eternal life; do not, therefore, dream that it will be presumptuous on your part to aspire to it. Our conscience tells us that we ought to seek full assurance of salvation. It cannot be right for us to be children of God, and not to know our own Father. How can we kneel down and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," when we do not know whether he is our Father or not? Will not a life of doubt tend to be a life of falsehood? May we not be using language which is not true to our consciousness? Can you sing joyful hymns which you fear are not true to you? Will you join in worship when your heart does not know that God is your God? Until the spirit of adoption enables you to cry, "Abba, Father," where is your love to God? Can you rest? Dare you rest, while it is a question whether you are saved or not? Can you go home to your dinner to-day and enjoy your meal, while there is a question about your soul's eternal life? Oh, be not so foolhardy as to run risks on that matter! I pray you, make sure work for eternity. If you leave anything in uncertainty, let it concern your body or your estate, but not your soul. Conscience bids you seek to know that you have eternal life, for without this knowledge many duties will be impossible of performance. Many Scriptures which I cannot quote this morning stir you up to this duty. Are you not bidden to make your calling and election sure? Are you not a thousand times over exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, and to give thanks continually? But how can you rejoice, if the dark suspicion haunts you, that perhaps, after all, you have not the life of God? You must get this question settled, or you cannot rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Come, brothers and sisters, I beseech you, as you would follow Scripture, and obey the Lord's precepts, get the assurance without which you cannot obey them.

Listen, as I close, to this mass of reasons why each believer should seek to know that he has eternal life. Here they are. Assurance of your salvation will bring you "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." If you know that you are saved, you can sit down in poverty, or in sickness, or under slander, and feel perfectly content. Full assurance is the

Koh-i-noor amongst the jewels wherewith the heavenly Bridegroom adorns his spouse. Assurance is a mountain of spices, a land that floweth with milk and honey. To be the assured possessor of eternal life is to find a paradise beneath the stars, where the mountains and the hills break forth before you into singing.

Full assurance will sometimes overflow in cataracts of delight. Peace flows like a river, and here and there it leaps in cascades of ecstatic joy. There are seasons when the plant of peace is in flower, and then it sheds a perfume as of myrrh and cassia. Oh, the blessedness of the man who knows that he has eternal life! Sometimes in our room alone, when we have been enjoying this assurance, we have laughed outright, for we could not help it. If anybody had wondered why a man was laughing by himself alone, we could have explained that it was nothing ridiculous which had touched us, but our mouth was filled with laughter because the Lord had done great things for us, whereof we were glad. That religion which sets no sweatmeats on the table is a niggardly housekeeper. I do not wonder that some people give up their starveling religion: it is hardly worth the keeping. The child of God who knows that he has eternal life goes to school, be he has many a holiday; and he anticipates that day of home-going when he shall see the face of his Beloved for ever.

Brethren, full assurance will give us the full result of the gospel. The gospel ought to make us holy; and so it will when we are in full possession of it. The gospel ought to make us separate from the world, the gospel ought to make us lead a heavenly life here below; and so it will if we drink deep draughts of it; but if we take only a sip of it now and again, we give it no chance of working out its design in us. Do not paddle about the margin of the water of life, but first wade in up to your knees, and then hasten to plunge into the waters to swim in. Beware of contentment with shallow grace. Prove what the grace of God can do for you by giving yourself up to its power.

Full assurance gives a man a grateful zeal for the God he loves. These are the people that will go to the Congo for Jesus, for they know they are his. These are the people that will lay down their all for Christ, for Christ is theirs. These are the people that will bear scorn and shame and misrepresentation for the truth's sake, for they know that they have eternal life. These are they that will keep on preaching and teaching, spending and working, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and they know it. Men will do little for what they doubt, and much for what they believe. If you have lost your title deeds, and you do not know whether your house is your own or not, you are not going to spend much in repairs and enlargements. When you know that heaven is yours, you are anxious to get ready for it. Full assurance finds fuel for zeal to feed upon.

This also creates and sustains patience. When we know that we have eternal life, we do not fret about the trials of this passing life. I could point to the brethren here this morning, and I could mention sisters at home, who amaze me by their endurance of pain and weakness. This I know concerning them, that they never have a doubt about their interest in Christ;

and for this cause they are able to surrender themselves into those dear hands which were pierced for them. They know that they are the Lord's, and so they say, "Let him do what seemeth him good." A blind child was in his father's arms, and a stranger came into the room, and took him right away from his father. Yet he did not cry or complain. His father said to him, "Johnny, are you afraid? You do not know the person who has got hold of you." "No, father," he said, "I do not know who he is, but you do." When pain gives us an awkward nip, and we do not know whether we shall live or die, when we are called to undergo a dangerous operation, and pass into unconsciousness, then we can say, "I do not know where I am, but my Father knows, and I leave all with him." Assurance makes us strong to suffer.

This, dear friends, will give you constant firmness in your confession of divine truth. You who do not know whether you are saved or not, I hope the Lord will keep you from denying the faith; but those who have a firm grip of it, these are the men who will never forsake it. A caviller in an omnibus said to a Christian man one day, "Why, you have nothing after all to rest upon. I can prove to you that your Scriptures are not authentic." The humble Christian man replied, "Sir, I am not a learned man, and I cannot answer you questions; but I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have experienced such a change in character, and I feel such a joy and peace through believing, that I wish you knew my Saviour, too." The answer he received was a very unexpected one: the unbeliever said, "You have got me there; I cannot answer *that*." Just so: we have got them there. If we know what has been wrought in us by grace, they cannot overcome us. The full-assurance man baffles the very devil. Satan is cunning enough, but those who know and are persuaded, are birds which he cannot take in the snares of hell. When you know that your Lord is able to keep that which you have committed to him until that day, then you are firm as a rock. God make you so.

Dear brethren, this is the kind of thing that will enable you to bear a telling testimony for your Lord. It is of no use to stand up and preach things that may or may not be true. I am charged with being a dreadful dogmatist, and I am not anxious to excuse myself. When a man is not quite sure of a thing, he grows very liberal: anybody can be a liberal with money which he cannot claim to be his own. The broad-school man says, "I am not sure, and I do not suppose that you are sure, for indeed nothing is sure." Does this sandy foundation suit you? I prefer rock. The things which I have spoken to you from my youth up have been such as I have tried and proved, and to me they wear an absolute certainty, confirmed by my personal experience. I have tried these things: they have saved me, and I cannot doubt them. I am a lost man if the gospel I have preached to you be not true; and I am content to bide the issue of the day of Judgement. I do not preach doubtfully, for I do not live doubtfully. I know what I have told you to be true; why should I speak as if I were not sure? If you want to make your own testimony tell in such a day as this, you must have something to say that you are sure about; and until you are sure about it I would advise you to hold

you tongue. We do not require any more questionings; the market is overstocked. We need no more doubt, honest or dishonest; the air is dark with these horrible blacks.

Brethren, if you know that you have eternal life, you are prepared to live, and equally prepared to die. How frequently do I stand at the bedside of our dying members! I am every now and then saying to myself, "I shall certainly meet with some faint-hearted one. Surely I shall come across some child of God who is dying in the dark." But I have not met with any such. Brethren, a child of God may die in the dark. One said to old Mr. Dodd, the quaint old Puritan "How sad that our brother should have passed away in the darkness! Do you doubt his safety?" "No," said old Mr. Dodd, "no more than I doubt the safety of him who said, when he was dying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Full assurance, as we have said before, is not of the essence of salvation. Still, I beg of you to note this, that all along through these many years, in each case, when I have gone to visit any of our brethren and our sisters at death, I have always found them departing in sure and certain hope of seeing the face of their Lord in glory. I have often marvelled that this should be without exception, and I glory in it. Often have they said to me, "We have fed on such good food that we may well be strong in the Lord." God grant that you may have this assurance, all of you! May sinners begin to believe in Jesus, and saints believe more firmly, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON¹ JOHN 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK" 175, 738, 711.