

Assurance Sought

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately teaches that true assurance of salvation comes only through a personal, continual reliance on God as the eternal source of salvation.

Scripture: Psalm 35:3, Jonah 2, John 3:3

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Personal Faith"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the deep longing for assurance of salvation expressed by David in Psalm 35:3. Spurgeon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing our need for salvation, the exclusivity of God as the source of salvation, and the importance of personal faith and assurance. He passionately calls listeners to seek a personal relationship with God, assuring them that true salvation and peace come only from the eternal God Himself.

Transcript

"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Psalm 35:3.

DAVID knew where to run to for shelter in his hour of difficulty. Many were there that opposed him. He had been much slandered. His course was rough. So, after spreading his case before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter, he turns to the Most High and he cries to Him for succor with one request, as if this would suffice to relieve him from all his troubles—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." He thus invokes God to give him a word from His own mouth, to take the buckler and the sword in his defense, and to be his Champion. "Oh, my God, speak to my soul some assuring word and it shall be enough for me!" It is a sign of adoption, a mark of the residence of the Spirit of God within us, if in our times of trouble we fly to our God! Soul, can you find any difficulty in doing so? Is this not one of your spiritual instincts? Then, be afraid lest you are an alien, and no true-born child, for the true-born child seeks its Father's face, cries out for its Father's notice and creeps into its Father's bosom!

This short prayer I commend to everyone present—to saint and sinner, to the young and the old, to those who are assured and to those who are doubtful—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." It appears to me to imply certain doctrines, to express certain desires, and to suggest certain practical lessons upon which we may profitably meditate.

I. "SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM YOUR SALVATION."

Is it not very clear on the surface of the text that we need salvation? Salvation is the great necessity of the human race. We need to be saved from the consequences of the Fall, from the results of our own transgressions, from the penalties due to our guilt, the indwelling power of sin and the domination of our corrupt nature. You all know this by the witness of conscience. Therefore I need not argue or attempt to prove it. The main question is whether we know it experimentally, for it is one thing to know the letter, but quite another thing to know the spirit—one thing to know a matter with the head—and another thing to be affected by it in a lively manner in the soul. Answer me, then, have you learned experimentally that you need to be saved? Did you ever see your past sins in their true color? Did you ever behold what a future sin opens up before you, till you did start back alarmed and terror-stricken? Have you perceived that you need just such a salvation as Christ came to bring? Truly we never seek it till we see we need it! We are usually driven into the Port of Grace by a storm. It is not often that we fly to Christ if there is any other door open. In the sore straits of poverty, we have to cry to Him for sustenance. When we are sick we resort to Him for health and cure.

Moreover, Beloved, we continue to require a continuous salvation. It is well for the Christian to remember that in a certain sense he, too, needs to be saved—not from Hell, for we are saved from that—nor from the guilt of our sins, for, thank God, that is purged by the blood once shed for our remission. But we need to be saved every day from the temptations that assail our souls, from the trials that beset our path, from the corruptions of our nature. Mr. Whitefield said he hoped he was converted, but conversion was a thing to take place every day—not regeneration, mark you—that is once and for all. But conversion, "Why," he said, "I need to be converted from lying too late in bed in the morning, and converted from idleness all the day long." So do we! There is something or other we need to be converted from, some wrong thing that we need to be saved from—and until we get within the gates of pearl we shall still have need to cry for salvation from some evil that harasses us! Salvation by blood we have—salvation by the might and power of the Holy Spirit, who is to conquer and to destroy all our dire iniquity and innate depravity—we still need! Do we feel that we need it? Believer, do you feel that you need it? Beware of getting spiritually rich in yourself! Nothing is so near akin to soul-poverty as this! Beware of thinking that you are increased in goods. You are near to bankruptcy when you thus make account of your possessions. I counsel you, therefore, to still bow your knee and cry unto the great Savior, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" That prayer should never be in advance of the most advanced Christian!

Another Doctrine lies on the surface of the text. His own personal salvation should be the matter of a man's highest thoughts and greatest earnestness. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation," should be the uppermost and the uttermost cry of your heart. Ask not the Lord to make you rich—you may well reckon that this would involve too high a position and too heavy a responsibility for you to bear with equanimity. Seek not a pinnacle from which you might be in peril of falling. Did you ask to be learned in all the knowledge and languages of the ancients? You might miss the road to Heaven, for oftentimes the shepherds are guided to the place where the Holy Child is, while the wise men miss their way, going to Jerusalem instead of Bethlehem! I will not crave the Lord to give me food for my vanity, or good fortune for my wishes, or anything beside for which my passions yearn, but, "Lord, give me salvation!" This is a gift I must have. It is essential to my instant and my endless welfare! Let not Your servant be put off with any inferior blessing. If You please to keep me poor on a scanty pittance, or bid me toil hard for slender wages, so let it be. Yet deny me not a draught from the upper springs! Give me the heritage of Your chosen. Grant me Your salvation!

Salvation! Oh, salvation! This should be the chief, the insatiable longing of each man's spirit! Alas, for the ignorance and callousness that can trifle with salvation as though it were a matter of no immediate concern. Are you mad enough to imagine that whether you have an interest in Christ or not, is a question that may be solved in a few minutes in a fearful emergency upon a dying bed? Ah, it is not so! Wisdom should urge us, or peril should drive us to seek shelter from a calamity that would leave us a total wreck! Nothing lies so near to our interest and our happiness—nothing, therefore, should press so closely on our hearts as to be in Christ and be made, through Him, partakers of everlasting life! Dear Hearer, this question, then, I press upon you. Be pleased to answer it. Have you been led by the Spirit of God to see to this, your first concern? Are you saved? Or are you anxious to be saved with an anxiety that will not rest or abate? Are you striving and struggling in your heart to find the Savior, without whom you are utterly lost, ruined and undone? Unless God's Holy Spirit clothes it with power, preaching reaches no farther than the ears! Oh, that He would speak to your souls! With what energy you would then be filled!

A third Doctrine is couched in these words. Salvation, if it is worth the having, must come entirely from the Lord, Himself. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The eyes of the suppliant here is evidently turned to God alone, and rightly so, for salvation comes not from the hills, nor from the multitude of the people, not yet from the prowess of individuals. Surely in the Lord, alone, is the salvation of Israel. Never did salvation spring from the devices of this poor heart. In vain do you seek to obtain it by any religious ceremonies, or by any bodily exercises. The source and fountain of salvation are only to be found in the eternal purpose of God! In the Covenant of God it was resolved, in the Wisdom of God it was planned, in the great Redemption of God it was effected and by the Spirit of God it is applied! Jonah went to a strange college to learn this masterpiece of sound theology, that salvation is of the Lord. As for Israel, he could destroy himself, but he could never save himself. In his God he found help, in his God alone! Happy the man that knows this! Thrice happy he who knows it experimentally! He will turn his eyes to the Lord alone.

My Hearer, are you seeking salvation by works—by anything that is meritorious or meretricious? You are spending your money for that which is not bread! Are you seeking a knowledge of salvation by your own feeling? Do you consult your frames of mind, hopeful or desponding, as one marks the rise or fall of a barometer? Do you dream of being prepared for Christ and fitting yourself to receive mercy? This is to impose on yourself and to insult the Savior! Christ needs nothing from you—He comes to bring everything to you! Even your sense of need He gives you. All your fitness is to be unfit! All your preparation for washing is to be foul! All your prerequisite for enriching is to be poor as poverty can make you! Come as you are to your God through Christ, the Mediator, and in Him you shall find salvation! Do notice particularly that the words are not, "Say unto my soul, I am your Savior," but more than that—"I am your salvation." As if God were not only the Giver of salvation, but absolutely salvation itself. To get a hold of Christ is to get salvation! To get God on our side is to be saved! Salvation does not merely come from God as a gift—it absolutely involves the appropriation of God, Himself, as the portion of one's own soul! How wonderful this is! Who can find God? Who can imagine, much less describe, His Infinite perfections? Salvation proceeding from THE LORD, from JEHOVAH, from the GREAT I AM, communicates the wealth of His adorable attributes. "Say unto my soul, I"—our translation reads—"I Am." Ask, what are You, Lord? The answer comes, "I Am your salvation." No title, however noble, could enhance the description! He is the "I Am." His existence is original and pure. "He sits on no precarious throne, or borrows leave to be. "From everlasting to everlasting He is God the Most High. To Him there is neither past nor future, but one eternal

Now."

The God who can save us must be the only true and living God. So great a salvation you cannot realize without a clear apprehension of Jehovah in all His attributes! And if any speak of Christ as delegated Deity, discredit His eternal power and Godhead, or deny that He made the heavens and the earth and bears them on His shoulders, they bring to us a Christ who cannot save! We must have a Redeemer as mighty as the Creator and the Preserver. We must have the strong Son of God, Immortal and Eternal, to rescue our souls from going down into the pit of Hell! If you are leaning on any arm but an eternal one, it will fail you! Poor silly heart, if you are depending on anything for salvation but the same God who bears the earth's huge pillars up, your dependence will fail you when most you need its help! The strongest sinew of an arm of flesh will crack—even an angel's wing will flag and the earth, itself, will grow dim with years! This globe, with all her granite rocks, shall melt with a fervent heat! The eternal God must be your refuge, and underneath you must be the everlasting arms, or else the salvation you pretended to have is worse than useless! "Say unto my soul, I, the glorious Jehovah, I am your salvation."

These doctrines may seem to some of you so commonplace that you will say, "We have heard them ten thousand times." But I refer to them now to press the question—Do you know the vital force of these great Truths of God in your own hearts? Beloved, let each man, let each woman, enquire, "Do I know my need of salvation? Do I know that it must come from God? Have I got it from Him? Have I applied directly to Him for it? Have I received it at His hand in such a way that I have seen the Glory of God therein, so that my salvation shall be to me for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off?" If you have had no dealings with God, your soul is in bad plight. Let us turn now to observe—

II. THE DESIRE EXPRESSED IN THE TEXT.

It was David's wish not only to have God for his salvation, but to know it for a fact, and that on the most conclusive evidence, with the best possible assurance, by a positive communication from GodHimself—"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." There are some who doubt whether full assurance of faith can be obtained. They need not discredit an attainment which multitudes possess and daily enjoy! Others suppose that if they could experience a full assurance, it would be dangerous—and yet there are thousands of the saints who, so far from finding the privilege perilous, constantly prove its sanctifying, elevating power while they walk by faith and live near to God! Some have conjectured that any man who knew himself to be saved would inevitably grow listless in character and negligent of his conduct, but it is not so. A man who knows that an estate is really his own, does not become indifferent about its culture. He tills and farms it all the more sedulously. The fact is this—he who knows himself to be saved—being rid of that curse and burden of fear which often renders him incapable of serving God, passes beyond the sphere of a servile bondage! No more does he selfishly seek his own interest. His labor is free, cheered by love and lightened by song—

"Now for the love I bear His name What was my gain, I count my loss."

Out of sheer gratitude he devotes himself to the service of the good God, by whom so great a blessing has been bestowed. If your confidence in your own salvation makes you walk without tenderness of conscience, then rely upon it—you have mistaken vain boasting for pure faith, and haughty presumption for true assurance! They who are really possessed of this Grace are always very tender of the Lord's will. It compels them to walk humbly with God. A king's courtier knows that conduct is expected of him far beyond that of ordinary subjects. He would not encroach upon the freedom he enjoys in approaching his sovereign, lest by any negligence or impropriety he should forfeit the good esteem and grateful smile of his royal master. He is not afraid that the king would kill him, nor is he in terror as if his majesty were a

tyrant. But he is jealous of himself, lest he should provoke the king to take away the light of his countenance from him. And to any child of God who has once enjoyed the favor of Heaven's eternal King and basked in the light of that Countenance which beams with Grace and Glory, there is no attraction in all the world that can compare with the peace and pleasure in which he abides! True assurance of faith is a humble thing, a comforting thing, a sanctifying thing—and it should, therefore, be the desire of all faithful hearts.

This assurance of which the Psalmist speaks is a personal matter, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Oh, Beloved, we must have personal dealings with our God! No proxy will avail. Churches may invent what ordinances they please to gratify their notions of expediency, but there can be no sponsors in godliness—the thing is irrational, it is impossible! Every vow and every offering, to be acceptable, must have its own proper individuality. No eyes but your own can acceptably weep for your sin. No heart but your own can acceptably be broken and contrite for your transgressions. You yourself must repent! Even the Holy Spirit cannot repent for you, as some seem to imagine. He works repentance in you, but you must, yourself, repent. And as to faith, that must be the looking with the spiritual eyes to Christ, and resting on Him with your whole heart. Another cannot do it for you. National religion—if it is depended upon for personal acceptance—is the most deceitful of all delusions! What use is it that we call ourselves a Christian nation if God does not call us so? Might we not be pronounced a heathen nation if we were polled? Take a survey of this great city and see how many there are who never enter a House of Prayer, who spend the entire Sabbath in idleness, or seek their own pleasure in sensual pursuits! What multitudes there are who scarcely know the name of Jesus! Are these Christians? It is a pity we should lend the slightest sanction to such an empty profession. While men live as heathens, we ought to deal with them as such, and seek to convert them from darkness unto God's marvelous Light! And as to the religion which descends in families, this will not suffice, though it is perpetuated from generation to generation. Not a drop of true religion comes in the blood! You are all born of a corrupt stock and you naturally bear the image of the earthly! If, however, you are born of God, it is not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God! "You must be born-again" is as true of the child of a long generation of godly ancestors as it is of the young Hottentot in the kraal who never heard the Savior's name. "You must be born-again" is of universal application! There must be a personal work of the Spirit of God in each individual soul, and the assurance we ought to pant after is our own personal assurance, our own individual interest in the salvation of Jesus Christ!

Have you thought of this, dear Hearer, or, thinking of it, have you trifled with it? Let me urge you, since you will have to die alone. Since through the iron gates you must pass as solemnly as others. Since in the awful balances you must be weighed alone and before the last tribunal you must come as a separate spirit, I beseech you seek Christ, seek union with Him, that so you may have a blessed Companion in your death and in your everlasting destiny! These vast congregations are made up of units! Oh, that I knew how to reach your conscience one by one! O Man, awake to righteousness! Your brother's conversion, your sister's salvation, your mother's piety, your father's Grace—how will these avail you? Thank God if you have such relatives, for therein God has been so kind to you. But how will they comfort you if you are cast out? What drops of water can they administer to your burning tongue if you are cast away into the place of torment? Oh, I beseech you, be eager, be earnest, be anxious with a sacred covetousness to make your own calling and election sure! It is a personal assurance that we must seek after—so shall our souls be joyful in the Lord—and in His salvation we shall exceedingly rejoice.

But, remember, lest any should be mistaken, that the assurance David sought was purely spiritual. When he says, "Say," it is, "Say unto my soul." We do not expect that God will make fresh Revelations to us. We are far from believing that voices heard or visions seen, or supposed to be seen, or dreams, can give any satisfactory evidence of the Divine Love to any man. I am ashamed of such ministers as would encourage their hearers in the conviction that their fancies are to be taken as assurances from God! Why, were you to dream tonight that you were in Hell, thank God it would not send you there! Or were you to dream that you were in Heaven, it would not carry you there. If you think that you see angels, or that you hear voices—well, there is much pretence in your tales, but little profit you will ever derive from them. Think as you like about your own experiences, but attempt to build any inference upon them and your construction will prove a baseless fabric. Such things furnish no grounds of dependence. Whether there may ever be supernatural manifestations of this kind to some men, or whether they can have a good effect upon their minds, are questions which I will not discuss, but that these visionary things can afford any evidence of the favor of God, I utterly deny! The voice which alone can confirm you is the voice of God to your soul, to your mind, to your spirit—not to your ears, not to your eyes! Salvation is a spiritual thing. It belongs not to external sounds, nor to external impressions upon the eyes. There is an eye inside the eye, an ear far quicker than this organ of sense. It is with that inner eye that you must see God, and with that inner ear that you must hear the voice of God saying unto your soul, "I am your salvation." Be sure that you cultivate always a spiritual religion. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." The assurance that comes from God is addressed to the heart, to the mind, to the conscience, to the soul—it is purely spiritual. Seek not, therefore, after visions, fancies, miracles, signs and wonders, but believe when God speaks to your heart, according to all the statutes and testimonies, the precepts and promises which are contained in the sure Word of Revelation.

And now mark this well, the assurance craved is Divine. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Do you ask in what manner does God, Himself, tell a man that He is his salvation? He does it simply enough through His Word. If I read in God's Word, I shall not find my name enrolled there among the saved—if I did, I would be suspicious that perhaps I was not the person intended. I should be rather dubious as to the spelling of the name, or I might be apprehensive that there was another individual of that same name. But when I find myself properly and fully described, then I cannot doubt my own identity. For instance, it is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Very well, I have believed—I know I have—I know I trust Christ with all my heart. I have also, in obedience to His Word, been baptized. Therefore, if the testimony of God's Word is true—plain and designed to make mistakes impossible—that, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," the conclusion is reached, the problem is solved, the evidence is transparent! When you find a description answering to yourself, you have only to accept the distinct statement of God's Word. And, mark you, God's Word in that old Book—this blessed Bible—is as good as if He rent the heavens and spoke right out from the excellent Glory! It is just as sure and as steadfast to the souls who believe it to be His Word as if He did speak with a trumpet, or as if He sent a message through an angel! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." You have but to make sure that you believes on the Son, and you have God's assurance that you have everlasting life! But, over and above the testimony or Word, which is as clear as a mathematical demonstration—though Euclid is not more reliable than Moses and the Prophets—there comes a vital force to God's people with the Word, compelling them to perceive the meaning and to accept it. This mysterious energy comes from the Holy Spirit, Himself! Of this we cannot speak to those who have not proved it, for we only know it and understand it by its effect—quickenings us, enlightening our understanding, speaking to us—and saying of God to our soul that He is our salvation!

Moreover, it is an immediate assurance. "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." That is a pressing cry for prompt succor. It meant in David's case that present moment. We, reading it, take it for this very hour. Beware of postponing the expectation of assurance until when you are about to die! You have no more reason to expect it, then, than to expect it now! If you are content to live in doubt and slur over the disquietude of your soul in the vigor of your days, you will probably be haunted with gloomy misgivings when the time of your departure arrives. It is your duty and your privilege as a Believer not to stand wavering over God's promise, but, knowing it is truthful, to accept it with unstaggering faith! I can understand a man doubting whether he is truly converted or not, but I cannot countenance his apathy in resting quiet till he has solved the riddle. You may say—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

But, oh, Beloved, how can you trifle, how can you give sleep to your eyes till you have known it? Not know whether you are in Christ or not? Perhaps unreconciled, perhaps already condemned, perhaps upon the brink of Hell, perhaps with nothing more to keep you out of Tophet than the breath that is in your nostrils, or the circulating drop of blood which any one of ten thousand haps or mishaps may stop, and then your career is closed—your life story ended! What? Sit on such a volcano, take it easy on the brink of such a precipice and content yourself with merely saying, "I am but a doubting one"? I entreat you, I beseech you, shake off this sluggishness! Ask the Lord to say unto your soul tonight, "I am your salvation." He is able and He is willing! You know that, Beloved. He will do it for you when you eagerly seek it from Him. How often does He suddenly disperse the doubts that overshadow us like clouds? An autumnal day like yesterday— what a strange, fitful atmosphere we breathed! How fiercely the wind blew—how heavily the rain fell! And then, how quickly afterwards the soft sunshine made the earth look cheerful and the heart of man feel glad! Perhaps you may be dull and heavy, or the raindrops of your weeping and the winds of your fears howling about you. All of a sudden the rain may stop, the clouds disperse, the clear shining come about you. God, by His dear Son, through His Spirit, may shine unto your soul at once. You may come in very heavily burdened, and go out very light-hearted! You may be exceedingly depressed and, all of a sudden, your soul may be like the chariots of Amminadab. Your attire may be changed from mourning to dancing with unspeakable joy and full of glory! You may rejoice in tribulation if the light gleams from His chambers. Pray, then! Let your soul now breathe out the prayer, "Oh, my God, if indeed I have relied upon Your dear Son to be All-in-All to me, whisper to my heart the full assurance of my everlasting safety and my present acceptance in the Beloved."

The Lord answer such a petition to every troubled spirit. And now— III. WHAT LESSON DOES THE TEXT TEACH?

Surely it teaches us this—if we need blessings from God, let us pray for them. David needed assurance, he needed comfort and he prayed for both one and the other. The quickest road to spiritual wealth is prayer! Every prayer is like a ship sent to the Tarshish of spiritual riches to bring us back treasures better than gold or silver, or precious stones. Let us not be lax in the commerce, lest our wealth decline. Every cry to God from the true heart brings a result. You see the men in the belfry sometimes down below with the ropes. They pull them and if you have no ears, that is all you know about it. But the bells are ringing up there—they are talking and discoursing sweet music up aloft in the tower. And our prayers do, as it were, ring the bells of Heaven! They are sweet music in God's ears and as surely as God hears, He answers, for, indeed, in Scripture, to hear and to answer are precisely the same things! Praying breath is not spent in vain. They who truly cry shall find that passage true, "The righteous cry, and the Lord hears them, and delivers them out of all their troubles." If a man may have anything for the asking, and he will not ask, he

deserves to go without! Why, if you may have assurance of every precious thing merely for the asking—and assuredly you may—if you will not knock and intercede at Mercy's door, if you are such a fool, who is to be blamed but yourself? Be much in prayer, Beloved. What I say to you I say especially to myself. Yet I would press this home upon Believers with the more earnestness because these times are so full of labor and anxiety that they rob Christians of the opportunity for much prayer. Oftentimes, too, we get so fatigued and weary that we have not the inclination to pray as we should. I like to think of Welch, who used to cast a Scotch plaid over the bed where he rested at night, and would always rise in the night and cast this plaid about him, and pray for one or two hours. And he says in his biography, "I cannot understand how a man can sleep through the night without prayer." That is a point to which few of us have ever thought of coming! David Brainerd, too, speaks of rising one morning by four of the clock, and the sun had not risen at six, and he says that in those two hours of prayer he had so wrestled with God that he was wet with perspiration! Such was the earnestness of his spirit as he pleaded before the Lord. I am afraid we do not practice much of this sacred importunity. We are sad hands at this devout exercise, whereby saints became famous in the days gone by. God restore to us the spirit of prayer, and all other blessings will come as the result.

Another lesson is this. Let everyone of us be satisfied we get a word from God. This was all David needed. Would God only say, though not do anything? He did not ask Him to interfere practically, or put out His hand to help, but only to say. If you go into the city, you may find plenty of merchants who, by simply writing their names, can enable you to get from the bank shovelfuls of gold. Think you not, then, that God's promises always stand to us as good as their fulfillment? Will you blow upon His credit? Will you refuse to take Him at His word? I think I heard a Brother ask, the other day, I know I did—at family prayer—that we might trust God where we could not see Him. I have heard that prayer many times before. I have prayed it myself, I am sorry to say. But is it not rather a wicked prayer, if you scan it narrowly? Should anyone say at our Monday night Prayer Meeting, "Grant, O Lord, that we may be able to trust our minister when we cannot see him"? I think I would want to know a little about what that Brother thought of me! I am sure if I prayed like that for any of you, I would be likely to see you in the vestry before long to learn my cause for suspecting your character! How dare we, then, pray such a thing about our God?

Yet I suppose this never struck us in that light. It seemed very proper. That is just because we have not learned yet to believe in God. If the Son of Man were to come into this world, would He find pure faith among His disciples? Talk of Diogenes with his lantern looking for an honest man! Were God to look with the sun, He could hardly discover a believing man. Mr. Muller, of Bristol, believes in God for the support of his benevolent institution—and God supplies him with all his needs. But whenever you speak about him you say, "What a wonderful thing!" Has it come to this, that in the Christian Church it is accounted a marvel for Christians to believe in the promises of God, and something like a miracle for God to fulfill them? Does not this wonderment indicate more clearly than anything else how fallen we are from the level of faith at which we ought constantly to live? If the Lord wants to surprise His people, He has only at once to give an answer to their prayers! No sooner had they obtained their answer than they would say, "Who would have thought it!" Is it really surprising that God should keep His own promise? Oh, what unbelief! Oh, what wretched unbelief on our part! We ask and we receive not because we do not believe in God! We waver—we must not expect to receive anything at His hand except what He chooses to give as a gratuity, an act of Sovereign Mercy, not a covenanted blessing. We do not get what we might have as the reward of faith because we have not got the faith that He honors!

I like that story of a godly old woman, who, when told of God's answering prayer, supplemented with a reflection, "Is not that wonderful?" She replied, "No, it is just like Him. Of course, He answers prayer! Of course, He keeps His promise!" We ought to consider it a right, natural, and blessed thing that believing prayer should be answered, and that faith should have its reward. Christian, rest content with a Word from God and be satisfied therewith. And as for those of us who have been living in the enjoyment of the full assurance of our own salvation (and, God be praised, there are some of us who do not often have doubts and fears), how thankful we should be! God likes to give to those who are grateful. Men like to put their jewels into a good setting and a grateful heart is a fit setting for so gracious a mercy! God loves to pour the river of His bounty along the channel of Grace in the soul. Be thankful, and you will keep your assurance—perhaps, keep it untouched till you die. It is a rare thing, I suppose, though I have known one or two holy men of God who have told me that they did not remember, for the space of 30 years, having been left to question their interest in Christ—they had enjoyed unbroken communion with Him. Why, then, should they doubt it? May we even come to that assurance, if so it pleases the Master!

In what way, however, can we better show our gratitude than by comforting and assisting such as have not this blessing?—

"Thousands in the fold of Jesus This attainment never could boast. To His Name eternal praises, None of these shall ever be lost— Deeply graven

On His hands, their names remain."

Have you faith? You are saved, even if your faith should not develop into assurance. As the Puritan well said, "Faith is necessary to the being of a Christian. Assurance is necessary to his well-being." Yet, mark you, it is a great necessity. Let us try to comfort, then, such as are distracted, distressed and bowed down. When the Lord sees that we are using our strength and our joy for the help of the rest of the family for whom He cares, He will give us yet more abundantly, and make us to be stewards of the manifold Grace of God in the midst of the Church! Thus shall we glorify His name while we cultivate happiness in our own bosoms.

I would that all whom I now address could have this assurance. Some of you, alas, have not faith. "All men have not faith," said the Apostle. Too true is this testimony! Soul, would you have faith? Consider what it is. You have to believe in God made flesh. Think of the Son of God bleeding on the Cross. It is at the foot of the Cross that faith is brought to light. If you would get faith, Christ must give it to you. Look to Him for the power to believe as well as for the Grace to receive all the benefits that follow. May He give it to you now! To you, oh, Seeker, He will give it. While you are seeking salvation, you shall find it near you. He will say to your soul, "I, even I, am your salvation." May it be so with many here. Amen.

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