

Assurance of Salvation

by Catherine Booth

Catherine Booth emphasizes the necessity of a personal union with Christ for true assurance of salvation and spiritual power over sin.

Scripture: John 14:23, John 15:4, Romans 7:4, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:31, 1 John 5:10

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Assurance Of Salvation"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches about the vital importance of being united with Christ, emphasizing that true assurance of salvation comes from a genuine, living union with Him. She highlights that mere knowledge or belief is not enough, but rather, it is the power that comes from being married to Christ that enables believers to bring forth fruit unto God. Through this union, believers receive power over sin, the world, and the temptations of the Devil, allowing them to resist and overcome with the strength that comes from abiding in Christ.

Transcript

ROMANS vii. 4.--"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

IN answer to letters received since last Sabbath, I would just say that the writers tell me that they have been struggling for years for assurance; that they do receive the testimony of God concerning His Son; that they do believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins; still they have no peace or joy. I want you to mark well that assurance of salvation is the testimony of God's Spirit to a fact which has transpired, and if that fact has not transpired, God's Spirit will never testify to it. You may think you believe; but, oh, I feel sure numbers of people are deluded here. They think they believe because they receive into their minds the written record that God has given of His Son; but they have not believed and rested on the promise in such a way as to bring the witness of the Spirit. They have stopped short of that. They have been satisfied with the letter.

Now, do not think, friends, that I underestimate the letter. Perhaps few of you, if any, value this word more than I do, but I have known very few of those who have rested merely in the letter (and I have known many do so), who, when I have come into close conversation with them, have not been miserably dissatisfied, unassured, sin-conquered souls; and that fact alone convinces me that there is something wrong. That is

not the glorious liberty of the children of God. That is not knowing God in the scriptural sense.

Take God's way, and then the witnessing Spirit will come. Of course, people are not assured because they have nothing to be assured of! They have no salvation, and, therefore, they cannot be assured of it. Get salvation, and you will get assurance. Oh! friends. This is what you want. IT IS FOR YOU. Here it is. There is no other religion recognized in this Book. All the saints to whom Paul wrote, knew they were saved. Here and there was an exception, where they had fallen back and got into bondage, as some of you have; but, as a rule, he recognizes the fact that they all were saved, and were rejoicing in the assurance of it, and this is the normal condition of the children of God. I do not say such a person may not occasionally slip. He may occasionally. He may lose his scroll, as Pilgrim did, but he cannot, will not rest till he finds it again!

Then you say, 'I am not to believe, I suppose.' Oh, yes! you are. Take the blessed record to your heart, but do not rest in the letter. Do not rest in the letter. Go ON until you find the substance of things hoped for--the substance. There is a substance in spiritual things quite as much as there is in natural things, and those who really and truly believe, know it. No one can testify when you do really and truly believe but God's Spirit, for the things of a man knoweth no man save the spirit of a man that is in him, and just so with the things of God. He searcheth the hearts and minds, and knows when you are sincere and real and true; and when you seek Him with all your heart you will find Him, and He will come and testify to that fact--and, oh! if you have not this testimony suspect yourself. Do not throw discredit upon God. Begin over again and get assurance.

Oh! what POWER assurance of salvation gives! when the individual can say I know; not merely I believe, but I know. St. John seems to have written his First Epistle mainly to enable the believers to know: and then several times shows how we may "know" we are saved. Faith is the means to assurance, but assurance is not faith, and faith is not assurance. Assurance is the result of faith, and when you have the right sort of 'faith' you will have assurance. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," and until you get assurance do not trust yourself. Persevere until you get it. God will never leave a sincere soul in the dark. You must come down to the foot of the cross in the little children's way--give up all for Christ, and make up your mind that you will follow Him at all costs, and then cast your guilty soul upon His broken, bleeding sacrifice, and, as soon as you do this, God will send the answer of His Spirit.

But this afternoon I want to go a little farther in showing how Christ supersedes the Law.

We have noted in a former sermon that He does so, first, by giving assurance.

Secondly, I want to show that He does so, by giving POWER OVER SIN. Now we shall be safe here. I trust this will not be controverted ground. I believe He can do a great deal more for His people than this, but we will stop here this afternoon. By-and-by we may, perhaps, go farther. Christ gives His people power over sin. Now, this is a necessity of our position. We have, as we saw last Sunday, been all slaves of sin. Sin is, indeed, the sting of death. Now, how is it if there is no deliverance from this dreadful plague and scourge of God's people--how is it that the Holy Ghost sets every real child of God struggling after it? Whatever may be a man's theory in his creed, you get him on his knees, and he will begin to pray to God to save him from sin. Sin is the abominable thing which he hates, and longs to be delivered from; and the universal experience of God's people is that the Spirit urges them to seek to be saved from sin. I have heard people argue powerfully against the possibility of being delivered from sin, and the next time I have heard them pray, they have asked God for the very thing, and I have said, I thank God, that is the Holy

Ghost teaching him now; he cannot help praying for it, whether he believes in it or not.' If I have been under the power of sin, so as to become its complete slave, and Jesus Christ comes and pardons me for the past, and delivers me from the guilt and condemnation which came upon me in consequence of the past, what do I want? I want some new power. I want something besides pardon. I want power to stand, or I shall be down again the next minute.

What God does for us through Jesus Christ outside of us is one thing, and what He does in us by Jesus Christ is another thing, but the two are simultaneous, or one so immediately succeeds the other, that we hardly discern the interval. Now, I say, I want power to enable me to meet that temptation which is coming on me tomorrow, as it came on me yesterday, and, if Jesus Christ pardons me ever so, and leaves me under the reigning power of my old appetites, what has he done for me? I shall be down in the mud, and tomorrow night I shall be as condemned as ever. I want power. I want regeneration--as the Holy Spirit has put it. I want the renewing of the spirit of my mind. I want to be created anew in Christ Jesus; "made a new creature."

Now this is where Jesus Christ transcends the Law. The Law could not renew the spirit of my mind. It could only show me what a guilty rebel I was. It could not put a better spirit in me. It could not extract the venom, but only show it to me, and make me writhe on account of it. But Jesus Christ comes and does this for me--gives me power. How?

Now, I hope those friends who think that I do not sufficiently exalt the Saviour, will mark this. How does He give it to me? He unites me to Himself. I am dead to the Law. He delivers me from the condemning power of the Law when He pardons me, and then He does not leave me there, but He "marries" me to Himself. He unites me "to another" husband, and then I attain power to bring forth fruit unto God. A beautiful--a wonderful figure! We may not pursue it; but, oh! what a wonderful figure! Alone under the Law's power, my old husband, I could do nothing but agonize, wrestle, and desire. There was no power in me but when Jesus Christ comes and unites me to Himself; then He gives me power to bring forth fruit unto God. It is by the UNION OF MY SOUL WITH HIM. You say, 'Explain it!' I cannot. God Himself cannot explain it. We cannot explain it, but we know it. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The mystery is too great to be explained, but there is the beautiful illustration; united to Christ I have power to conquer, to subdue, to trample under foot those things which heretofore have been my master, and by virtue of Him I retain the power, and no other way. Oh! dear friends, what a delusion there is on the subject of Christian knowledge. If knowledge could save people, what a wonderful world we should have today.

Knowledge is as powerless as ignorance. A man is not a whit nearer God, or more like Christ, because he has his head crammed with this Word. In fact, some I have known who have been best acquainted with the Word, who have been the greatest slaves of sin; and even ministers of Jesus Christ have confessed to me that they have been bond slaves of some besetting sin. The power is not in knowledge--and God is raising up thousands of witnesses to this fact, that it is not in knowledge--it is in union with Him, and the little child in intellect and intelligence, who has the real, vital, union with Jesus, has more power than the most cultivated theologian has without Christ. The things of God can only be understood by those who have the Spirit of God. The world by wisdom knows not God any more now, than it did in Paul's days. The things of the Spirit are only spiritually comprehended. Hence this beautiful union cannot be explained; I only know it is spoken of all through the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New, as knowing God. After God has summed up the failures of His people, He gives them a promise, and says, "I will betroth

thee unto me in righteousness for ever, and thou shalt KNOW the Lord," as though that were the end of the whole matter, really and truly to know Him. When they come to that living union of soul with Him, it brings the vital sap as it were into the branch of the tree--another of his own beautiful illustrations. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." You know what the branch is when it is broken off. It is a branch. It retains the form of a branch; and for a while, the beauty and the greenness of a branch, but it is broken off. There is no power in it. Suppose it could maintain that form. Alas! Human branches often maintain their verdure in a certain beauty, as when first lopped off. But it can never bear fruit. Why? Because the communication is cut between itself and the vine, and there is no sap in its fibre. Its life is cut off. Now, my friends, you can see why a soul, who has never been truly united to Christ in this living spiritual marriage, cannot bear fruit unto God.

You can be like a branch. You can get so much scriptural knowledge, that you can look just like a real Christian. Alas! You can get many of the feelings of a Christian, and of the sentiments, as well as a great many of the aspirations and desires, of a Christian. You can be so like a branch that nobody, but Jesus Christ, may know you are not in that true Vine, and yet you have never, as the Apostle says, been grafted on to the olive tree. And, therefore, you go on weeping, and struggling, and trying to perform the function of a living branch, when all the while you are a dead one. You go on trying to bring forth fruit unto God when the one indispensable condition of fruitfulness is wanting. You have got every other condition. You may even be nailed up to the wall close to the vine. You may be such a professor that nobody may ever doubt you. You may be so close to the vine that nobody can detect your want of union, excepting the Gardener who comes and closely inspects you, and yet you may not have one fibre truly circulating the real spiritual sap. HENCE YOU HAVE NO POWER, and down you go when the temptation comes. Ah! what weary years of strife some professing Christians have--they would be ashamed to tell; death sometimes forces it from their lips before they die--trying to perform the functions of living men when they have never been spiritually made alive. All they have ever had has been what Paul depicts as the struggle of a poor convicted sinner unable to bring forth any fruit unto God.

Now, you say, this union with Him--what is it? Well, I cannot explain it. You, who know what it is, cannot explain it--so to know the Lord as to be conscious of the living sap circulating through your soul, anointing your eyes with eye-salve, giving you eyes to see, a voice to speak, feet to run, and hands to serve--making you in all respects a "new creature."

Now, my dear friends, those of you who have not experienced this, never mind who comes to you and brings a Bible, and says, 'Do you believe this and that? if you do you are saved.' Say, 'Miserable comforters are ye all: I will never be content until I know God.'

I made up my mind to this when I was 15 years of age. I had had the strivings of God's Spirit all my life, since I was about two years old. My dear mother has often told me how she went upstairs to find me crying, and when she questioned me, I said I was crying, because I had sinned against God. Thank the Lord, I do not say this boastfully. I have good cause to be ashamed that I was so long before I fully gave myself up; but all through my childhood I was graciously sheltered by a watchful mother from outward sin, and, in fact, brought up as a Christian. When I came to be between 15 and 16, when, I believe, I was thoroughly converted, the great temptation of Satan to me was this: 'You must not expect such a change as you read of in books. You have been half a Christian all your life. You always feared God. You must content yourself with this.' Oh! how I was frightened! It must have been the Spirit of God that taught me. I was frightened at it. I said, 'No, no.' My heart is as bad as other people's and if I have not sinned outwardly

I have inwardly. I cried to God to show me the evil of my heart, and said, 'I will never rest till I am as thoroughly and truly changed, and know it, as any thief, or any great outward sinner.' I went on seeking God in this way for six weeks, often till two o'clock in the morning, wrestling, and I told the Lord I would never give up, if I died in the search, until I found God, and I did find Him, as every soul does, when it comes to Him in that way. I cried for nothing on earth or in heaven, but that I might find Him, whom my soul panted after, and I did find Him, and you can find Him. I knew Him. I can't tell how, but I knew Him. I knew He was well pleased with me. I knew that we held sweet converse often to the small hours of the morning together, and I know that I was as happy in His love, and far more happy than I ever was in any human love before or since.

Now, friends, you can all have this union. He is no respecter of persons. He has bought it for us. He saw our weakness. He contemplated our moral inability. He need not have come if we could have known God by the Law. If that old covenant had been perfect, there would have been no room for a second. It brought us not into the full realization and enjoyment of God, but the new covenant does. It cleanses the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, and God is henceforth revealed to His people, and they walk with Him. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." And when a man has got the Father and the Son, he is a match for Satan and all his forces. Union with Christ!

Oh! do you think this is a mere allegory of the Apostle's? It is a beautiful illustration. When He delivers us from the condemning, reigning power of the Law, we become married to Jesus Christ. Then we get a power to produce, in our affections, and hearts, and lives, and all about us, such things as God delights in.

Now, mark, all through the New Testament, and, indeed, the Bible, no truth is taught with greater force and frequency than this, that without a vital union of soul with Christ, all ceremonies, creeds, beliefs, professions, church ordinances, are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, and all who trust in them will be deceived. This is the very essence of the Gospel. This is what He came for and (oh! how my heart bleeds to think and say it) all who do not attain to this real vital union with Him, will be lost. Everything else falls short of our need and the purpose and end of the Gospel of Christ. He came on purpose for us to have this union with Himself. Neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, nor anything else availeth anything, but this faith, which worketh by love, and brings the Spirit of Christ into our hearts. Oh! bear with me; dear friends, have you got it? Have you got this vital union with Christ? Are you bringing forth fruit unto God? If not, I beseech you give up daubing yourselves with untempered mortar, and trying to make yourselves believe you are right, when you are all wrong. However much desire, purpose, hope, aspiration, struggle, or whatever else you have, if you have not attained to this, you are not saved yet, and you are not in the kingdom.

In conclusion, "bring forth fruit unto God," or, as the Apostle has it, "having your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life" and in another place, for the "end of the commandment," the purpose of the commandment, the ultimatum of the commandment, "is charity," "love out of a pure heart," and so in many other passages; but we just take these at random.

The result! What is the result? "That we may bring forth fruit unto God." Jesus Christ in this union recognizes the fact that we are still in the body; still in the world; and that we are open to the attacks of Satan. He knows--has foreseen, and has provided for, the temptations of the flesh, that is, the temptations which come to us through our natural appetites, and instincts, and desires, as they came to Him. He was hungry after enduring the great temptation in the wilderness. There was no sin in being hungry. He was

intensely hungry, for He had nerves, and a brain, and a heart, as we have. He was a perfect man, and he suffered all the consequences of that lengthened strain upon His nervous system, and the Devil took advantage of the existence of that intensely excited condition of His body by tempting Him unlawfully to gratify it. For he said, "Command these stones that they be made bread." This was unlawful under the circumstances, (we will not stop now to enquire why) and, therefore, He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He would rather suffer the hunger, than unlawfully gratify it, and, therefore, He did not commit sin. It matters not (and this will meet the case of some who have written to me how intensely excited any physical appetite may be) that is not sin. The more you suffer through the excitement of the physical appetite, of whatever kind it may be, the more Jesus Christ sympathizes with you, for He was tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin; and if you endure temptation, He will sympathize with you, more than with the man who does not have to endure and resist. You do not sin because of the appetite merely being excited. I think Satan gets some sincere souls to bring themselves into condemnation, when God does not condemn them. If you resist as He did; if you say, Get thee behind me, Satan," you sin not. What was Eve's sin? Unlawful self-gratification. The Devil might have tempted her until now, if she had lived so long; but if she had steadily resisted him, she would not have brought sin into the world.

Under the Law you see that it is sin, and you struggle against it, but you have no power to resist, and down you go. United to Christ you see that it is sin, and you have power to resist, and you resist it, and the Devil runs away; and that is the difference. You are married to a new husband now, and he is more than a match for the old Devil. He is a conquered foe, while you abide in Christ. He can torment, harass, and excite you, and stimulate your natural appetites, but he cannot make you sin, while you abide in Christ. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that Wicked One toucheth him not." "Ye are strong and have overcome the Wicked One."

Then, again, we are open to the temptations of the world, but this is provided for. Jesus Christ knows that we are susceptible to the liking of nice things like other people, and great things, and ambitious schemes, and the world's praises and censures. God's people are only sadly too familiar with this, and the weak part of their nature would respond to it, and they would fall; but now they are united to Christ, and he opens their eyes to see that it is Satan and the world. When the Devil takes them to the top of the pinnacle, and shows them all the glory of the world, he tries to make them think it would be very nice to have it; he tempts them to think it hard that they should be regarded as such paltry and mean people, because they belong to Christ; but when they are thoroughly and truly united to Jesus, He gives them power to say as He did, "Get thee behind me, Satan," for it is written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Him ONLY shalt thou serve" not Him and the world. Oh! thank God, if you have got there. Praise the Lord, if you understand that.

Then he comes not only through these avenues, but he comes again with direct, subtle, spiritual influence, with his old insinuation, as he came to Eve, and says, "Hath God said" this, or that? He tries to inject doubts as to God's goodness and veracity into the believer's soul, as he used to do under the Law, and under the Law the convicted sinner's soul used to swell with rebellion, and say, 'Yes, it is hard and cruel.'

Now, Satan still comes and vomits these thoughts, and tries to excite these ill-feelings and these chargings of God foolishly in the believer's soul, but by virtue of his union with Christ, who came not to do His own will, but His Father's, and who spoke only the things that His Father bade Him, the believer says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" and the Devil is gone. And then when the Devil is foiled at all these points, he tries higher ground. 'Really you are a wonderful Christian--you are. You have had special grace, for surely very few people can have resisted

the amount of temptation that you have. Really you must be one of God's specially favoured ones. Now cast yourself down. It is written, "He shall give His angels charge concerning you." Spiritual presumption next. When he is foiled through the world, and the flesh, and the Devil, and then he doffs his old robe and comes as an angel of light. But the soul's Bridegroom is hard by, and he says 'Be not ignorant of Satan's devices. Behold I am thy salvation. Trust and be not afraid.' And so the soul refuses to cast itself into unnecessary troubles, and is content to abide in, and walk with its Lord. That is how He gives us the victory. He shows us Satan's devices, and gives us power. I cannot tell you how. We don't know how. We only know that He gives it to us, and we only know that if one instant separated from Him we fall and become as other men. We only know that in those seasons when our faith has relaxed its grasp, we have gone down in the mud and been overcome as others. It is by faith we stand, and while, like Peter, we keep our eye on Him, and hold Him fast, the waves may roar, and the winds may howl, but He holds us by virtue of this union, and we bring forth fruit unto God. We have power over the Devil. He said, "I will give you power over all the power of the enemy." This is the deliverance of the SAINTS. This is the life of the saints. This is the fight of faith. THIS IS THE JOY OF SALVATION. This is the SORT OF RELIGION THAT DOES TO DIE WITH!!!

People all over the land are astounded at our poor, weak, illiterate, Salvation Army Soldiers. A gentleman, in a meeting on Easter Monday, a leading man of thought and experience in the holiness world, who was there all day--when my daughter said, 'Why don't you speak?' said, 'One feels as if one can't speak in these meetings.' 'Why?' These people have such unction from the Holy One that they are wiser than their teachers. Another gentleman, of considerable position, too, in the religious world, said, 'I feel like getting down at their feet.

I feel as if they could teach me.' How is it that they have such power--these babes in intellect and intelligence? All over the land people say this to me. People who talk and go ahead in other meetings, when they get into our meetings, say, 'I can't. They are so far ahead of me that, to tell you the truth, I have nothing to say.' I say, the Lord have mercy upon you, and make haste and come up after them. Only get down from your high mightiness as low as these people, and you will get it.

It is not because they are poor and illiterate, that they have power, but because they are babes in spirit. Even as Christ said, "I thank thee, oh! Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The simple spirit, the teachable believing soul--oh! how much more it learns of God, in one hour's precious communion, than Doctors of Divinity learn in weeks of close study, who have not got it, because it is the SPIRIT that teaches the things of God.

This is union with Jesus that bringeth forth fruit unto God, and, oh! the wonderful things it enables us to bring forth. If you would all follow me, as far as I have gone this afternoon, and make the resolution I made at 15 years of age, not to be put off with theories, but that you will KNOW THE LORD, that you will have this Divine union, and that you will never rest till you get it and know you have it--if we could all get thus far by next Sunday--what happiness there would be amongst you.

There would be some Hallelujahs. Many of you would be surprised, how you would find your tongues. A gentleman once said to me 'I never did shout in my life, but upon my word I couldn't help it.' I said, 'Amen. It's time, then, you began.' I hope it may be the same with many of you. When the Lord comes to His Temple and fills it with His glory, you won't know what to do. You must find vent somewhere, or you will be as the poor old negro said he was, "Ready to bust his waistcoat."

We feel so about temporal things. People drop down dead with joy. People shriek with grief. People's hearts stand still with wonder at the news they have heard, perhaps from some prodigal boy. I heard of a mother, not long ago, whom some one injudiciously told of the sudden return of her son, who dropped down dead, and never spoke. And when the Master comes to His Temple, that glorious blessed Holy Saviour, whom you profess so to long after and to love, and who has been absent so many years, and whom you have been seeking after with strong crying and tears, when He comes, do you think it will be too much to shout your song, or go on your face, or do any extravagant thing?

Oh! no, if there is reality, you cannot help yourself. The manifestation will be according to your nature. One will fall down and weep in quietness, and the other will get up and shout and jump. You cannot help it. I have read of two martyrs one of whom rejoiced in the realization of God's presence, and the other was in darkness, yet did not deny his Lord. He continued in the way of obedience, and the other was encouraging him to hope and believe that the Master would come; but He had not come, when they started from the dungeon to the stake; so they fixed upon a sign, and the one said to the other, "If He comes, you will give me the sign on the road." The Master did come, but the martyr could not confine himself to the sign. He shouted, raising his arms to his fellow-martyr, "He's come, He's come, He's come." He couldn't help it.

When He comes you won't be ashamed who knows it. When you really get a living Christ for your husband, you will be prouder than the bride, you will have got a husband worth being proud of, and you will love to acknowledge and praise Him, and the day is coming when you will crown Him before all the host of heaven. The Lord help you to accept Him, and put away everything that hinders His coming. Amen.

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