

Full Assurance of Faith

by Harry Ironside

The full assurance of faith is the confidence that comes from trusting in the finished work of Christ and the testimony of the Lord given in the Scriptures.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:19

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Faith"

Description

Harry Ironside emphasizes the concept of 'full assurance of faith' as presented in Hebrews 10:19-22, highlighting that true faith is not based on emotions or philosophical reasoning but on trusting God's promises. He illustrates that faith is the means by which believers can confidently approach God, relying on the redemptive work of Christ rather than their own efforts or feelings. Ironside shares a poignant story of an old gentleman seeking assurance of salvation, ultimately finding peace through faith in God's Word rather than emotional experiences. The sermon underscores that the assurance of salvation comes from resting on the finished work of Christ and the unchanging promises of Scripture. Ironside concludes that true assurance leads to a joyful and confident relationship with God.

Transcript

In the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verses 19 to 22, are found the words which we will consider together as the theme of this present chapter. Read the entire passage very thoughtfully: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:19-22).

Do you notice that remarkable expression, "full assurance of faith"? Does it not thrill your soul as you read it? "Full assurance!" What could be more precious? And it is for you if you want it, only you must receive it by faith. For observe carefully, it is not the full assurance of an emotional experience, nor the full assurance of a carefully reasoned-out system of philosophy. It is the full assurance of faith.

The little boy was right who replied to his teacher's question, "What is faith?" by exclaiming, "Faith is believing God and asking no questions." That is exactly what it is. Faith is taking God at His word. This is the real meaning of that wonderful definition given by inspiration in Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." God tells us something beyond human ken. Faith gives substance to that. It makes unseen things even more real than things that the eye

beholds. It relies in unquestioning certainty upon what God has declared to be true. And when there is this complete reliance upon the promise of God, the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth, so that the believer has the full assurance of faith.

Faith is not, however, mere intellectual acceptance of certain facts. It involves trust and confidence in those facts, and this results in the word of faith and the work of faith: Faith in Christ is not, therefore, simply accrediting the historical statements revealed concerning our blessed Lord. It is to trust one's self wholly to Him in reliance upon His redemptive work. To believe is to trust. To trust is to have faith. To have faith in Christ is to have full assurance of salvation.

Because this is so, faith must have something tangible to lay hold of, some definite worth-while message to rest upon. And it is just this that is set forth in the gospel, which is God's well-ordered plan of salvation for sinners who otherwise are lost, helpless and hopeless.

When, for instance, we are told four times in our Bibles that "the just shall live by faith," it is not simply that we live in a spirit of optimism, a faith or hope that everything will come out all right at last. And when we speak of the doctrine of justification by faith, it is not to say that he who maintains a courageous heart will thereby be declared righteous. Faith is not the savior. Faith is the hand that lays hold of Him who does save. Therefore the folly of talking of weak faith as opposed to strong faith. The feeblest faith in Christ is saving faith. The strongest faith in self, or ought else but Christ, is but a delusion and a snare, and will leave the soul at last unsaved and forever forlorn.

And so when we are bidden to draw near to God with true hearts in full assurance of faith, the meaning is that we are to rest implicitly on what God has revealed concerning His Son and His glorious work for our redemption. This is set forth admirably in the former part of this chapter in Hebrews where our verse is found. There we have set out in vivid contrast the difference between the many sacrifices offered under the legal dispensation and the one perfect, all-sufficient oblation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note some of the outstanding differences:

1. They were many and often repeated. His is but one, and no other will ever be required.
2. They did not have the necessary value to settle the sin question. His is of such infinite value, it has settled that problem forevermore.
3. They could not purge the consciences of those who brought them. His purges all who believe, giving a perfect conscience because all sin has been put away from under the eye of God.
4. They could not open the way into the Holiest. His has rent the veil, and inaugurated the new and living way into the very presence of God.
5. They could not perfect the one who offered them. His one sacrifice has perfected forever those who are sanctified.
6. In them there was a remembrance again of sins from year to year. His has enabled God to say, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
7. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should put away sin. But Christ has accomplished that very thing by the sacrifice of Himself.

Here then is where faith rests, on the finished work of Christ. It will help us greatly to understand this, if we glance at what is revealed concerning the sin offering of the old dispensation.

Consider the Troubled Israelite

Let us imagine that we stand near the altar in the temple court, as a troubled Israelite comes with his sacrifice. He leads a goat along to the place of the oblation. The priest examines it carefully, and finding it without any outward blemish he commands it to be slain. The offerer himself puts the knife to its throat, after laying his hand on its head. Then it is flayed and cut in pieces, and all its inward parts carefully inspected. Pronounced perfect, it is accepted and certain parts are placed upon the fire of the altar. The blood is sprinkled round about the altar and upon its four horns, after which the priest pronounces absolution, assuring the man of his forgiveness.

This was but "a shadow of good things to come," and could not actually put away sin. That unblemished animal typified the sinless Saviour who became the great Sin Offering. His blood has made full and complete expiation for iniquity. All who come to God through Him are eternally forgiven.

If the Israelite sinned against the Lord, on the morrow he required a new sacrifice. His conscience was never made perfect. But Christ's one offering is of such infinite value that it settles the sin question eternally for all who put their trust in Him. "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." To be sanctified in this sense is to be set apart to God in all the value of the atoning work and the personal perfections of Christ. He is Himself our sanctification. God sees us henceforth in His Son. Is not this a wonderfully precious truth? It is something man would never have dreamed of. God alone devised such a plan. He who believes His testimony regarding it has full assurance of faith.

He does not know he is saved because he feels happy. But every true believer will be happy to know he is saved. Confidence based upon an emotional experience would leave one in utter bewilderment when that emotion passed away. But assurance based upon the Word of God abides, because that Word is unchangeable.

The Old Gentleman Had No Peace

Many years ago I was holding a series of evangelistic meetings in a little country schoolhouse some miles out of Santa Cruz, California. One day I was out driving with a kindly old gentleman who was attending the services nightly, but who was far from being sure of his personal salvation. As we drove along a beautiful, winding road, literally embowered with great trees, I put the definite question to him, "Have you peace with God?" He drew rein at once, stopped the horse, and exclaimed, "Now that's what I brought you here for. I won't go another foot until I know I am saved, or else know it is hopeless to seek to be sure of it."

"How do you expect to find out?" I inquired.

"Well, that is what puzzles me. I want a definite witness, something that I cannot be mistaken about."

"Just what would you consider definite, some inward emotional stirring?"

"I can hardly say, only most folks tell us they felt some powerful change when they got religion. I have been seeking that for years, but it has always eluded me."

"Getting religion is one thing; trusting Christ may be quite another. But now suppose you were seeking salvation, and suddenly there came to you a very happy feeling, would you be sure then that you were saved?"

"Well, I think I would."

"Then, suppose you went through life resting on that experience, and at last came down to the hour of death. Imagine Satan telling you that you were lost and would soon be beyond hope of mercy, what would you say to him? Would you tell him that you knew all was well, because you had such a happy emotional experience years before? What if he should declare that it was he who gave you that happy feeling, in order to deceive you, could you prove it was not?"

"No," he answered thoughtfully, "I couldn't. I see that a happy feeling is not enough."

"What would be enough?"

"If I could get some definite word in a vision, or a message from an angel, then I could be sure."

"But suppose you had a vision of a glorious angel, and he told you your sins were forgiven, would that really be enough to rest on?"

"I think it would. One ought to be certain if an angel said it was all right."

"But if you were dying and Satan was there to disturb you, and told you that you were lost after all, what could you say?"

"Why, I'd tell him an angel told me I was saved."

"But if he said, 'I was that angel. I transformed myself into an angel of light to deceive you. And now you are where I wanted you - you will be lost forever.' What then could you say?"

He pondered a moment or two, and then replied, "I see, you are right; the word of an angel won't do."

"But now," I said, "God has given something better than happy feelings, something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given His Son to die for your sins, and He has testified in His own unalterable Word that if you trust in Him all your sins are gone. Listen to this: 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' These are the words of God spoken through His apostle Peter, as recorded in Acts 10:43.

"Then here in 1 John 5:13, which says, '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.' Are these words addressed to you? Do you believe on the Name of the Son of God?"

"I do, sir, I do indeed! I know He is the Son of God, and I know He died for me."

"Then see what He tells you, 'Ye may know that ye have eternal life.' Is not this enough to rest upon? It is a letter from heaven directed expressly to you. How can you refuse to accept what God has told you? Can you not believe Him? Is He not more to be depended on than an angel, or than aroused emotions? Can you not take Him at His word and rest upon it for the forgiveness of your sins?"

"Now suppose that as you are dying Satan comes to you and insists that you are lost, but you reply, 'No, Satan, you cannot terrify me now. I rest on the Word of the living God and He tells me I have eternal life, and also the remission of all my sins.' Can you not do this now? Will you not bow your head and tell God you will be saved on His terms by coming to Him as a repentant sinner and trusting His word concerning His blessed Son?"

The old man dropped his eyes, and I saw that he was deeply stirred. His lips were moving in prayer. Suddenly he looked up and touching the horse lightly with his whip, explained, "Giddap! It's all clear now. This is what I've wanted for years."

That night at the meeting he came to the front and told the audience that what he had sought in vain for half a lifetime, he had found when he believed the message of God's word about what Jesus had done to save sinners. For several years he was a regular correspondent of mine until the Lord took him home - a joyous saint whose doubts and fears had all been banished when he rested on the sure Word of God. His was the full assurance of faith.

Emotional Element in Conversion

And please do not misunderstand me. I do not discount the emotional element in conversion, but I insist it will not do to rely upon it as an evidence that one has been forgiven. When a man is awakened by the Spirit of God to realize something of his lost, undone condition, it would be strange indeed if his emotions were not aroused. When he is brought to repentance, that is, to a complete change of attitude toward his sins, toward himself, and toward God, we need not be surprised to see the tears of penitence coursing down his cheeks. And when he rests his soul on what God has said, and receives in faith the Spirit's witness, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," it would be unthinkable but that, like Wesley, his heart should be strangely warmed as he rejoiced in God's salvation.

But what I am trying to make plain is that assurance is not based upon any emotional change, but whatever emotional experience there may be, it will be the result of accepting the testimony of the Lord given in the Scriptures. Faith rests on the naked Word of God. That Word believed gives full assurance. Then the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in the believer's heart and to conform him to Christ. Growth in grace follows naturally when the soul has trusted Christ and entered into peace with God.

"Soon as my all I ventured

On the atoning blood,

The Holy Spirit entered

And I was born of God."

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