

Striving After Assurance

by Harry Ironside

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Jesus Christ and him crucified as the sovereign remedy for all spiritual ills, and the power of divine sovereignty in leading people to salvation.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 2:2

Topics: "Assurance in Christ", "Divine Providence"

Description

Harry Ironside emphasizes the importance of resting in Christ for assurance, drawing from his extensive ministry experience. He shares personal anecdotes illustrating how God orchestrates encounters for the purpose of leading souls to salvation, highlighting the transformative power of the Gospel. Ironside stresses that the message of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion is the ultimate remedy for spiritual struggles, and he encourages readers to seek assurance through the Scriptures. He believes that God is actively seeking to draw troubled souls to Himself, and that the written word can provide clarity and peace. Ultimately, Ironside's message is one of hope and divine providence in the journey toward faith.

Transcript

In a ministry of almost half a century, I have had the joy of leading many to rest in Christ. And I have found that the questions that perplex, and the hindrances to full assurance are all more or less basically alike, though expressed differently by different people. So I have sought in this little volume to set forth, as clearly as I know how, the truths that I have proven specific in meeting the needs of thousands of souls.

I have been told that in days gone by young doctors were in the habit of using a great number of medicines in their endeavors to help their various patients, but that with increasing practice and larger experience, they discarded many remedies which they found were of little use and thereafter concentrated on a few that they had proven to be really worth while.

The physician of souls is likely to have much the same experience, and while this may give a somewhat uninteresting sameness to his later ministrations, as compared or contrasted with his earlier ones, it puts him after all in the immediate succession of the apostles of our Lord, whose viewpoint may be summed up in words written by the greatest of them all: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Here is the sovereign remedy for all spiritual ills. Here is the one supreme message that is needed, whether they realize it or not, by all men everywhere. And this I have tried to proclaim in these unpretending pages.

As an Itinerant Preacher

For the most of my life I have been an itinerant preacher of the gospel, travelling often as much as thirty to forty thousand miles a year to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. In all these years I only recall two occasions on which I have missed my trains. One was by becoming confused between what is known as daylight saving and standard time. The other was through the passive assurance of a farmer-host, who was to drive me from his country home into the town of Lowry, Minnesota, in time for me to take an afternoon train for Winnipeg, on which I had a Pullman reservation. I can remember yet how I urged my friend to get on the way, but he potted about with all kinds of inconsequential chores, insistent that there was plenty of time. I fumed and fretted to no purpose. He was calmly adamant.

Finally, he hitched up his team and we started across the prairie. About a mile from town we saw the train steam into the station, pause a few moments, and depart for the north. There was nothing to do but wait some five or six hours for the night express, on which I had no reservation, and found when it arrived I could not get a berth, so was obliged to sit in a crowded day coach all the way to the Canadian border, after which there was more room. While annoyed, I comforted myself with the words, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." I prayed earnestly that if He had some purpose in permitting me to miss my train and comfortable accommodations, I might not fail to find it out.

When I boarded the crowded, foul-smelling coach, I found there was only one vacancy left and that was half of a seat midway down the car, a sleeping young man occupying the other half. As I sat down by him and stowed away my baggage, he awoke, straightened up, and gave me a rather sleepy greeting. Soon we were in an agreeable, low-toned conversation, while other passengers slept and snored all about us. A suitable opportunity presenting itself, I inquired, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" He sat up as though shot. "How strange that you should ask me that! I went to sleep thinking of Him and wishing I did know Him, but I do not understand, though I want to! Can you help me?"

Further conversation elicited the fact that he had been working in a town in southern Minnesota, where he had been persuaded to attend some revival meetings. Evidently, the preaching was in power and he became deeply concerned about his soul. He had even gone forward to the mourners' bench, but though he wept and prayed over his sins, he came away without finding peace. I knew then why I had missed my train. This was my Gaza, and though unworthy I was sent of God to be his Philip. So I opened to the same scripture that the Ethiopian treasurer had been reading when Philip met him: Isaiah 53.

Drawing my newly-found friend's attention to its wonderful depiction of the crucified Saviour, though written so long before the event, I put before him verses 4, 5 and 6: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he

was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

As the young man read them, they seemed to burn their way into his very soul. He saw himself as the lost sheep that had taken its own way. He saw Christ as the One on whom Jehovah laid all his iniquity, and he bowed his head and told Him he would trust Him as his own Saviour. For perhaps two hours we had hallowed fellowship on the way, as we turned from one scripture to another. Then he reached his

destination and left, thanking me most profusely for showing him the way of life. I have never seen him since, but I know I shall greet him again at the judgment seat of Christ.

Help for the Needy Soul

Into whose hands this book will fall I cannot tell, but I send it forth with the prayer that it may prove as timely a message to many a needy soul as the talk on the train that night in Minnesota with the young man who felt his need and had really turned to God, but did not understand the way of peace and so had no assurance, until he found it through the written Word, borne home to his soul in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you are just as troubled as that young man, and should by divine providence peruse this treatise at any time, I trust that you will see that it is the Lord's own way of seeking to draw you to Himself, and that you will read it carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully, looking up each passage referred to in your own Bible, if you have one, and that thus you, too, may obtain full assurance.

Be certain of this: God is deeply concerned about you. He longs to give you the knowledge of His salvation. It is no mere accident that these pages have come to your attention. He put it on my heart to write them. He would have you read them. They may prove to be His own message to your troubled soul. God's ways are varied. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The Barber Was Much Concerned

Another personal experience will perhaps accentuate and fittingly close this chapter. One afternoon I was walking the busy streets of Indianapolis, looking for a barber shop. Entering the first one I saw (my attention being attracted by the red and white striped pole), I was soon seated in the chair, and the tonsorial artist began operations. He was chatty but subdued, I thought, not carelessly voluble. Praying for an opening, it soon seemed a fitting time to ask, as in the other case, "Are you acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ?" To my astonishment, the barber's reaction was remarkable. He stopped his work, burst into uncontrollable weeping, and when the first paroxysm had passed, exclaimed, "How strange that you should ask me about Him! In all my life I never had a man ask me that before. And I have been thinking of Him nearly all the time for the last three days. What can you tell me about him?"

It was my turn to be amazed. I asked him what had led

up to this. He explained that he had gone to see a picture of the Passion Play, and that it had made an indelible impression on his mind. He kept asking, "Why did that good Man have to suffer so? Why did God let Him die like that?" He had never heard the gospel in his life, so I spent an hour with him opening up the story of the Cross. We prayed together and he declared that all was now plain, and he trusted the Saviour for himself. I had the joy of knowing, as I left his shop, that the gospel was indeed the dynamic of God unto salvation to him, an uninstructed Greek barber, who had learned for the first time that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him.

To me it was a singular instance of divine sovereignty. The very idea of the Passion Play - sinful men endeavoring to portray the life, death and resurrection of Jesus - was abhorrent to me. But God, who delights not in the death of the sinner, but desires that all should turn to Him and live, used that very picture to arouse this man and so make him ready to hear the gospel. And I could not doubt that He had directed my steps to that particular shop, that I might have the joy of pointing the anxious barber to the

Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

That in many similar instances He may be pleased to own and use these written messages is my earnest desire.

"Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding,

Ransomed souls the tidings tell;

'Tis a deep that knows no sounding,

Who its length and breadth can tell?

On its glories, let my soul forever dwell."

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