

FULL ASSURANCE

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CHAPTER NINE

DIFFICULTIES WHICH HINDER FULL ASSURANCE

IT IS NOW MY PURPOSE to consider some of the difficulties and perplexities which keep souls from entering into peace and enjoying the full assurance of salvation.

These questions and objections are some that have come to me again and again from earnest seekers after light, and are therefore, I have good reason to believe, fairly representative of the troublesome thoughts that hinder many from seeing the simplicity of GOD's way of life, as set forth in His holy Word. Perhaps if my reader has not a settled rest of heart and conscience, he may find his own peculiar trouble dealt with here.

1. "How may I be sure that I have repented enough?"

Very often the real difficulty arises from a misapprehension of the meaning of repentance.

There is no salvation without repentance, but it is important to see exactly what is meant by this term.

- It should not be confused with penitence, which is sorrow for sin;
- It should not be confused with penance, which is an effort to make some satisfaction for sin;
- It should not be confused with reformation, which is turning from sin.

Repentance is a change of attitude toward sin, toward self, and toward GOD. The word (in the Greek Testament) literally means "*a change of mind*." This is not a mere intellectual change of viewpoint, however, but a complete reversal of attitude.

Now test yourself in this way.

- You once lived in sin and loved it. Do you now desire deliverance from it?
- You were once self-confident and trusting in your own fancied goodness. Do you now judge yourself as a sinner before GOD?

- You once sought to hide from GOD and rebelled against His authority. Do you now look up to Him, desiring to know Him, and to yield yourself to Him?

If you can honestly say yes to these questions, you have repented. Your attitude is altogether different to what it once was.

You confess you are a sinner, unable to cleanse your own soul, and you are willing to be saved in GOD's way. This is repentance. And remember, it is not the amount of repentance that counts: it is the fact that you turn from self to GOD that puts you in the place where His grace avails through JESUS CHRIST.

Strictly speaking, not one of us has ever repented enough. None of us has realized the enormity of our guilt as GOD sees it. But when we judge ourselves and trust the Saviour whom He has provided, we are saved through His merits. As recipients of His lovingkindness, repentance will be deepened and will continue day by day, as we learn more and more of His infinite worth and our own unworthiness.

"It is not thy tears of repentance, nor prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul;
On Him then who shed it thou mayest at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll."

2. *"I do not feel fit for GOD; I am so unworthy, I fear He will not take me in."*

What a wretched condition would be yours if you imagined you were fit, in yourself, for Heaven, or that you were worthy of such love as GOD has shown!

- It is because of your lack of fitness that CHRIST died to redeem you.
- It is because you are worthy only of eternal judgment that He "**who knew no sin**" was made sin for you, that you might become the righteousness of GOD in Him.

If you had any fitness of your own, you would not need a Saviour.

When the Roman centurion sought the healing power of JESUS for his servant, he sent the Jewish elders to the Lord to intercede for him. They said, "**He was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.**" But when the centurion faced the Lord, he exclaimed, "**I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.**"

They said, "**He was worthy**"; he declared, "**I am not worthy**," and this moved the heart of JESUS, so that He exclaimed, "**I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**"

So long as a man considers himself worthy there is no salvation for him; but when, in repentance, he owns his unworthiness, there is immediate deliverance for him through faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Without repentance the sinner is unable to believe unto salvation.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him."

3. *"I am afraid I am too great a sinner ever to be saved."*

But CHRIST came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He did not die for good people, and in truth there are no intrinsically good people in the world. "**There is none that doeth good, no, not one.**" But if any imagine they are good in themselves, there is no salvation for them. "**They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.**"

Sin is like a dire disease that fastens upon the whole being, but JESUS is the great Physician who cures the worst of cases. None can be too vile, or too sinful, or too wicked for Him. His skill is unlimited. He delights to show great grace to great sinners. Saul of Tarsus was the chief of sinners, but he was saved in that moment when he trusted the Lord JESUS.

The greater your sinfulness, the more you need the Saviour; and the worse your condition, the more proof you have that you are the one for whom He died. GOD laid all our sins upon His Son when He hung on that Cross of Calvary. He suffered for them all. Not one of your sins was overlooked. There is such infinite value in His propitiatory work that grace can now be extended to the vilest sinner on the face of the earth, if he will but receive the Lord JESUS by faith as his personal Saviour.

"My sin - Oh, the bliss of this glorious thought
My sin - not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to His Cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh, my soul!"

4. *"But what if I am not one of the elect?"*

You can readily settle that yourself. Without attempting to delve into the mysteries of the divine decrees and the divine foreknowledge, it is enough to say that all who come to GOD through His Son are elect. Our Lord makes this very plain in John 6:37.

He says, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.**" Now do not linger too long on the first half of the verse. Be clear about the latter half, for it is there that your responsibility is found. Have you come to JESUS? If so, you have His pledged word that He will not cast you out. The fact that you come proves that the Father gave you to CHRIST. Thus you may be certain that you belong to the glorious company of the elect.

D. L. Moody used to put it very simply: "The elect are the 'whosoever wills'; the non-elect are the 'whosoever won'ts.'" This is exactly what Scripture teaches.

The invitation is to all.

Those who accept it are the elect. Remember, we are never told that CHRIST died for the elect. But what does the Word say? "**Christ died for the ungodly.**" Are you ungodly? Then He died for you. Put in your claim and enter into peace.

Meditate on the Holy Spirit's declaration through the Apostle Paul: "**This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**" Nowhere are we told that CHRIST came to save the elect.

The term "sinners" is all-embracing, for "**all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.**" Are you sure you are a sinner? Then you may be certain there is salvation for you. Do not exercise yourself in matters too high for you. Just be simple enough to take GOD at His Word.

"Sinners JESUS will receive:
Sound the word of grace to all
Who the heav'nly pathway leave,
All who linger, all who fall.
Sing it o'er and o'er again:
CHRIST receiveth sinful men."

5. *"Sometimes I am afraid that I am predestinated to be damned; if so, I can do nothing to alter my terrible case."*

No one was ever predestinated to be damned. Predestination is a precious truth of inestimable value and comfort, when rightly understood. Will you not turn to your Bible and read for yourself in the only two chapters in which this word "**predestinate**" or "**predestinated**" is found?

The first is Romans 8:29-30, "**For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**"

The other chapter is Ephesians 1. In verse 5 we read, "**Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.**" And in verse 11, it says, "**Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.**"

You will note that there is no reference in these four verses to either Heaven or hell, but to Christlikeness eventually. Nowhere are we told in Scripture that GOD predestinated one man to be saved and another to be lost. Men are to be saved or lost eternally because of their attitude toward the Lord JESUS CHRIST. "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him**" (John 3:36).

Predestination means that some day all the redeemed shall become just like the Lord JESUS!

Is not this precious? Do not try to make a bugaboo out of that which was intended to give joy and comfort to those who trust in the Saviour. Trust Him for yourself, and you will know that GOD has predestinated you to be fully conformed to the image of His Son.

"And is it so, I shall be like Thy Son,
Is this the grace which He for me has won?
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,
In glory to His own blest likeness brought."

6. *"I am trying to believe, but I have no assurance of salvation."*

Trying to believe whom? Would you dare speak of trying to believe the One who cannot lie? Is not this to insult GOD to His face?

Suppose a dear friend of yours related a strange story which he declared to be a fact, would you say to him, "I will try to believe you"? Would not this be tantamount to declaring that you did not believe him at all? Do not then, I beg of you, talk of trying to believe when GOD has given His own testimony concerning His Son, and promised to give eternal life to all who trust Him.

You either do believe Him, or you do not. If you do not believe Him you practically make Him a liar.

If you have been doing this heretofore, will you not go to Him at once and confess this great wickedness of which you have been guilty, and tell Him you will henceforth rest in simple faith upon His word? It is not a question of feeling or emotion but of "believing GOD and asking no questions," as that little boy put it, when asked "What is faith?"

"I do believe, I now believe,
That JESUS died for me,
That on the cross He shed His blood
From sin to set me free."

7. *"But must I not feel different?"*

It is a remarkable fact that the word "**feel**" is only found once in the New Testament, and that is in Paul's sermon to the Athenians, where he rebukes them for imagining the Godhead to be like unto silver and gold, and shows that the true GOD is the Creator of all things, "**and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring**" (Acts 17:26-28).

Now you find the word "**feel**" right in the very midst of this passage, but it has nothing to do with the Gospel, but rather with the heathen groping in the dark, "**if haply they might feel after God.**"

You are not in their ignorant condition. You have heard the Gospel. You know of the one living and true GOD. You are not told to feel anything, but to believe His record.

Then it may interest you to know that the word "**feeling**" is only found twice in the New Testament, and never has anything to do with the message of salvation.

In Ephesians 4:19 the Spirit of GOD describes the state of certain unbelieving Gentiles in these words:

"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

This is what continual indulgence in sin does for people. They become insensate, "**past feeling**," and so conscience ceases to register, as they plunge into one excess and enormity after another.

The only other place where we read of "**feeling**" is in a very different connection.

In Hebrews 4:15, our blessed Lord Himself is brought before us in a very precious verse:

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Nowhere else do we read of feeling in all the New Testament! But oh, how many times we read of believing, of faith, of trust, of confidence! Yes, these are the words for us.

Ignore your feelings altogether, and tell the Lord JESUS now that you will trust Him and confess Him before men.

"JESUS, I will trust Thee,
Trust Thee with my soul;
Weary, worn and helpless,
Thou canst make me whole.
There is none in Heaven,
Nor on earth like Thee;
Thou hast died for sinners,
Therefore, Lord, for me."

8. "I can see that GOD has done His part in the work of my salvation, but must I not do my part if I would avail myself of what He has done?"

Have you ever heard the story of the man who was wonderfully saved and arose in a class meeting to testify to his newfound joy?

His heart was filled with CHRIST and his lips spoke of Him and of Him only, as his Redeemer and Lord.

The class leader was a legalist and said when the other had finished, "Our brother has told us what the Lord did for him, but he has forgotten to tell us what he did in order to be saved. GOD does His part when we do ours. Brother, did you not do your part before GOD saved you?"

The man was on his feet in a moment and exclaimed, "I surely did do my part. I ran away from GOD as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. And GOD chased me till He caught me. That was His part."

Yes, you and I have all done our part, and a dreadfully sad part it was. We did all the sinning and He must do all the saving. After we are saved we can labor night and day to show our gratitude to Him for what His grace has wrought.

"I am not told to labor To put away my sin;
So foolish, weak and helpless, I never could begin.
But, blessed truth, I know it, Though ruined by the fall,
CHRIST for my sin has suffered, Yes, CHRIST has done it all."

9. *"It is not exactly that I do not trust GOD, but I cannot be sure of myself; I am afraid even my faith is unreal."*

Faith is not the Saviour: CHRIST is. He is the unchanging One - **"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."**

Faith is just the hand that lays hold of Him. You are not asked to trust yourself. The less confidence you have in yourself the better. Put all your confidence in the Lord JESUS. He is not unreal, and if your faith is centered in Him all will be well for time and eternity.

"JESUS, I rest in Thee,
In Thee myself I hide;
Laden with sin and misery,
Where can I rest beside?
'Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast
My burdened soul doth find its rest."

10. *"But the Bible says faith is the gift of GOD and that all men have not faith; perhaps it is not the will of GOD to give me saving faith."*

Faith is the gift of GOD in this sense, that only through His Word is it received. **"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**

All men may have faith if they will: but alas, many refuse to hear the Word of GOD, so they are left in their unbelief.

The Holy Spirit presents the Word, but one may resist His gracious influence. On the other hand, one may listen to the Word and believe it. That is faith. It is GOD's gift, it is true, because given through His Word.

"Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

But CHRIST the heav'nly Lamb,
Takes all our guilt away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

Believing, I rejoice
To see the curse remove,
And bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing redeeming love."

- Isaac Watts

11. *"What troubles me is that I am not sure I have accepted CHRIST."*

To accept CHRIST is to receive Him by faith as your Lord and Saviour. But, strictly speaking, the great thing to see is that GOD has accepted CHRIST. He took our sins upon Him, died to make propitiation for them. But GOD has raised Him from the dead and taken Him up to glory. He has accepted Him in token of His perfect satisfaction in His work. Believing this, the soul enters into peace.

I simply rest in GOD's thoughts about His Son.

"Peace with GOD is CHRIST in glory,
GOD is light and GOD is love;
JESUS died to tell the story,
Foes to bring to GOD above."

12. *"Sometimes I believe I have trusted JESUS and am justified before GOD, but I cannot forget my sins; they come before me night and day. Surely, if I were really forgiven I could forget the past."*

Ah, dear troubled one, the closer you get to CHRIST and the more deeply you repent of your sins, the more you will abhor yourself for ever committing them. But let your comfort be in this blessed thought - GOD has forgotten them!

He says, **"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."**

So when they come before your mind to trouble and distress you, just rest in the fact that GOD has forgotten them, and will never bring them up again. CHRIST has settled for all of those sins.

Believe it and be at peace.

"Settled forever, sin's tremendous claim,
Glory to JESUS, blessed be His name;
No part-way measures doth His grace provide,
Finished the work, when CHRIST the Saviour died."

13. *"I often come to the point of deciding for CHRIST then I draw back because I am afraid I cannot hold out."*

If it were a matter of your own ability to hold out, you might well fear. You have no power in yourself that will enable you to hold out. But the moment you fully trust the Lord JESUS you are born again.

Then the Holy Spirit comes in to dwell in your heart and to be the power of the new life. He will enable you to resist temptation and to live to the glory of GOD. **"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."** Do not count on self at all. Let Him have His way. He will lead you on in triumph as you surrender to Him.

"Safe in the Lord, without a doubt,
By virtue of the blood:
For nothing can destroy the life
That's hid with CHRIST in GOD!"

14. *"But must I not hold on to the end if I would be saved at last?"*

May I, without irreverence, venture to recast a Bible story? If the account of Noah and the flood went something like this, what would you think of it? Suppose that after the ark was completed GOD said unto Noah, "Now, get eight great spikes of iron and drive them into the side of the ark." And Noah procured the spikes and did as he was bidden.

Then the word came unto him, "Come thou and all thy house and hang on to these spikes." And Noah and his wife, and the three sons and their wives, each held onto a spike, And the rains descended and the flood came, and as the ark was borne up on the waters their muscles were strained to the utmost as they clung to the spikes. Imagine GOD saying to them, "If you hang on till the deluge is over you will be saved!"

Can you even think of such a thing as anyone of them going safely through?

But oh, how different the simple Bible story. **"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark."**

Ah, that is a very different thing than holding on!

Inside the ark they were safe as long as the ark endured the storm. And every believer is in CHRIST and is as safe as GOD can make him. Look away then from all self-effort and trust Him alone.

Rest in the ark and rejoice in GOD's great salvation.

And be sure to remember that it is CHRIST who holds you, not you who hold Him. He has said, **"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."** **"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"** (Romans 5:10).

He who died for you, now lives at GOD's right hand to keep you, and the Father sees you in Him. **"He hath made us accepted in the beloved."** Could anything be more sure?

"The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet."

15. *"Must I not strive, if I would enter in at the strait gate? It seems to me just believing is too easy a way."*

Our Lord's words may well give us pause. They were never intended, however, to make us feel that a hard struggle was necessary in order to be saved.

But He would have us understand that no one will ever be saved who is not in earnest. The great majority of people drift aimlessly and carelessly on, passing heedlessly by the gate to life, intent only on gratifying their carnal and worldly desires. He who would be saved must arouse himself to the supreme importance of spiritual things. He must put first things first. In this sense he strives to enter in at the strait gate.

He will be like Bunyan's pilgrim who, when awakened to his danger and realizing the dreadful burden of sin, refused to heed the pleadings of his old companions, and putting his fingers in his ears, cried, "Life, life, eternal life!" as he fled from the City of Destruction. You, too, must determine that nothing shall be allowed to interfere with the settlement of the great matter of the salvation of your soul.

But you do not have to strive with GOD to save you. He is waiting to do that very thing.

Yea, and He will do it for you the moment you cease from all self-effort and put your trust in CHRIST.

To strive to enter in is to be determined that nothing shall keep you from accepting the gracious invitation of the Lord JESUS, who bids you come to Him in all your need and guilt, that He may fit you for Heaven's glory by cleansing you from every stain. Do not on any account be turned away from this, but brushing every barrier aside, yield your heart to the Saviour now!

"He tells me words whereby I'm saved,
He points to something done,
Accomplished on Mount Calvary
By His beloved Son;
In which no works of mine have place,
Else grace with works were no more grace."

16. *"Do I not have to wait GOD's time? I can do nothing about it until He is ready to save me."*

But GOD's time is now. He plainly tells us, "**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**"

You need not wait another moment. He will never be any more ready to save you than He is at the very instant you are reading these words, and you will never be more fit to come to Him than at this very moment.

- Every day you wait you are adding to the terrible list of your sins.
- Every hour you continue to reject Him you are increasing your guilt by refusing to receive His blessed Son.
- Every moment you stay away from Him you are sinning against His love.

Why not close up the present evil record by prostrating yourself before Him now, and owning your need, accept the gift of GOD, which is eternal life?

"I was waiting once for pardon,
I was hoping to be saved;
Waiting, though my heart would harden,
Hoping danger might be braved.
Till by GOD's own truth confounded,
I, a sinner, stood confessed;
Richly then His grace abounded,
JESUS gave me perfect rest."

17. *"I really want to come to JESUS, but I do not seem to know how to do so."*

It is strange how we stumble over the very simplicity of the Gospel invitation.

CHRIST JESUS is a living, loving, divinely human Personality - as truly as when He was here on earth. It is He Himself who bids us come. Do you know what it is to stay away? Then surely you need have no difficulty in doing the very opposite! Lift your heart to Him in prayer.

Tell Him that you are the sinner for whom He died, and that now you accept His gracious invitation to "**Come, for all things are now ready.**"

Then believe that He receives you, for He said He would and He always keeps His word.

You may have heard the story of Charlotte Elliot, the hymn writer.

As a young woman she was troubled and anxious about her soul, but very reticent when it came to seeking help from others. But a French pastor, who was visiting her father, put the question directly to her, "Have you come to JESUS?"

She replied, "I want to come, but I do not know how."

He simply answered, "Come just as you are."

She fled to her room in tears and later emerged a saved soul. She wrote the well-known lines quoted below as the expression of her own coming. Will you not make them yours?

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of GOD! I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Hath broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of GOD! I come, I come!"

18. *"Must I not pray through until I get the witness that I am saved?"*

Nowhere in the Bible are people told they must pray to be saved.

It is true that the natural expression of an awakened and anxious soul is prayer. But there is no such thing in Scripture as "praying through" in order to be saved. What is required is that the convicted sinner believe the Gospel.

Suppose you went home tired and hungry, and said to your wife, "Will you please let me have supper as early as possible?"

She complies at once and sets the table, calling you to come and partake of what she has provided.

Instead of doing so, you plead long and earnestly, literally begging for food. What would she think of you?

And what does GOD think when He has spread the Gospel feast for starving sinners and invited all to "**come and dine**," but instead of obeying His voice, men fall on their knees and beg and plead for His mercy and grace, and do not accept His invitation and feast on the living bread provided for their salvation.

The witness of the Spirit is only enjoyed by those who thus take Him at His word.

The believer has received the witness to him as given in the Word of GOD (Hebrews 10:15). He has the witness in himself because the truth has been received into his heart (I John 5:10). He enjoys the Spirit's witnessing with his spirit, when, upon believing, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within (Romans 8:16). The witness is not a happy feeling. It is the testimony that the Spirit gives through the Word. That this testimony believed brings joy and gladness goes without question. I do not know I am saved because I feel happy. But I feel happy because I know I am saved.

An old evangelist I knew as a boy often used to say, "Believing is the root; feeling is the fruit." This expresses it well.

"O the peace my Saviour gives,
Peace I never knew before;
And the way has brighter grown,
Since I've learned to trust Him more."

19. *"Sometimes I fear that I have sinned away my day of grace, for though I have been seeking the Lord for a long time, I do not seem to find Him."*

No one has sinned away his day of grace who has any desire to be saved. That desire is divinely implanted. If you are seeking after GOD it is because He is seeking after you. But, what, after all, do you really mean when you talk of seeking the Lord and being unable to find Him? He is not hiding Himself.

He has come in love to sinners as the good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep.

A little boy was asked one day, "My lad, have you found JESUS?"

He looked up in amazement and replied, "Why, sir, I didn't know He was lost; but I was, and He found me." A wonderful confession surely!

In Old Testament times GOD said through the prophet, "**Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near**"; and there is a sense in which these words are still applicable. But they do not convey the full truth of the Gospel. JESUS said, "**The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luke 19:10). Are you lost?

Then He is looking for you. "**Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.**" Stop right where you are and lift your heart to Him as a repentant sinner, and you will find He is waiting and ready to receive you.

And as to sinning away your day of grace, has He not said, "**Whosoever will may come**"? Are you not included in that great word "**whosoever**"? Unless you can prove that it does not take you in, you are still where the grace of GOD can reach you. Do not listen to the lying voice of the enemy of your soul, who tells you that your case is hopeless, but heed the gentle invitation of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, as He bids you now believe on His name.

"And if I now would seek Him,
In love He sought for me,
When far from Him I wandered
In sin and misery;
He oped my ears and bade me
To listen to His call;
He sought me and He found me
Yes, CHRIST has done it all."

20. *"But how can I be sure that my faith is strong enough to save my soul?"*

It is not faith that saves the soul. It is the One whom GOD has set forth as the object of faith. It is true we are justified by faith instrumentally, but actually we are justified by His blood. The weakest faith in JESUS saves.

The strongest faith in self, or in good works, or in the church, or in its ordinances leaves you lost and undone still.

James Parker of Plainfield, New Jersey, was visiting in a hospital, when a nurse indicated a bed surrounded with white screens, and whispered, "The poor man is dying. The priest has been here and administered the last sacrament. He cannot live long."

Mr. Parker begged to go inside the screen, and permission was granted. As he looked down upon the dying man he observed a crucifix on his bosom. He stooped over and lifted it up. The sick man lifted his eyes and looked distressed.

"Put it back," he whispered, "I want to die with it on my breast."

The visitor pointed to the figure pictured on the cross, and said fervently, "He's a wonderful Saviour!"

"Yes, yes, I love the crucifix. Put it back, please. I hope it will help me to die well."

"Not the crucifix," was the reply, "but the One who died on the cross, the Lord JESUS, He died to save you."

The man looked bewildered, then his face brightened:

"Oh, I see, not the crucifix but the One who died. He died for me. I see, sir, I see. I never understood it before."

It was evident that faith had sprung up in his soul.

Mr. Parker replaced the crucifix, offered a brief prayer, and left. In a few minutes he observed the body being wheeled out of the ward.

Telling me of it later, he exclaimed, "I know that GOD thinks so much of the work of His Son that He will have everyone in Heaven who will give Him any excuse for taking them there!" It is blessedly true.

Faith's look at the Crucified saves, even though it be faith of the feeblest kind.

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved,
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

21. *"But must I not keep the law in order to be saved?"*

Keep the law! Why you have already violated those sacred precepts times without number. Go carefully over the Ten Commandments; which of them have you not broken, either literally or in spirit? Take them one by one, and face them squarely and honestly in the presence of the GOD who gave them, and who said,

"The man that doeth them shall live in them"; but who also declared, **"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."**

Let us consider them seriously:

a. **"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."**

He is downright exclusive! He must be the one object of worship! But have you given Him this place in your life? Have not many other gods shared your love and veneration? We are commanded to love the Lord our GOD with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength. Have you ever risen to this? If not, plead guilty on count one, and pass on to the next.

b. **"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."**

Of gross idolatry, involving the actual adoration of images you may never have been guilty; but we read in Scripture of some who set up idols in their hearts. And these are as obnoxious to GOD as idols of wood, or stone, or metal. What are some of their names?

Self, Wealth, Fame, Pleasure, and many more. The devotees of these false gods are as truly idolaters as the heathen who bow down to carved and molten symbols. Are you guilty of such false worship? If so, bow in humiliation before the one true and living GOD, and cry again, "Guilty."

c. **"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."**

How widespread is the wicked practice of profanity!

"**Swear not at all**" is the command of Holy Scripture. Yet how few there are who have not sinned along this line. Remember, it is not always necessary to use vile, wicked language to profane the name of the Lord.

When that name is used carelessly, lightly, without due respect and reverence, this commandment is broken just as truly as when coupled with oaths and cursing. And many a one swears in thought whose lips have never been sullied by cursing. Can you honestly face this third commandment and cry, "Not guilty"?

d. "**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.**"

GOD claims one-seventh of man's time. He gives six days for useful labor and lawful pleasure. He demands that one day be set aside for Himself. "**The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.**" But what base ingratitude have we manifested here! The disregard for GOD's holy day is but an evidence of the rebellion of the human heart against all divine authority. What can you say for yourself as to this?

Are you guilty or not guilty? Answer as at the bar of eternal justice.

e. "**Honor thy father and thy mother.**"

One of the outstanding sins of the last days is "**disobedience to parents.**" Self-will is everywhere apparent. Where is the child that has always been dutiful and obedient? Lack of filial regard is scarcely considered a sin anymore. But He who on earth was subject to His mother and His foster-father is our example. How far short we have come of the perfection seen in Him!

Be absolutely honest with yourself and with GOD. If you have ever been a disobedient, willful child, do not attempt to justify your wrongdoing, but take the penitent sinner's place and own your guilt.

f. "**Thou shalt not kill.**"

Your hand may never have been stained with human blood. But what of that passage in the first epistle of John, "**Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.**" Judged by this high and holy standard, who is beyond condemnation here?

g. "**Thou shalt not commit adultery.**"

Many there are who have kept themselves physically pure from this gross sin, but how few have always been pure in thought; and the Lord JESUS told us that an unchaste look is adultery in the sight of GOD. This raises a standard that few, if any, have been able to wholly live up to.

If uncleanness in act or in thought has ever soiled your soul, do not try to excuse it, as do the psychologists of our degenerate times, but bow with the woman of the seventh chapter of Luke and the other woman of the eighth chapter of John at the feet of JESUS, own your guilt, and hear Him say, "**Thy sins are forgiven . . . Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**"

h. **"Thou shalt not steal."**

We are apt to think of stealing as involving large sums of money, or the purloining of valuable goods. But he is as really a thief who steals a trifle, as he who burglarizes a house or embezzles a million. Who is entirely guiltless of appropriating what was not rightfully his?

i. **"Thou shalt not bear false witness."**

Have your lips never been stained with a lie?

"The wicked," we are told, **". . . go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."**

It has often been noted that all children need to be taught to speak the truth. None ever need lessons in lying, for **"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."** And **"the heart is deceitful above all things."** Therefore, deceitful lips and practices. Whoever dares to say, "I am not guilty" on this count is but adding another lie to the many yet to be answered for.

j. **"Thou shalt not covet."**

This was the prohibition that convicted self-righteous Saul of Tarsus of his sinfulness.

He who could claim that as to outward observances he was guiltless of violations, found himself a slave to desires for what GOD had withheld from him, and so **"the commandment which was ordained to life,"** he found **"to be unto death."** For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence (covetousness, lust, evil desire) and thus he realized he was a helpless slave, unable to break the chains that bound him. Do you find yourself in the same state? Then let the voice of the law have its way. Own its authority and admit you are under condemnation.

Even One Offense Means Guilt

Now possibly you find, by careful examination, that you are not guilty on every count of these ten words.

But remember what the Holy Spirit has told us in James 2: 8-11: **"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."**

It has often been remarked that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Suppose you were suspended over a precipice by a chain of ten links.

How many would need to snap before you would drop into the abyss below?

And so, if you are guilty of the violation of one of the commandments, you are condemned by the law and therefore under its curse.

The law of GOD was never given to save men. It was given to magnify sin, to make it exceedingly sinful, to give it the specific character of transgression.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). But, blessed be GOD, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

He became man, and was born under the law. He obeyed that law perfectly, and was not subject to its penalty. But He went to the cross and endured its curse for us, that we who trust Him might be forever free from its just condemnation. **"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God", (John 3:18). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).**

"Free from the law, oh, happy condition,
JESUS hath bled, and there is remission;
Curs'd by the law and bruised by the fall,
CHRIST hath redeemed us once for all."

22. *"But must I not first make restitution for all the wrongs I have done to other people before I can come to CHRIST and be forgiven?"*

It is good that you are exercised as to wrongs done to others, but nowhere in the Word are we told we must make restitution first, though after we are saved we should certainly seek to do all in our power to straighten up any crooked things involving the rights of other people. It is to those already saved that the apostle writes, **"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth"** (Ephesians 4:28).

Consider the repentant thief on the cross. Surely he had been guilty of wronging many of his fellows!

Yet the moment he turned in faith to JESUS he was saved.

In the very nature of the case he could not make restitution to anyone for any crime committed. His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. It was not possible for him to do one thing to repair the many wrongs he had done. But through the merits of the holy Sufferer on that central cross, he was fully and freely pardoned and fitted for paradise. Had he been permitted to live, and to come down from that scaffold, undoubtedly he would have spent his life seeking to show the reality of his repentance, and wherever possible to make restitution for offences committed. But he was saved altogether apart from this; and that on the ground of the propitiatory work of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

You may be saved in the very same way. Then as a new man in CHRIST you can prove your love to Him by striving to live unselfishly and devotedly to His glory. And if you are able to put wrongs right, as between man and man, you will in so doing not only find joy yourself, but you will be a witness to others of the power of saving grace. But all such efforts to clean up the past will have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of your soul. You cannot even help GOD to save you. It is CHRIST's work alone that counts.

"Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at JESUS' feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete."

23. *"I humbly hope that I am a Christian, but I dare not be too sure. I cannot see how anyone can be certain until after the day of judgment."*

But the day of judgment will be too late!

If this matter is not settled before that great assize, you will then be irrevocably lost. Perhaps you are laboring under a misapprehension of what that judgment of the Great White Throne is for, and who is to be judged at that time.

It will be the judgment of sinners, when all who have lived and died out of CHRIST will be judged according to their works.

Christians will not stand there for judgment. Concerning them our Lord has said (John 5:24): **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."**

Here is a glorious truth revealed! The believer in the Lord JESUS will never have to be judged for his sins because CHRIST has been judged for them already.

On account of this GOD justifies freely and completely all who receive His Son in faith as their Saviour.

Look again at the verse quoted above. Notice that all who hear His Word and believe in Him have everlasting life. It is present possession. Therefore it is really unbelief that would lead one to say, "I hope I have eternal life because I believe in JESUS." Do not speak of humility when you are doubting GOD.

Take Him at His Word and know beyond all question that eternal life is yours.

"Though all unworthy, yet I will not doubt,
For him that cometh He will not cast out;
He that believeth, oh, the good news shout,
Hath everlasting life."

24. *"Must I not first be baptized before I can know that I am saved?"*

It is right and proper that you should be baptized. But baptism cannot effect the salvation of the soul.

It is, as Peter tells us, a figure of salvation, just as was the deliverance of Noah in the ark of old. But we are told distinctly, **"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"** (Ephesians 2:8). To the inquiring jailer at Philippi, who asked the definite question, **"What must I do to be saved?"** there came as definite an answer, **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."** (See Acts 16).

Baptism followed believing. It was the God-ordained way of confessing CHRIST as Saviour and Lord.

Many have been saved who could not possibly be baptized.

Consider again the case of the penitent thief, and be assured that GOD has never had two ways of saving sinners. The same grace that saved him will save you, when you trust in JESUS, whose blood alone cleanses from all sin.

There are a number of passages relating to baptism that may seem a little confusing. But rest your soul on the clear, definite statement concerning salvation by grace and as you study your Bible the perplexing portions will become clearer under the Holy Spirit's guidance. It is CHRIST's baptism of judgment that is the basis of our deliverance from death.

"Lord JESUS, we remember The travail of Thy soul;
When in Thy love's deep pity The waves did o'er Thee roll.
Baptized in death's dark waters, For us Thy blood was shed;
For us Thou Lord of glory Wast numbered with the dead."

25. *"If I could only be sure I was in the right church, I would feel secure; but there are so many different churches that I get all confused and upset."*

The church is not the ark of safety.

The church is the aggregate of all who believe in the Lord JESUS and who have therefore been baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body. This is not a mere organization, however ancient and venerable. If you were sure you were in the right church (some earthly organization), and trusted in that for salvation, you would be forever lost! Your trust must be in the Head of the church, the risen CHRIST. He is the only Saviour.

All ecclesiastical pretention is vain and to rest in any kind of church membership is an empty deception.

CHRIST alone is the ark that will carry you safely through all the storms of judgment.

No matter what denomination you turn to, you will never find salvation in allying yourself with it, but when you come to JESUS, you are then prepared to enjoy fellowship with His people.

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood."

26. *"I believe that JESUS died for me, but I am afraid to say I am saved, for I know I do not love GOD as much as I should."*

I question if anyone loves Him as He ought to be loved.

But it is a grave mistake to be looking in your own heart for love. Rather rejoice in the amazing love of GOD for you as expressed in the cross of CHRIST and in all His care for you through the years.

We say sometimes that love begets love. This is very true in regard to love for GOD. As you are occupied with His love, your own heart will respond to it and you will be able to say, **"We love him, because he first loved us."**

Looking into your own heart for a ground of confidence is like casting the anchor in the hold of a ship. Cast it outside and let it go down, down, down into the great, tossing ocean of strife and trouble, until it grips the rock itself.

CHRIST alone is the rock, and He is the manifestation of the infinite love of GOD for sinners.

The following lines are of uncertain authorship, but they are most blessedly true:

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
Were the world of parchment made,
Were every blade of grass a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love Of GOD above
Would drain that ocean dry;
Nor would the scroll Contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky!"

27. *"At times I feel assured that all is well, but at other times I tremble, fearing that I am mistaken."*

Mistaken about what?

- If you believe that JESUS died for you and rose again, there can be no mistake about that.
- If you have taken Him at His word, and have come to Him for peace and pardon, there can be no mistake about that.

- If you have opened your heart to Him, you can be certain He has come in to abide, for He has told you He would, and there can be no mistake about that.

Your trembling does not alter these basic facts.

A story is told of a vessel that was wrecked one stormy night by crashing on the rocks off the coast of Cornwall. All hands perished but one lone Irish lad, who was hurled by the waves upon the jagged slopes of a great towering ledge, where he managed to find a place of refuge. In the morning, watchers on the beach spied him through their glasses, and a boat was launched and rowed out to where he clung.

Almost dead with cold and exposure, he was tenderly lifted into the boat and brought ashore. After restoratives were applied, he was asked, "Lad, didn't ye tremble out there on the rock in all that storm?"

He replied brightly in his Irish way, "Trimble? Sure and I trimbled. But do you know, the rock never trimbled wanct all night."

If you have trusted CHRIST you are on the rock. While you may tremble, that does not invalidate GOD's salvation.

The rock remains firm and secure. Look away from self altogether and rely solely upon the Word of GOD.

"When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
On CHRIST, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

28. *"There have been times when I had very definite assurance of my salvation, and then I have lost it again. Why do these periods of darkness come?"*

There may be various reasons for these periods of darkness. The greatest saints have at times known the same experiences. They may possibly be accounted for by great mental weariness and physical weakness.

The adversary of our souls is always ready to take advantage of such conditions, and ever seeks to make us forget the clear, definite promises of GOD on which we have rested when well and strong.

There is an authentic story told of an aged minister, who had preached the Gospel in clearness and power during all his public life, but who, when he was suffering at times, found himself greatly beset by doubt and uncertainty.

Mentioning the matter to his wife, she drew his attention to John 5:24. As he read the precious words again:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," he burst into a joyous laugh, and said, "How strange that I should ever forget words like these, when I have preached on them myself for years."

Sometime later the wife came into the room and found her aged husband leaning over the side of the bed, holding the open Bible beneath his couch.

She exclaimed, "Whatever are you doing?"

He answered, "Satan has been after me again and as he is the prince of darkness, I took it that he would be in the darkest place in the room, which is under the bed, and so I was just showing him John 5:24, and the moment he saw it he ceased to trouble me."

We can quite understand the mental weakness that the story suggests, but the principle is blessedly true.

When the adversary of your soul comes against you seeking to destroy your confidence, show him what GOD has said.

But there may be other reasons which account for the loss of that blessed assurance you once enjoyed.

The Apostle Peter suggests such in his second epistle, chapter 1, verse 9. In the previous verses he has been stressing the importance of spiritual growth, and the believer is instructed to be diligent in adding to **"your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

But, on the other hand, if the believer is neglectful of these things, he cannot expect the divine blessing to rest upon him; and so we are told, **"He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."**

There is something very solemn here. Notice, he was purged from his old sins, but through indolence and carelessness he has lost the assurance of this. The blessedness of bygone days has faded from his memory.

The Christian life is never static. One must either grow in grace, or there will be backsliding and deterioration. **"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"** (Proverbs 14:14). He who does not go on with GOD, but allows himself to drift, is almost sure to lose the joy of his salvation.

Examine yourself as to this matter, and if you find that you have been careless in regard to the study of your Bible, careless as to your prayer life, careless as to the proper use of the means of grace, confess all this to GOD and give diligence to walk with Him in days to come, that you may develop a stronger Christian character.

Last of all, let me remind you that any known sin condoned in your life will rob you of the joy and assurance of your salvation. **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."** Many a one who has gone on happily with CHRIST for some time, has later toyed with sin and become ensnared and entrapped into something that has so grieved the Spirit of GOD that he has lost his sense of acceptance in CHRIST. See to it that there is no unconfessed sin in your life. Be sure that you are not tolerating any secret sin which is draining you of spiritual power and hindering your communion with GOD.

Worldliness, carnal indulgence of any kind, unfaithfulness as to your Christian responsibilities, unseemly levity, the harboring of malice or ill-will toward others - all or any of these things are calculated to destroy your sense of assurance. If guilty of any of them, face things honestly in the presence of GOD, remembering that He has said, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

Do not accept the suggestion of the tempter that you are powerless to break away from evil habits.

Remember it is not a question of your own power, but when you honestly repent of the wrongdoing and turn to the Lord for divine help to overcome your besetting sin, He will undertake for you. As you reckon yourself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our Lord, the Holy Spirit will work in and through you, causing you to triumph over tendencies toward evil, and enabling you to live victoriously to the glory of the GOD who has saved you.

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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