

FULL ASSURANCE

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, the real basic ground for this assurance, not only of the individual salvation of each believer but of the eventual carrying out of the divine program in its entirety, rests solely upon the resurrection of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

This is emphasized by the Apostle Paul in his great sermon addressed to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill, as recorded in Acts 17. There, after pointing out the unreasonableness and wicked folly of idolatry, he declared the truth as to the Unknown God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and added:

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

He had himself received ocular proof of that resurrection of which he spoke. The risen CHRIST had appeared to him, as he fell to the ground on the Damascus road, overcome by a supernatural light from Heaven. And at this very time there were living many witnesses of the greatest miracle of all the ages, for when writing to the Corinthian church, some years later than his visit to Athens, he enumerated over five hundred who could bear positive testimony to the resurrection of our Lord, **"of whom,"** he added, **"the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep"** (I Corinthians 15:5-6).

Horace Bushnell declared that the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST is the best attested fact of ancient history. Think of the authoritative sources for any other outstanding event, and compare them with the proofs of the resurrection, and you will realize the fairness of this remark.

The writers of the four Gospels were men of the sincerest piety and probity, as their works attest. They unite in giving unqualified testimony to the resurrection of CHRIST.

The other New Testament writers - Paul, James, Peter, and Jude - definitely mention or clearly imply the same glorious fact. They all speak of CHRIST JESUS as the living One, who once died for our sins. Concerning what other ancient historical event can the testimony of so many eyewitnesses be cited?

Even the enemies of the Gospel bore unwilling witness to the resurrection by their clumsy efforts to interpret to their advantage the empty sepulcher on that Resurrection Sunday. They knew JESUS had predicted that He would rise again in three days, and so they went to Pilate demanding that steps be taken to prevent His disciples from stealing the body of their Master. Pilate gave them a guard and commanded the sealing of the tomb, and grimly added, "**Make it as sure as ye can!**" But all their efforts were in vain.

When the appointed hour struck, angelic hands broke the Roman imperial seal and rolled back the stone revealing an empty crypt - the body was not there.

Certainly none of His foes rifled that grave. They were determined to keep the body of JESUS there as long as time should last. And if they could have produced that body later, in order to disprove the message of the resurrection, certainly they would have done so. And it is preposterous to credit the story circulated by the wily priesthood that His disciples came by night, and stole away His body, for even they "**knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.**"

The amazing thing is that His enemies remembered what His friends had forgotten. The empty tomb was as great a shock to those who loved JESUS, as it was a fearful portent to those who hated Him.

Christ's Bodily Resurrection Real

Only the personal appearances of the risen CHRIST convinced them of the reality of His resurrection.

The forty days during which He appeared to them on many occasions, instructing them concerning the kingdom of GOD, furnished ample proof that He had really triumphed over death, and this glorious fact gave them that confidence which enabled them to stand against all opposition, witnessing to every man that GOD had raised His body from the grave. They beheld Him as He was taken up from them into Heaven in that same body, and after receiving the Pentecostal enduement they went about bearing witness to the resurrection of their Lord with great power.

This is the outstanding message of the church. He who died for our sins lives again for our justification.

The resurrection of the material body of flesh and bones is the proof that GOD is satisfied with the redemptive work of His Son. It declares that GOD can now be just and the Justifier of him who believes on the Lord JESUS. To say that though CHRIST is dead physically He is alive spiritually will not do. That might be true of any man.

It would be no evidence of divine satisfaction in His work.

Some years ago an eloquent New York preacher, who denies the physical resurrection of the Saviour, declared "The body of Jesus still sleeps in an unknown Syrian tomb, but His soul goes marching on!"

Many applauded this as a wonderful explanation of the influence of JESUS down through the ages. But it is utterly false and fallacious. If the body of JESUS still rests in the grave, He was not what He professed to be and is powerless to save.

This heresy (for heresy it is) is not new. It became prevalent in certain circles even in apostolic days, as I Corinthians 15 proves. In the Corinthian church there were some who accepted the teaching of the Sadducees and denied the reality of a literal resurrection. Sternly, Paul challenges them in the well-known words:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Corinthians 15:12-19).

Here is sturdy logic indeed, and withal inspired by the Holy Spirit. If CHRIST be not risen we have no Gospel to preach, and there is no message of deliverance for poor, lost sinners held captive in chains of iniquity. Faith in a dead CHRIST will not save anyone.

The Gospel is the dynamic of GOD unto salvation because it proclaims a living, loving Redeemer who is waiting to manifest His power on behalf of all who trust in Him.

What the Resurrection of CHRIST Attests

Let us then notice carefully what the Word of GOD tells us about this glorious truth.

1. The resurrection of the Lord JESUS attests the truthfulness of His claims concerning His divine person and mission.

To His enemies He said, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" But He spoke of the temple of His body. To His disciples He declared, "**No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.**"

He definitely told them that the Son of man must be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and He added, "**They shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again**" (Luke 18:33).

Therefore if He failed to come out of the tomb in a resurrected, physical body of flesh and bones, all that He claimed regarding Himself and His saving power was invalidated. But He did not fail! It was not possible that He would be held by death. He fulfilled His word by rising again on the third day.

2. His resurrection attests the truth of the prophetic scriptures.

The Old Testament abounds in prophecies of Messiah's death and resurrection. In Psalm 16, David foretold concerning Him, "**Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell** [Sheol, or Hades, the abode of the dead]; **neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**" Both Peter and Paul show us that this passage had its fulfillment in the resurrection of CHRIST.

Isaiah wrote seven hundred years before His birth, "**When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand**" (Isaiah 53:10).

Here is a remarkable statement. Death was not to end the activities of the Lord's Servant. After He had given His life as an oblation for sin, He was to prolong His days, and so in resurrection be the Administrator of GOD's great plan for the blessing of mankind.

3. The resurrection of the Lord JESUS was the display of omnipotent power on our behalf.

In Ephesians 1:17-23 we have the apostle's prayer for all believers.

He asks that the eyes of their hearts might be opened, in order that they might know the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and the "**exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.**"

The same mighty energy that was put forth to revivify the body of JESUS, and raise Him from among the dead, is the power that quickens dead souls into newness of life and energizes children of GOD so as to enable them to live even on earth a heavenly life of victory over sin, while they walk in fellowship with Him under the control of His Holy Spirit.

4. The resurrection of CHRIST is the proof that the sin question has been settled to GOD's satisfaction.

On the cross our sins were laid upon Him. He voluntarily accepted responsibility for them. He bore them in His own body on the tree. "**He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for** [or, on account of] **our justification**" (Romans 4:25).

When GOD raised His Son from death it was His way of expressing His recognition of the perfection of His finished work. If sin had not been forever put away, He would never have come forth from that grave; but having paid for us the uttermost farthing, death had no claim upon Him. By raising Him GOD declared to all created intelligences His full approval of and His acceptance of the work of His blessed Son.

5. *CHRIST's resurrection is therefore the believing sinner's assurance that his record is now clear.*

GOD Himself has no charge against him who puts his trust in JESUS. So we read in Romans 8:32-34:

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Observe that no voice can now be raised to condemn the one who rests in CHRIST's finished work. His death and resurrection effectually forbid the raising of the sin question again, as far as any believer is concerned. The resurrection is like a receipt for full payment made. On the cross the mighty debt we owed was settled. A risen CHRIST tells us that every claim has been met and GOD holds nothing against the believer.

"Now we see in CHRIST's acceptance
But the measure of our own,
He who lay beneath our sentence
Seated high upon the throne."

6. *His resurrection is the token that through Him GOD will judge the world.*

That judgment is based on man's attitude toward the One whom the Father delights to honor. If men receive Him as Lord and Saviour they will never have to come into judgment for their sins, because He was judged in their room and stead. But if men refuse Him and spurn His grace, they will not only have to answer before Him for all their sins, but in addition to all the rest, they will be judged for rejecting Him who died to save them.

7. *It is His resurrection which alone gives validity to the Gospel message and delivers the believer from the fear of death.*

Turning now to II Timothy 1: 8-10, we read this important admonition:

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Do not, I beg of you, read these words carelessly.

Go over them again and again, until their force and their solemnity and their preciousness have gripped your soul.

Our entire salvation hangs on the truth that our Saviour, JESUS CHRIST, has abolished (that is, annulled the power of) death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. He went down into the dark stream of death. All its waves and billows rolled over Him. But He came up in resurrection life never to die again. And so for us the waters of this Jordan have been rolled back, and there is a dry way through death for all who believe. Listen to His triumphant words, **"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"** (John 11:25-26).

Does not your heart reply, "Yes, Lord, I do believe; I rest my soul forevermore upon Thy sure testimony, and I confess Thee as my Saviour and my Lord"?

GOD's Assurance That CHRIST Arose

It is thus that GOD gives assurance unto all men in that He hath raised CHRIST from the dead.

If Satan should try to discourage you by occupying you with your own unworthiness and your manifest shortcomings, do not attempt to argue with him, but look up to the throne of GOD and there contemplate the risen One who once hung a bleeding Victim on the cross of shame, and whose lifeless body once lay in Joseph's new tomb. Remember, He could not be yonder in the glory if one sin remained unsettled.

Therefore, every believer can sing with assurance:

"The Lord is risen, with Him we also rose,
And in His death see vanquished all our foes.
The Lord is risen, we stand beyond the doom
Of all our sins, through JESUS' empty tomb."

The young convert was right, who said, when this truth was revealed to him by the Spirit:

"If anyone is ever to be kept out of Heaven for my sins, it will have to be JESUS, for He took them all upon Himself and made Himself responsible for them. But He is in Heaven already, never to be turned out, so now I know that I am secure as long as He lives, the One who once died in my place."

This expresses it exactly, for faith is just saying "Amen" to what GOD has made known in His Word. The believer sets to his seal that GOD is true, and so rests everything for eternity on the fact that CHRIST, who died for our sins on the cross of shame, has been raised to endless life.

It is noticeable that the entire Trinity of the Godhead is concerned in this marvelous event, and each divine Person participated in our Lord's rising from the dead.

As we have already seen, His resurrection is attributed to Himself: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again." Again He said, **"Destroy this temple; and in three days I will raise it up."**

It is also attributed to the Father: "**The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.**" The Holy Spirit is likewise recognized as the direct Agent in bringing to pass this stupendous miracle:

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

And so each Person of the Godhead is concerned in proclaiming the testimony of JESUS and His resurrection to men and women everywhere - those who are dead in trespasses and sins, until quickened by the same mighty power that raised up our blessed Lord and set Him at GOD's right hand in the highest Heaven.

"Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest,
Cannot confound or doubt Him or deny:
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand then on that side, for on this am I."

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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