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The Witness of the Spirit

By Ella K. Crossley

People want to know for certain about the most important thing in the world—the salvation of their souls. There is no rest of heart where there is doubt. No “think so,” no “hope so,” is enough. We must know. Certainty that after our repentance and turning from all sin, Christ has blotted out all the past through His atoning grace, actually fulfilled His promise to us—to me—is the only way to have a sure foundation on which to stand. We must have a “know so” salvation.

How to get such knowledge is a perplexity to many. And yet the way is easy. Have you noticed how simply children believe the Saviour? It is because their minds and hearts are open to believe and receive Him instead of being filled with unbelief and warped by sin. Often the heathen, hearing the Gospel once or twice only, receive Christ just as simply and surely. We do so much to make things difficult for ourselves. It is a thousand pities that we allow ourselves to become the victims of our own doubts. The habit grows and then the truth seems hard to accept. There is much to help us in the old hymn, “Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near.” Bury your doubts and start again.

To experience any work of grace in the soul, it is necessary to enter into direct touch with God Himself. Then the witnessing Spirit will make us aware of His working.

John Wesley explained it in this way:—“By the witness of the Spirit we mean an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ has loved me, that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God. I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by an outward voice. No, nor always by an inward voice, although He may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that He always applies to the heart (although He often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But He so works upon the soul by His immediate influence and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and the troubled waves subside and there is sweet calm, the heart resting in Jesus, and the sinner being entirely satisfied that all his iniquities are forgiven and his sins covered.” There is no doubt as to the truth of this, for it has happened to millions down the ages and will yet happen to every sincere seeker.

When the Rev. Thos. Collins was a young man he heard someone crying and imploring for mercy. As he entered the Chapel he found

it was a friend who, like himself, had let religion slip. Together with the young man he began to pour out his soul in pleadings for salvation. The prayers of both were answered and were soon exchanged for bursts of praise and holy rapture. Were men to-day to put themselves in the way of coming under such deep conviction of sin, there is little doubt that they would soon get the same witness of the Spirit to their salvation. Where is the burning desire, the needed earnestness? Are men not toying with their souls and so not finding the salvation and the assurance they might enjoy? “Seek” with the greatest earnestness and abandon, “and ye shall find.”

Scripture makes the fact of the witness of the Spirit very clear. One of the reasons why John wrote his first Epistle was because it was so necessary for us to KNOW, that is, to have a sure and certain knowledge of what God has done for us and in us. Over a dozen times John mentions this knowledge (mark them all carefully) and then calls this knowledge “the witness of the Spirit.” Here are a few of the passages:—we must know in our inner consciousness why Christ died (1 John 3:5); that we have passed from death unto life (3:14); that we are of the truth (3:19); that He abides in us and we in Him (3:24 and 4:13); and that He hears and answers prayer (5:15). Such witness is a calm, sure knowledge, not an emotion, though it may stir the emotions, but a conviction.

It is not only John who speaks of this knowledge, for it is described variously in different parts of Scripture. One very significant statement is given in Isaiah 32:17, “The effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever.” Here is one of the keys to assurance—righteousness, being right with God. When heart and life are right, rest and assurance follow. They cannot be reversed. Some fail here. Everything may not be right. God cannot give the assurance till all is clear between the soul and Him. Any sense of condemnation necessarily prevents it.

In his Epistles, Paul describes the Gospel as coming in **much assurance** (1 Thess. 1:5), and **full assurance** (Col. 2:2). The word denotes **full conviction** and is translated **fully persuaded** in Romans 4:21. In his testimony to Timothy he says, “I know Whom I have believed, and am **persuaded** that He is able to keep” (2 Tim. 1:12). The word **persuaded** is the same as that used in 1 John 3:19, “We know that we are of the truth and shall **assure** our hearts before Him.”

The writer to the Hebrews describes this experience as **confidence** (Heb. 3:6, and 10:35), and the same word occurs in 1 John 2:28, 3:21,

(Continued on Page 4)

“Surely I Come Quickly”

By Horatius Bonar

Church of the living God, hast thou heard the voice which spoke from Heaven, “Surely I come quickly.” And hast thou responded to it gladly, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus?” Does his absence lay heavily upon thy spirit? Does the promise of His return cheer thee? And is the thought of His speedy coming a most welcome hope in these days, when men’s hearts are failing them for fear? Then how is the prospect operating? Is it full of quickening, animating, stimulating power? Is it kindling love into greater warmth? Is it increasing the intensity of your earnestness? Is it making the separation between you and the world a more decided thing? Is it rebuking idleness, and sloth, and vanity, and frivolity, and levity, and selfishness? Has it uprooted and destroyed in you covetousness and worldliness, those two master-sins of this evil age? And has it made you liberal and generous, enlarging your heart to give—to give with no sparing hand so long as time remaineth? Ah, brethren in Christ, we are surely far behind! We are dreaming when we should be working; we are pleasing and self-indulging the flesh when we should be serving the Lord. We sit idly in our tents with weapons sheathed and banners folded, when we should be in the thickest of the fight; for the world’s last conflict is begun, and the armies are mustering for the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

And you, ye men of the earth, whose portion is not among the things unseen, have you heard the voice that speaks to you from Heaven: “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come?” Has the warning pierced your ears and broken your mad security? How long do you count it safe to remain unreconciled? And what, short of reconciliation with God, will avail you in the day when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth? And when is He to arise? Have you ascertained the time, that you sit so easily and unalarmed? The long pent-up winds are beginning to break loose; and the sudden bursts of tempest that have overswept the earth these few years past, are precursors of the world’s last desolating storm, and behind that tempest there is the Judge of quick and dead; and behind the Judge there are the everlasting burnings! Has this prospect no terrors for you, and have these terrors no urgency to compel you to consider the overwhelming necessity of betaking yourself to the provided shelter, ere another day, with all its gloomy uncertainties, shall have dawned upon you?

Are you ready? Are you hidden in the

(Continued on Page 8)