

FULL ASSURANCE

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CHAPTER SIX FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE

ONE OF THE LITERATI of this world has told us that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." Regarding some phases of life this may be true, but concerning the eternal future the Word of GOD tells us that in our unregenerate state we were in a hopeless condition.

In Ephesians 2:11-12, we read: **"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."**

But when one trusts in CHRIST all this is changed. From that moment on, the believer has a **"good hope through grace."** In Romans 8:24-25, we are told: **"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."**

Note, this does not say we hope to be saved, but we are saved by, or perhaps more properly, in hope. He who has the full assurance of faith and of understanding, and knows on the authority of the word of Him who cannot lie that he is already justified and eternally saved now, has the hope set before him of the redemption of his body at the return of the Lord JESUS, when he will be conformed fully to the image of GOD's Son. This hope buoys him up as he faces the manifold trials and vicissitudes of life, and gives him courage to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

The opening section of the fifth chapter of Romans may be pertinently quoted here (vv. 1-5):

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

We have already seen that our assurance is not based upon an emotional experience, but on a **"Thus saith the Lord."** But we should by no means belittle experience. The renewed man enjoys true Christian experience which is produced by the knowledge of CHRIST as the One who undertakes for him in all the varied trials of the way. These are designed by GOD to work together for the perfecting of Christian character. It is therefore a great mistake to shrink from trouble, or to pray to be kept free from tribulation.

Praying for Patience

The story has often been told of the younger Christian who sought the counsel and help of an older brother, a minister of CHRIST "Pray for me," he entreated, "that I may be given more patience." Down on their knees they dropped and the minister pleaded with GOD, "O Lord, send this brother more tribulations and trials!"

"Hold," exclaimed the other, "I did not ask you to pray that I might have tribulations but patience."

"I understood you," was the reply, "but we are told in the Word that **'tribulation worketh patience.'**"

It is a lesson most of us are slow to learn. But note the steps as given in the passage above: tribulation, patience, experience, hope; and so the soul is unashamed, basking in the enjoyment of the divine love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit who dwells within.

With this before us, it ought to be easy to understand what is meant when in Hebrews 6:10-12 we read of **"the full assurance of hope."**

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

As one walks with GOD, and learns to suffer and endure as seeing Him who is invisible, eternal things become more real than the things of time and sense, which are everything to the merely natural man.

Thus there comes to the heart a trustful calm, a full assurance, based not alone upon the revealed Word but upon a personal knowledge of communion with GOD, which gives implicit confidence as to this present life and all that lies ahead.

One was once asked, "How do you know that JESUS lives - that He has actually been raised from the dead?"

"Why," was the answer, "I have just come from a half-hour interview with Him. I know I cannot be mistaken."

And this testimony might be multiplied by millions who, through all the Christian centuries, have borne witness to the reality of the personal companionship of CHRIST JESUS by the Spirit, drawing out the heart in love and devotion, and answering prayer in such a way as to make it impossible to doubt His tender care.

The Young Man Convinced

The late Robert T. Grant told me that on one occasion, while traveling, he was sitting in the Pullman, reading his Bible, and he noticed the people around; many with nothing to do. He opened up his bag and got out some Gospel tracts, and after distributing them, he sat down again. A young man left his own seat and moved over to the preacher, and asked, "What did you give this to me for?"

"Why, it is a message from Heaven for you, to give you rest in your soul," replied Mr. Grant.

The young man sneered and said, "I used to believe in that stuff years ago, but when I went to school and got educated, I threw it all overboard. I found out there's nothing to it."

"Will you let me read to you something I was going over just a moment ago?" Mr. Grant asked. "**The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.**' Is there nothing in that, young man? I have known the blessedness of that for many years. Is there nothing in it?"

The young man replied, "Go on, read what comes next."

"**He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**' Is there nothing in that?"

"Pardon me, sir, let me hear some more," said the young man.

"**'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.'** Is there nothing in that?"

Then the young man cried, "Oh, forgive me, sir, there is everything in that! My mother died with those words upon her lips and besought me to trust her Saviour, but I have gotten far away from Him. You have brought it all back. Tell me more."

And as GOD's servant opened up the truth as to the way of salvation, the young man who had been so careless and unbelieving was convicted of his sin, and led to trust in CHRIST and confess Him as his own Saviour right there in that Pullman car.

Yes, there is everything in the blessed companionship of CHRIST, the Lord, both in life and in death, and it is this that gives the full assurance of hope.

But, unhappily, this assurance may become clouded and in a measure lost by spiritual negligence and carelessness in regard to prayer and feeding upon the Word.

Therefore the need of such an exhortation as we have before us, which urges us to "**shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end**"!

The Unhappy Backslider

Peter speaks of some who through waywardness have gotten so far out of fellowship with GOD that they have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This is a sad state to be in. It is what is commonly called in the Old Testament "backsliding"! "**The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways**" (Proverbs 14:14).

An old preacher I knew as a boy used to say, "Backsliding always begins in the knee." And this is very true indeed. Neglect of prayer will soon dull the keen edge of one's spiritual sensibilities, and make it easy for a believer to drift into worldliness and carnality, as a result of which his soul's eyesight will become dimmed and he will lose the heavenly vision.

The backslider is shortsighted. He sees the things of this poor world very vividly, but he cannot see afar off, as he could in the days of his former, happy state. To such comes the exhortation, "**Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.**"

Get back to your Bible and back to your knees.

Let the Holy Spirit reveal to your penitent heart the point of departure where you left your first love, and judge it definitely before GOD.

Acknowledge the sins and failures that have caused eternal things to lose their preciousness.

Cry with David, as you confess your wanderings, "**Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.**"

And He who is married to the backslider will give you again to know the blessedness of fellowship with Himself, and once more your peace will flow as a river and the full assurance of hope be yours.

As you walk with GOD your faith will grow exceedingly, your love unto all saints will be greatly enlarged, and the hope laid up for you in heaven will fill the vision of your opened eyes, as your heart is occupied with the Lord Himself who has restored your soul. For it is well to remember that He Himself is our hope. He has gone back to the Father's house to prepare a place for us and He has promised to come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also.

This is a purifying hope. In I John 3:1-3 the Spirit of GOD tells us so: "**Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**" The third verse has been translated, "**Every man that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself,**" etc.

As we are occupied, not with the signs of the times, or simply with prophetic truth, but with the coming One who is our hope, we must of necessity become increasingly like Him. We shall learn to hate the things that He cannot approve, and so, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, we shall seek to be perfected in holiness as we await His imminent return.

"So with this hope to cheer us,
And with the Spirit's seal
That all our sins are pardoned
Through Him whose stripes did heal;
As strangers and as pilgrims,
No place on earth we own,
But wait and watch as servants
Until our Lord shall come."

This hope will be the mainspring of our loyalty to Him whom we long to see. We are exhorted to be like servants who wait for their Lord, and are occupied for Him, that whether He come at morn, at noon or at night, we may be ready always to meet Him, and so not be ashamed before Him at His coming. **"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing"** (Matthew 24:46).

No wonder this is called a **"blessed hope,"** as in Titus 2:11-14:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The Great School of Grace

It is not merely that we are now saved by grace but we are also in the school of grace, here to learn how to behave ourselves in such a manner as to have the constant approval of Him who has made us His own.

And so grace is here presented as our instructor, teaching us the importance of the denial of self, and the refusal of all that is contrary to the mind of GOD, in order that we may manifest by clean and holy lives the reality of the faith that we profess, while we have ever before our souls that blessed hope of the appearing of the glory of our great GOD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

At His first coming He died to redeem us from all lawlessness, that He might purify us unto Himself a people of His own possession, zealously engaged in all good works.

At His second coming He will redeem our bodies and make us wholly like Himself in all things. What a wonderful hope this is, and as we live in the power of it what assurance we have of the unchanging love of Him whose face we soon shall see!

Often when the dead in CHRIST are being laid away, we are reminded that we commit their precious bodies to the grave **"in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection."**

And this is a most blessed truth.

For when the hope of the Lord's return is realized, the saints of all past ages who died in faith will share with those who may be alive upon the earth at that time, in the wonderful change that will then take place when **"the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord In the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

How bright a hope is this and who knows how soon it may be realized!

Let us not falter, nor give way to doubt or unbelief, but give diligence in maintaining **"the full assurance of hope"** until it gives place to full realization. Often we may feel that **"hope deferred maketh the heart sick,"** but the consummation is sure.

Meantime let us be busy in our MASTER's service, and particularly in trying to win others, bringing them to share with us in the joy of GOD's salvation. When at last our little day of service here is ended, not one of us will feel that we have given up too much for CHRIST, or be sorry that we have labored too earnestly for His glory; but, I fear, many of us would then give worlds, were they ours, if we could only go back to earth and live our lives over again, in sincerity and unselfishness, seeking alone the honor of Him who has redeemed us.

It is better to be saved so as by fire than not to be saved at all, but surely none of us would desire to meet our MASTER empty-handed, but the rather to **"come . . . with rejoicing"** into His presence, when our hope is fulfilled, bringing our sheaves with us.

Let us then remember that we have

"Only a little while to tell the wondrous story
Of Him who made our guilt and curse His own!
Only a little while till we behold His glory,
And sit with Him upon His throne."

And so may we ever heed His command, **"Occupy till I come"!**

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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