

## LIFE BY THE SON



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PRACTICAL LESSONS  
IN EXPERIMENTAL HOLINESS

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DR. DONALD GREY BARNHOUSE

*Bible Teacher, Dr. Barnhouse & the Bible*

Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Inc.  
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## Biographical Information

**D**onald Grey Barnhouse was, for half a century, one of the most widely acclaimed American preachers. Scholarly exposition and a popular approach marked his teaching. An unyielding faith, devotion to Christ, innovation, and great energy marked his ministry.

Although some found him overly abrupt and sometimes controversial, his zeal for the kingdom of God made him an exciting and captivating speaker. His elocutionary ability sprung from his careful speech, friendly manner, vivid analogies and most of all from his faithful exposition of the Scriptures. He was able to make the Bible relevant to the modern man. In fact his sermons have grown no less relevant to those who hear or read them today.

Dr. Barnhouse was one of the pioneers of radio preaching in the 1920s. Eventually he launched his own network program, The Bible Study Hour. In 1949 he began his famous study of Romans which continued each week for nearly 12 years until his death. This broadcast continues to air as Dr. Barnhouse & the Bible.

The written word was also part of Barnhouse's ministry. He wrote many articles and authored more than a dozen books. He was founder and editor-in-chief of Eternity Magazine. He displayed remarkable insight in his evaluation of the meaning of events for church and nation.

For over 30 years Dr. Barnhouse conducted a weekly Bible study class in New York City. More than 500 people attended. The demand for his services as a speaker and a conference leader was international.

His ministry was a varied one. For 33 years until his death he served as the pastor of Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church. There his influence was realized in many young lives that were directed into the ministry and the foreign mission field.

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## Foreword

**T**he Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals recently finished a construction effort at 1716 Spruce Street in Philadelphia. This is the grand building given to the ministry, a result of Dr. Barnhouse. The work even resulted in a newly remodeled Barnhouse Library, set up for the receiving of guests. The taking of something grand, yet broken is much of what we are to see in this title.

Dr. Barnhouse leads us through the assurance, the foundation of our holiness. He insightfully says “If the Word of God contained your name, you would always have the fear that the message was addressed to some one else of the same name.” “But God has given His Word to us in such terms that every one who hears or reads may know that God is speaking directly to his own need, and I want that this should be in your consciousness as you follow the word that God has given me for you.” He reminds that “The work of salvation has been done in our hearts and that it has been done for ever” And “The Word of God is the guarantee of our salvation and the ground of our assurance.”

From assurance, Dr. Barnhouse reminds us

where the knowledge of God comes from. First, he states the frighteningly obvious, “No one can ever know Biblical holiness until they know that salvation is secure.” And this knowledge is “The truth behind all this is that we have been counted righteous, just, and holy in Christ, and thus we are called saints, which is the equivalent of ‘the righteous ones,’ ‘the justified ones,’ ‘the holy ones.’”

All of this leads to our cleansing, “for the cleansing of the believer from his daily sins of omission and commission is the gateway to the maintenance of an unbroken fellowship with God which will enable us to have less sins to confess to God, and more periods of unbroken fellowship and victory in Christ.” But it’s not just some worldly sin he speaks of, but urges to go on to “Consider the difference between sin and sins.” And provides continued assurance, knowledge in our cleansing by reminding us that “Christ undertook to appease the wrath and to silence it forever. So wrath is now effectually stilled in virtue of Christ’s blood sacrifice which has been offered.” Or “put very simply, this means that the moment a person is born again, forgiveness has been provided for all the sins he ever has committed or for all the sins that he ever will commit and of course of his life. This is the true meaning of justification.”

Then Dr. Barnhouse reminds us of the joy and

work involved in the walk, the walk of the Christian life. He points out “unhappy the Christian life that does not have its chimes in it somewhere during the day, to stop the earthly activities while we listen to the heavenly peal, think upon the Savior a moment, talk directly to Him, listen to His voice in some verse that He will recall to mind, and then step on into the work and the activity of the moment.” “We must have such relationship with Christ, such constant communication with Him, that no matter what difficulty may arise in the course of the preaching or the meetings of the day, we can turn to Him and know that we have met Him, and that our problems have been fully dealt with.”

This is teaching that is often missing from many of today’s pulpits. Here Dr. Barnhouse speaks of sin and our need for a savior. This is not teaching that can’t be found today, but it is teaching that feels so removed from many a Sunday sermon on 3 steps to raising happy kids or 7 ways to have a good marriage. But Dr. Barnhouse was fighting it even then. He wished to recommend men “forsake the ministry rather than stand in any pulpit of the land with some ethical message that raises from the naturally good elements in the old nature which is nevertheless, alien to the life of God as it is in Christ Jesus.”

We need to be encouraged by Dr. Barnhouse’s

word here. We need to be emboldened to stand for and on the Word of God as he did. And we need to be as equipped as he would have had us, so we can have the life by the Son he speaks of. May you have this life!

Grace, mercy and peace,  
Robert Brady  
Executive Vice President

“I often tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembles under me!”

## PREFACE

THESE are practical messages. It will be impossible for you to read them without seeing that they come out of many experiences of living, and learning to have all “Life...by the...Son” (Gal. 2:20).

This life, Paul says, is lived *in the flesh*. But, praise God, it is not necessary to live according to the flesh.

The author must say that he is yet a learner in this school of living by the Son. He has seen his own nine-year-old child carefully teaching the three-year-old sister letters. Because the nine-year-old teaches what he knows, it does not mean that he himself has nothing more to learn. So, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended...but to my younger brethren in the faith I can teach a few of the lessons that have been learned along the road.

One special word must be said about these studies. They have been carefully thought over, during a period of years, and were finally given as the Bible Readings in the great tent at the English Keswick. There thousands heard them and they went forth in the printed report to every part of the world. The

fourth of these studies, "Walking," was printed with a foreword which should be repeated here. The gist of it concerned the fact that, as I had planned the messages in anticipation of the Convention, I had used a different fourth message, abandoned it for another, and still had no liberty. "Finally, leaving the small tent in the middle of the Missionary reception on Wednesday afternoon, I went to my room with the certainty that I must prepare an entirely fresh message for delivery on the morrow. With a natural reticence that was almost repugnance I prepared the very personal message that follows, and which came to me with impelling force. It was received in such a way that I knew that it had been blessed to many hearts. Undoubtedly the Lord had a special purpose in it."

Since then several months have gone by and word has come from various parts of the world, telling of blessing that has been received because of the very simplicity of the messages. They are to be read, then, not as pretentious essays, but as warm messages for the heart, that, together we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

D. G. B.

# I

## ASSURANCE

### The Practical Foundation of Experimental Holiness

SOME time ago I was invited to speak to a group of society people in a meeting that was held in rooms of one of the great metropolitan hotels. The chairman rose at the beginning of the meeting and announced that a telegram had been received, addressed to a certain man, and that it could be obtained by his coming to the front of the room. The young man came forward and received his message, to the accompaniment of a little polite laughter and some genteel applause. A few moments later I was introduced as the speaker of the evening. I told that audience that I had a message for each one of them, as directly addressed to each individual, as the telegram had been to the young man. The same is true of the messages which are to be given here.

If the Word of God contained your name, you would always have the fear that the message was addressed to some one else of the same name. There are some fourteen pages of John Smiths in the New York

telephone directory, and even if one's name belonged to a rare group, there would always be the possibility of mistaken identity if the Gospel message had your name on it. But God has given His Word to us in such terms that every one who hears or reads may know that God is speaking directly to his own need, and I want that this should be in your consciousness as you follow the word that God has given me for you.

The function of the true minister of Jesus Christ is to preach the message that is given to him by the Lord. The sceptic may wonder whether God has ever spoken by human lips, but those who have been saved by the Lord, have been given the ear of the sheep to know the Master's voice; and they will always recognise His tones, through whatever lips they may fall, and will not follow another. When we receive the call from God to minister His Word, we are responsible only to Him for our faithfulness in preaching that which He gives us to preach. This was the word which came to Jonah, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2), and there can be no fruitfulness apart from obedience to this Divine command. The Lord must furnish the message; we must deliver it. If a boy asked for a job delivering telegrams, he would not be allowed to select the messages which he would deliver. He could not ask for those messages which announced weddings,

births, and advances in the stock market, and refuse those which told of loss, illness, and death. His function would be to take every message that came and deliver it as rapidly as possible to the person to whom it was addressed. Thus must the minister of the Gospel of Christ look upon his work.

There are times when the message must be a message of condemnation, for in some instances it is “the savour of death unto death” (2 Cor. 2:16). I am thankful, however, that these messages, for the most part, will be words of joy, since they are words of comfort, assurance, healing, deliverance, and power. There may be moments of pain for some readers, just as the sharp cut of the lance held by the surgeon must precede cleansing and healing, but the end is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

I know that this little book will go into every foreign mission field and will be read in every part of the world by people in every conceivable state of spiritual advance. You should realise that it takes just as much of the filling of the Spirit of God to receive a message as it does to prepare and to give it. Therefore, will you stop a moment and ask the Lord how you are about to receive this message. What is your state of mind and heart? Are you yielded to Him? Perhaps the turning point of your whole spiritual experience would be

reached in this moment if you would stop and say:  
“Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.”

“Speak, Lord, in the stillness,  
While I wait on Thee,  
Hushed my’ heart to listen,  
In expectancy.”

*The practical basis of Experimental Holiness* is the assurance that the work of salvation has been done in our hearts, and that it has been done for ever. No Christian can ever enter into the depths of the Christian life, nor can he ever become useful for God until he comes to a place of certainty as to his own relationship with God. As long as a man has any doubts as to his own personal salvation, he can never communicate a living, vital faith to others. Yet there are innumerable Christians who have no certain assurance of their salvation. All those within the Church of Rome, for example, who have seen through the clouds of error to the heart of true faith in Christ, are, nevertheless, in a bondage of fear as to the finality of the salvation for which they hope. They have no other grounds of deliverance, yet they still are greatly concerned lest they die in a frame of mind that is not within the faith, and so be lost. Within the Protestant Church, strange to say, in spite of the centuries of life with an open Bible, there are multitudes who are in the same bondage. They can say

nothing beyond the fact that they “hope” they will be saved; they are “trying” to be saved; they are “doing their best” to be saved. But none of these have the sure, strong knowledge of the present certainty of salvation which is the God-given right of every soul who has been saved through Jesus Christ.

There are whole denominations denying the finality of salvation, teaching that it is possible to lose salvation after it has once been possessed, teaching that one can be born again and then unborn, teaching that it is possible to be a part of the body of Christ, and then to be severed from it. They base their teaching on human speculation, or upon a small portion of Scripture, generally twisted from its context. Those who teach that we have no right to certainty are perfectly described in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe...” (Heb. 5:12, 13). Thus God teaches us very definitely that there is a difference between spiritual babyhood and the strong position of one who has grown into spiritual manhood. The difference between a babe and an adult is that the adult has passed through adolescence

and has had his body so developed that he is now able to reproduce himself in the next generation. The child cannot do this. So God rightfully complains that many believers remain babes when they should be teachers, capable of bringing others to a knowledge of Christ. The next verses of this passage show that the elemental truths must be known and built upon as a foundation, and that when the foundation is secure, it must henceforth be taken for granted and our time given to the building of the superstructure. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" (Heb. 6:1).

We must pause for a moment, however, to make the plan of salvation very plain and sure. One simple illustration will suffice for this. Some time ago a group of young people from a church in another part of our city asked if they could have a conference with me on the subject of salvation. About thirty of them came to our evening service one Sunday, and afterwards they came to our home to talk over this matter in an intimate way. One young woman spoke for the group, and asked how they could know that their salvation was sure. "Just exactly what does God require of us?" was the way she put it. I answered the whole group by

replying to her personally. I held in my hand a fountain pen, and showing it to her, said, "Here is a fountain pen that is different from any other pen in the world. This difference lies in the following fact. On the barrel of the pen you will see that my signature is engraved. When I purchased the pen, they put it in a machine and gave me a metal stylus with which I was to sign my name on a metal plate, just as I would sign it on a check or other document. As I did so, electrical impulses communicated that signature to an engraving tool and my signature was engraved on the barrel of the pen." Then I asked her if she had a pen exactly like it, one that was marked with my signature. Of course she replied that she had not. And here let me refer to another incident which concerns the signature on my pen.

Two or three years ago, while in Palestine, I spent a night in the German Lutheran Deaconesses' Hostel on top of Mount Carmel. An Arab climbed up the drain pipe, entered the window and stole my wallet and fountain pen. He threw the wallet away and kept the dollars and pounds that were therein. When the police caught him he said that it was his money, that he had earned it, but he overlooked the signature that was almost invisible on the pen. I got my money back, and he was sent to the penitentiary for two years. The

British Courts recognised that there was no other pen quite like this one.

Then I said to the young lady: “Now, suppose I had the right to ask, and the power to enforce it, that you should never leave this house again unless you placed in my right hand a fountain pen that was engraved, not with an imitation or a forgery, but with my real signature. What would be the result?” She replied that she would be forced to remain in that house until the end of her days.

Then, with my left hand, I offered her the pen, saying: “But suppose I should hold this pen out to you with my left hand and offer it to you as a gift, while I still held this right hand out to receive that which I demand?” She understood immediately, and replied: “All I would have to do would be to receive the pen from your left hand and place it in your right hand.” “Would you then be free to go?” I asked. “Since that was the only condition you made, I would be perfectly free to go,” she answered. I asked her to take the pen out of my left hand and place it in my right in order that she might see how simple it was, and then I made the spiritual application which was not only for her, but which is for every one who reads these words.

God the Father, the righteous One, and the Holy One, demands of us that which we do not possess. The

right hand of His holiness is extended toward us, and He demands that we give Him a holiness equal to His own. His very nature requires him to ask perfection of all who would enter His presence, there to live and abide in fellowship with Him forever. I remember one of my professors saying that the righteousness of God was that righteousness which His holiness requires Him to require. But when I examine my attainments in the light of His demands, I see that I have nothing that I could ever offer to Him, and I know myself to be condemned unless He does something about it. And then the left hand of His love shows me the Cross. There I learn that He took my sin and provided me with His own righteousness. Nothing else can satisfy God. Nothing can replace this righteousness. Then, by faith I, as a poor, lost sinner, go to the Cross of Christ to receive the righteousness of my Saviour. Then I go to God and place that righteousness in the hand of His demand, and all His requirements are met, once and forever. I am received immediately, and in there is planted the life of Christ—eternal life. Therefore I have eternal life, now, as a permanent and present possession.

Only the man who possesses, and knows that he possesses great wealth, can live largely and help others. A man who possesses, but is not sure whether his

account is good, and, therefore, does not draw upon it, is, for all practical purposes, a pauper. So it is with this question of the present possession of eternal life. I know that I am saved. I am just as sure that I am going to be in Heaven as I am sure that my Lord Jesus Christ is already in Heaven. The first time that I heard someone make a statement like that it took my breath away a moment. I then realised that it was not conceited presumption, but the most simple faith. The man who thus spoke *had believed* God's Word, and *knew* that his salvation depended "on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Therefore, he dared believe that what God said about it is true. The only conceit that is to be found in the matter of assurance is that of the person who believes it to be possible to lose his salvation, and who still continues to believe that he is saved. He is in the conceited position of believing that he has lived up to whatever conditions he thinks are involved in his conditional salvation. If salvation were conditional, who would live in any other state than mortal fear? But "perfect love casteth out fear," and it is not our perfect love, but His perfect love in us that makes it impossible to fear when we have simply rested in the finished work of Calvary. The Word of God is the guarantee of our salvation and the ground of our assurance. There is nothing evasive about the message,

it is direct and sure. This is one of the reasons why so many people have found comfort in the Word of God. It is a solid ground of certainty. The old Scotswoman was right when she said: "I often tremble on the Rock, but the Rock never trembles under me!"

Christ "spake as One having authority and not as the scribes," and those who follow Him, filled with His Spirit, speak with like assurance. Luke begins to write "of those things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1). John writes with a certainty that is one of the marks of his authorship. The Gospel that bears his name as the longest of his epistles carry at their close finite statements concerning the purpose of the writing, and name the group to which they are addressed. We turn to the Gospel and read: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). God is not primarily interested in the intellectual opinions of men, but He does want them to believe with that belief which produces life, that supernatural implantation of divine life which is the work of God in the heart of the one who believes the simple statements God has made concerning the death of His Son. That Gospel is addressed to you, no matter who you may be, for it is the Gospel that is universal in its appeal, meeting, as it does, the

need of the whole race. To every rebel comes the offer of settlement out of court. To every sinner comes the promise of supernatural life. You may become a partaker of the Divine nature. You may have the righteousness of Christ put to your account and the life of Christ planted within you.

When we come to the Epistle of John we find that it is much more restricted in its scope or circulation, being addressed to the few. One of the important principles in Bible study is to realise that not all of the Bible was written to every one. This Epistle of John is limited to one particular group of people. What tragedy has been in our churches because the whole of the Bible message is frequently presented as belonging to every one! Young people who have not been born again listen to messages that were designed to build believers in the advanced truth of Christ, and as a result they have attempted to live a Christian life without having the life of Christ to enable them to live that Christian life.

Someone may hand you canvas, brush, and oils, put you in front of a Rembrandt or a Velasquez, and tell you to take it for an example and to produce a masterpiece just like it. You would be right in answering, "I do not need an example, I need genius which I do not possess." Someone may give you paper and pen with Shakespeare for your example, and ask you for an im-

mortal drama like his. You would be right in answering, "I do not need an example; I know Shakespeare's work by heart. What I need is genius, for that I do not possess."

So all of the sermons on the Christian life are worthless to the one who has not been born again. The Gospel, with its offer of salvation, with its settlement in grace of God's demands against the rebel, is indeed for all. But parts of the Scripture, like sermons on the Christian life, are for those only who have believed. At the close of his Epistle, John says: "These things have I written unto you that believe" (1 John 5:13). So everything in that Epistle is for believers only. Do not attempt to take the truths that we are going to study unless you know that your name is in the address.

How different are the two groups mentioned in the Gospel and the Epistle covered by the single word "you." The one is as broad as the universe, the other as narrow as the Cross. A candidate for the Presidency of the United States may speak into a microphone on a national broadcast the words, "I want you" and that "you" will include every voter in the nation. But when he says to his wife, "I want you to stand near me on Inauguration Day," the same three words have shrunk from millions to one. This is precisely the effect of the two clauses in John's Gospel and in John's Epistle.

“These things have I written that you,” and “these things have I written to you.” The one is as universal as the fever of the human race, the other as endearing as a bridegroom speaking to his bride.

You are undoubtedly a person of honour: You would not open someone’s letters without permission. You have been brought up to believe it most dishonourable to tamper with a letter addressed to someone else. Face, then, this fact. Have you believed? If not, the rest of this book is not for you. If so, these things can be received by you.

For one last time we will make it clear just what is required of the soul that comes to God through Christ. There are those who speak of conditions. There is one, and only one, condition. You must cease from any trust in yourself or anything that comes from yourself, and you must rest in Him alone. The word “rest” must be taken in its strictest sense. This leads naturally to a story that will illustrate the nature of a belief better than anything known to me.

When John G. Paton landed in the New Hebrides to begin his mission work, he faced an enormous task. The language had never been reduced to writing. He had to listen to the speech of the natives and write down in his notebook the sounds that he heard them speak. Little by little he developed a large vocabulary,

and finally thought that he could begin his work of translating a part of the New Testament. It was not long before he discovered that he had no word for “belief,” for “trust,” for “faith.” One cannot get far in the New Testament without a word that conveys to us the idea or thought of “trusting,” yet try as he might, he could not obtain any expression of this thought from the natives. But one day he went on a hunting trip with one of the islanders. The day was hot, the road was long. A large deer was shot and the game carried down the long mountain toward his house. The two men struggled with their burden, and finally reached home. They flung the deer down on the grass and dropped, exhausted, on to two lounge chairs on the porch overlooking the sea. The islander said: “My, but it is good to *stretch yourself out* here!” It was an expression that Paton had never heard before, and he made haste to have it recorded in his notebook. When his translation was complete, this was the word that was used for “belief” and “trust.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever *stretcheth himself out* upon the Saviour, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.” Stretch yourself out on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house.”

This, then, is faith. It is the turning away from everything that is in self, and the utter reliance upon

all that Christ has done for us. If this has been your experience, then you may claim the promise that goes with the resting in Christ. It is something that belongs to you, then, as a right. You have the right to say: I am saved. I have been born again. I now possess eternal life. You have that right, because God has given you the authority to speak so.

The Greek language is very strong on this point. Our English word “power” translates several different words from the original. There is the word “*dunamis*” from which we get “dynamo” and “dynamite,” a word meaning explosive power. This is used by Paul in the great verse: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the *power* of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). There is another word, “*kratos*,” from which we get “democrat,” “plutocrat,” “aristocrat,” and the other words denoting “rule.” There is a third word, “*exousia*,” which means “authority.” It is the word used in John: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He *authority* to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

It is this Divine authority that makes it possible for the Christian to be bold in his claims of eternal life. Unfortunately, positive language is not in the vocabulary of many Christians. Their experience with Christ is a vague one. They have trusted Him as best they

know how, and have closed their eyes for a leap in the dark, hoping that it will turn out all right. Someone has gone so far as to say that faith is gambling on God. All this is foolishness in the light of the Word of God. Faith is just the opposite of a gamble. Faith is reliance upon the Rock that cannot be moved. "The solid foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

I am going to misquote, purposely, the great promise that closes the Epistle of John. You may measure your point of spiritual advance by whether or not it grates upon your ear. I have a friend who is a professional musician, who does not like a certain hymn, for which I expressed a liking. He told me that there was a musical sequence that was not correct according to the laws of harmony. He admitted that it was a very fine point, and an error that frequently occurred in music, and said that few could discern it. But the error that I am going to make in misquoting John is not a little one that only an advanced theologian can distinguish. Every believer should detect it at once. Yet I have known Christians who have been church members for years who could not find anything wrong with the sentence. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may hope that ye will have eternal life." How does that sound to you?

Does it seem normal, pious enough? Does the “ye” instead of the more modern “you” make it sound orthodox? For there are some people for whom anything in the English style of the King James Version is quite all right. Nevertheless, in the light of what we have seen the Gospel to be, such a misquotation would be a slander on the very grace of God. God cannot do all that He has done for us in Christ and then tell us, merely, that we may hope that some day in the future we will have eternal life. Such an expression would shift the pivot of faith to the effort of the human heart, rather than to place it where God has placed it, upon the finished work of Christ. This is, of course, what the Devil wants people to do, and we can say, most certainly, that any teaching which denies the finality and completeness of salvation to those who have rested in Christ, and ceased from their own works, is an error that comes from Satan, even if the error is given in the guise of warnings to believers to be careful lest they be presuming upon the grace of God.

Yet there are teachers who fight against the Word of God and teach souls that they can never be absolutely sure of salvation unless they themselves keep on producing the conditions of faith which will permit God to keep on having them saved.

There was a group of people in the Galatian Church which believed and taught thus. To them the

Holy Spirit wrote: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth...This only would I learn of you, Receive ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:1-3). In other words, having had your first steps in salvation, the receiving of the life of God through absolute grace, are you so foolish as to think that God is going to oblige you to keep saved by what you do yourselves? Nevertheless, the enemies of grace cry, “You will be lost if you do not keep on fulfilling the conditions.” God says through Paul: Your moment-by-moment life in the flesh cannot even be through your own faith, for “I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20).

Yes, we who have trusted in Christ and who have received His very life with its unending production of faith within us, can claim the strong language of the New Testament for ourselves. Is there anything that can surpass the assurance of St. Paul? “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1, 38, 39).

Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a right to describe his experience in language as strong as this. We say again that we are as sure that we will be in Heaven as we are sure that Christ will be there. This is not pride and presumption, it is simple trust. Whether is it presumptuous to believe God or to doubt God? It is certainly the height of arrogance and rash boldness for the believer to doubt God. The Word goes even farther and expresses it in even stronger terms. God says that the one who denies the reality of salvation and the assurance of present possession of eternal life makes God a liar.

A few years ago I was preaching in Brussels to a French-speaking congregation. One Sunday morning I took as my subject the doctrine of the new birth. In the course of that message I said: “I know I have been born again. I know I have eternal life. Believers have been given the right to know that they will be in Heaven, so I am sure I shall be there.” The next morning the bell in the corridor clanged, and soon the concierge brought to my office a young man in the uniform of the Belgian army. He wore the stripes of an adjutant. He had been in church the day before, and

immediately began speaking of the manner in which I had presented my message.

“Monsieur le pasteur,” he said, “your assurance frightens me. If you had said, ‘I hope I am saved,’ ‘I am trying to be saved,’ ‘I am doing the best I can to be saved,’ ‘I hope that I shall be in Heaven,’ then I could understand. But for you to say so dogmatically, ‘I know I am saved; I am sure I will be in Heaven,’ Monsieur, your assurance frightens me!”

I looked at him and said: “Adjutant, are you married?” With some surprise he answered: “Oh, yes, I am!” Immediately, I retorted: “Adjutant, *your assurance* frightens me! If you had said: ‘I hope I am married,’ ‘I am trying to be married,’ ‘I am doing the best I can to be married,’ ‘I hope that after I have lived with my wife for twenty years I shall be married,’ then I should understand. But for you to say right out, ‘I *am* married,’—well, *your assurance* frightens me!” “Oh, but,” he began to protest, “it is not the same thing; it is not the same thing.”

“Why isn’t it the same thing?” I asked him. “Didn’t you go to the City Hall and get married?”

Here we must interject one word of explanation concerning marriage on the continent. The Church has no part. It is an entirely civic ceremony. There is no such thing as a valid religious marriage. Only the

Mayor of a town can perform the wedding ceremony. In the large cities the different wards have local mayors for such ceremonies. Those who wish to be married go through certain preliminary forms; their names are posted in the corridor of the building for a certain number of days, then they come to the City Hall for the final ceremony. In the large centres, like Brussels, there are magnificent marriage rooms, where prince and peasant alike must come for the marriage ceremony, and where there is even a place for the curious to stand and watch. The couples come, some in wooden shoes, some with gorgeous trains, and pass through, one after the other. The Mayor stands with the broad tricoloured sash over his shoulder, the colour of the national flag, takes the documents that an assistant hands him, and speaks to the candidates. After asking their identification, he says to the man: "Will you have this woman to be your wife?" Then to the woman: "Will you have this man to be your husband?" When they have given their assent, he says: "It is the duty of the husband to provide for the wife in all things," and to the woman: "It is the duty of the wife to accompany her husband wherever he desires to live." A marriage booklet is then signed, and it is the turn of the next couple. If those who have been married are good Catholics, they then go to the Church for a nuptial

mass. If they are Protestants, they go to what is called the Temple for the blessing of the marriage. If they are Jews they go to their Synagogue. If they are nothing at all, they go to the cafe and drink.

With all this in mind, let us go back to our Adjutant. "If you had said, 'I hope I am married,' I could understand, but for you to say, 'I am married'—your assurance frightens me!" Here he objected that it was not the same thing.

I said to him: "Adjutant, how do you know that it was the Mayor who performed your ceremony? How do you know that the Mayor was not sick that morning, and that *the janitor* did not take his place?"

He looked at me, nonplussed, and then cried, "But I am quite sure that it was the Mayor!"

"But, how do you know?" I insisted. "For would you be really married if the man who performed the ceremony were a substitute, an imposter? Would the marriage certificate be valid if the name were a forgery? Would you be really married?"

"Well, no," he hesitated, "but I am sure that it was the Mayor."

"In other words," I answered, "you have faith in a man and in a document. Your assurance that you are married depends upon the identity of the man and the validity of the document. Now I have no doubt

whatever that you had the real Mayor, and that you are really married. But I want you to see that, while there may be doubt concerning your marriage, there can be no doubt concerning my salvation. My assurance depends, not on myself, but upon that Man, Jesus Christ. This Bible is my certificate of eternal union with Him. I look to the Cross and see Him dying. Is He an imposter, or is He the Eternal Jehovah, made flesh in order to die in my place? When He died on the Cross He spoke those words: 'It is finished,' which sealed my salvation forever. Now, as long as He is Who He says He is, and as long as this Book is what He claims it to be, then I may be persuaded that nothing can ever separate me from His love, and since one Epistle was written that we might know that we have eternal life, I am going to continue to say, 'I know that I have eternal life.' To put it in any other way would cast aspersions upon the truthfulness of God."

God recognises the validity of this argument, and says: "If we receive the witness of men"—that is, if we believe marriage certificates, time tables, bills and checks, and the thousand other works of faith that go to make up life—"the witness of God is greater" (1 John v. 9). Strange, is it not, that God should have to take the trouble to tell us this? How little we understand the difference between our fallible nature and

His unchanging faithfulness! John then goes on to say: "This is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself." That is, when we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within our hearts. It is He who whispers to us, "My child, thou art Mine." It is He Who ever points to Christ, to take our confidence away from ourselves and to put it forevermore in Him. Then the climax is reached when God says: "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son." I cannot insist too strongly that these words are not spoken to unbelievers concerning their failure to accept Christ. That failure does indeed give the lie to God, but it is not the lie spoken here. Beyond any shadow of doubt the only allowable interpretation of this passage in John's Epistle is the following: the believer who has admitted his own sinfulness, who has accepted God's verdict as to his lost condition, and who has turned to build on Christ alone, and who subsequently doubts that God has really planted eternal life within him as his present possession, thereby makes God a liar. It is as the summary of this teaching that God gives our text: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God," and this time we quote it correctly, "that ye may *know* that ye *have* eternal life."

When the Wesley's were first converted they had little to help them grow in doctrinal truth. They had the Word and their own experience, and made their way falteringly through the Word of God. There were no Bible schools, no Keswick Conventions, no great mass of Christian literature to help them. At times they longed for something in their lives which in reality they already had, but were not aware that they possessed it. There are some children in the nursery who ask the nurse questions about life. Being put off with false information, the children may really believe that they were brought into this world by a stork, and they may go along for years thinking such a thing. In like manner there are Christians brought up in an uncertain knowledge of the faith, who may not know precisely what happened when they were born again. Nevertheless, God Almighty gives to us in the Word the great principle that when we are born again God has indeed given to us eternal life. Shortly after they had "Found rest to their souls," one of them wrote a hymn—it is still in use—that does not recognise the function of the Holy Spirit.

"I want a principle within,  
A jealous godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin,  
And pain to feel it near."

As a matter of fact the principle was within. It was there from the first. That principle is a Person. That principle is the eternal life of Christ, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, that believers might realise that God cannot lie, and that therefore that God does not lie when He says that He has given eternal life to all who have trusted His Son! He has not promised us anything short of eternal life. What do we read?

He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have *six months'* life? What foolishness! And if He did promise us six months' life, when could we lose it? Could it cease to be ours in five months? Of course not! Six months' life in the promise of God could not be lost before six months. We must never forget that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). Is it a ten years' life that He has given us? Then it could not be lost before ten years. What kind of life, then, does He say He has given to us? He says it is *eternal life*. But, Lord, does it really mean that eternal life is *eternal*? He is as patient with us as with a small child, for He makes it doubly clear and sure, like the carpenter who turns the board over and clinches the nail on the other side. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they

shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:27, 28).

In spite of this, it is necessary for us to point out that one teacher, at least, has written against the assurance and security of the believer, saying that we may not claim the promise of eternal life as adding anything to the duration of the believer’s existence. The truth is, of course, that all men have eternal existence. The one who believes on Christ as Saviour has *existence* changed to *life*. That is just the point. It is a quality of life, and not merely a duration. The writer against assurance then goes on: “Can this quality of life end in the believer?” and answers that he believes it can. He gives no Scripture whatsoever for his bald statement.

On the contrary, the life that God has given us is the life of His Son. All whom He has called He has also justified, and all whom He has justified He counts as already glorified. God never begins anything that He does not bring to an end. The world may start that which it cannot finish, but God says: “He which hath begun a good work in you, will *keep on perfecting* it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6, Gk.). Here are all three of the great doctrines of God’s work within us. He which hath begun a good work in you—that is justification—will keep on perfecting it—that is sanctification—until the day of Jesus Christ—that is glori-

fication. There is no change in God, and there will be no change in His work in us.

This truth is taught in still another way in the Epistles. God says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) This is, of course, the plain announcement that the Holy Spirit, Who has been the instrument of our new birth, and Who has come to dwell within us making our bodies His temples, has also placed us in Christ, sealing us there until the day when He shall give us our eternal bodies, and we shall be made like Him in all things in reality as we have already been made like Him in promise. It is the announcement that God has given us a gift that can never be lost. Were it anything less than this we would have to read, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of your sin, or unto the day when God goes back on His promises, or until the day when the new creation can be uncreated. It is all so evident that no such event is possible. "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept" (John 17:12), and "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:29).

Near, so near am I to God,  
Nearer I cannot be;  
For in the person of His Son,  
I'm just as near as He.

Dear, so very dear to God,  
Dearer I cannot be;  
The love wherewith He loved His Son  
Such is His love for me!