

THE PRIEST DISPENSED WITH NO. 1250

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.”
1 John 5:10.*

IT is a part of the theory of Ritualism, that is to say, Anglicized Popery, that no man can know his sins forgiven unless he is assured so by a priest. They tell us that to know ourselves saved we must either have a revelation from Heaven, which we may not expect, or we must wait till the Day of Judgement, or else some duly authorized “spiritual father” must pronounce us absolved. They cannot suppose any other method of being assured of forgiveness. That is the theory and in practice it comes to this, that when anything troubles your conscience you must make a clean breast of it to this, so-called, learned “minister,” *alias* parish priest, and tell him whatever things you have done, answering all questions he may choose to put to you, whether they are clean or whether they are unclean.

And only then will he give you absolution in the name of God, claiming to be—mark you, I am not saying what they do not say, for I quote from one of the most popular of their manuals, entitled, “Steps to the Altar”—claiming, I say, to be “a trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear, and judge, and absolve.” That is the theory, a very attractive one, too, to human nature, for man, by nature, is an idolater, that is to say, he desires something tangible, and visible, to revere and trust in. The old spirit which cried out in the wilderness, “Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses which brought us up out of the land Egypt, we know not what has become of him,” is still alive and craves for idols—and delights to find them either in the form of priests or sacraments

As for faith in the unseen purely *spiritual* worship, and simple reliance upon the promise of God, these are not according to human nature, and wherever you discover them, they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Man’s idolatry loves priestcraft and, therefore, we should not be astonished if Ritualism were to become more and more popular and subjugate the whole land. Confidence in priestly powers seems to afford the soul an easy way of coming to an anchorage. To come directly to Jesus Christ with the whole heart needs thought, consideration and heart work—but to confess to a *priest* and get his assurance of pardon is a method much less difficult, less spiritual and, consequently, more agreeable to human nature.

What need is there of being born again from above when a little water will do it? What need is there of feeding upon Christ when bread and wine are the same thing? What need is there of the witness from above when every curate can assure you that you are pardoned? What need is there, I ask, of the witness of the Holy Spirit, when any clerical person can pronounce you absolved? I would in all kindness speak with those who are in bondage to this delusion and suggest a few questions. You think it more easy to believe in a man appointed by God than to believe in Christ Himself, but may there not be a doubt or two about the *man*? Is it not possible that he has not been rightly ordained, or that he, himself, when he speaks does not mean what he says? Remember, everything depends upon his ordination and intention!

Do you say, “Oh, but he is certified by the Church”? But are there not grave questions as to the Church? Can Apostolic succession be proven? It is the idlest of romances! The church of Rome has struggled to prove her own descent from Peter, but fails at the very beginning—and we may be doubly sure that the Anglican Church is still more at sea. She calls the Nonconformists, Schismatic in reference to herself, but what is *she* in regard to the church of Rome? She has no Apostolic succession, in the sense in which the expression is ecclesiastically used, and should be ashamed of setting up the fraudulent presence!

Her godly ministers have the same Apostolic successor as all true servants of Christ have, and no more. No man has such a pedigree as to entitle him to represent the Eternal God and stand between the Father and men’s souls! The claim is as gross an imposition as that of the fortuneteller who pretends to prophecy. Hark you, my Friends, have you no manliness? Does it not seem to you, as it does to me, to be a monstrously degrading thing that you should prostrate yourselves

before a man, like yourselves, and believe that *he* can pronounce the pardon of your sins? This precious, “Steps to the Altar,” says, “Let the manner of your confession be in an humble posture, on your knees, as being made to God rather than man.” Mark you this, you are to go down on your knees to the *man* whom the *State* appoints to superintend the religion of your parish!

What is it but Brahmanism, mislabeled Christianity? The whole drift of the scheme is to elevate a clerical caste and lay all the rest of mankind at their feet! This is the reverse of the religion of the New Testament which says that all Believers are a royal priesthood, made by the Lord Jesus kings and priests unto God! Is not Ritualism quite sure to grow into Popery, no, is it not full-blown Popery, already? Will it not, once again, reduce the world to slavery under an arch-priest at Rome or Canterbury if it is allowed to have its way? And what say the Scriptures? “There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.” Why should we set up other mediators and go to them for absolution when our Lord Jesus receives all who come to Him?

Do you see in the New Testament any trace of such assumptions on the part of God’s ministers? Does the Gospel say, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, *if absolved by a priest*”? That interpolation is foreign to the Gospel! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” is the Gospel according to the Scriptures! “Confess to the priest and you shall be forgiven” is the Gospel of the Vatican! Everywhere the Scripture calls man to come into personal contact with his reconciled God in Christ Jesus. The first resolution of the awakened sinner is, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” It is not, “I will arise and go unto the authorized minister who stands between me and my Father.” It is not, “I will resort to sacraments and ceremonies,” but, “I will go to my Father.” In fact the whole objective of the Gospel is to bring us near to God in Christ Jesus and to put down every interposing medium. He who rent the veil of the temple has ended this priestly business!

This morning my business is to show that there is no need of a certificate from any man as to our being forgiven, for “*he that believes has the witness within himself.*” He does not need a new revelation. He does not need to wait till the Day of Judgment—he is forgiven, and he knows it, and knows it infallibly, too—by a witness which is within himself. Of that I shall speak, and may the Spirit of God help us to get at the real truth! Yes, I would to God that all who hear me this day would believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and have the witness of His salvation in themselves!

Let me, first of all, say a word or two about the way in which we are saved, the *modus operandi* of salvation, as we find it described in the Scriptures. Here it is in a nutshell. We have all broken God’s Law and we are justly condemned on account of it. God, in infinite mercy, desiring to save the sons of men, has given His Son, Jesus, to stand in the place of as many as believe in Him. Jesus became the Substitute of His people and suffered in their stead, and for them the debt of punishment due to God was paid by Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. All who believe in Him are, thereby, cleared before the bar of Divine Justice.

Now, the Lord, having given His Son, has revealed this great fact in His Word. Here it is in this Inspired Book—the full statement of it—to this effect, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life. This is God’s testimony! We, who are here present, or at least the bulk of us, know that it is God’s testimony and all we have to do in order to realize the result of Christ’s passion is simply to *believe* the testimony of God concerning it and rest upon it!

The argument runs thus—Christ saves those who trust Him. I trust Him and, therefore, I am saved. Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of His people. His people are known by their believing in Him. I believe in Him and, therefore, He died for my sins, and my sins are blotted out. This is the summary of the transaction. God’s testimony concerning His Son is at first believed, simply because God says so and for no other reason. And then there grows up in the soul other evidence not necessary to faith, but very strengthening to it—evidence which springs up in the soul as the *result* of faith, and is the witness referred to in our text—“He that believes has the witness in himself.”

There is no need for the intervention of any second or third party here. The man has trusted Christ and the Gospel for himself, and proved it to be true—what service can that gentleman in a long coat render to him? What more evidence can he bring with his Prayer Book or without it? The matter is as clear as the sun! What is the need of his tallow candles? We shall try to answer three questions today by the aid of our text—*How do we come to be Believers?* Secondly, *How do we know that Believers are saved?* And thirdly, *How do we know that we are Believers?*

I. HOW DO WE COME TO BE BELIEVERS? Beloved Friends, you know how faith arises in the heart from the human point of view. We hear the Gospel, we accept it as the message of God and we trust ourselves to it. So far it is our own work—and let it be remembered that in every case *faith* is and must be the act of *man*. The *Holy Spirit* never *believes* for anybody—each man must personally believe. We cannot be saved by the faith of another, even though that other were Divine. Each one of us must, himself, believe.

But, having said that, let us remember that the Godward history of our believing is quite another thing, for true faith is always the *gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit brings us to perform the act of faith by which we are saved and the process is after this manner, though varying in different individuals—First, we are brought *attentively to listen* to the old, old story of the Cross. We have heard it a great many times, perhaps, but now we hear with opened ears, anxiously desiring to know the inner sense. While we are so listening, the Word commends itself to us—it awes us by its majesty of holiness! It attracts us by its beauty of love and we perceive that it is truly the *Word of God*.

Thus faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Attentive hearers, earnestly listening, very seldom remain unbelievers long. The superficial hearer who is satisfied to sit through a sermon but does not care to understand it, misses the blessing. The diligent reader of the Bible, reading it with prayer, is very unlikely to remain unsaved—before long the Spirit of God, who works through the Word, applies some portion or other of Holy Scripture to the soul with power—and the reader is brought to faith.

We believe, then, not because a clerical person, or a crowd of clerics assure us that the Bible is Inspired, but because the Spirit of God, working with the Word, commends it to our consciences and to our understandings and, therefore, we believe. You will generally find that unbelievers do not read the Bible, and do not hear the Gospel—how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? If they will not consider the Gospel candidly, how can they expect to believe it?

Further, *the Holy Spirit is also pleased to make us conscious of our sinfulness*, our danger and our inability. And this is a great way towards faith in Christ, for the great difficulty in believing in Jesus is that men believe in *themselves*. But when they discover that their lives, which they thought commendable, are censurable—and when they find out that their native strength is feebleness itself—they are, then, prepared to believe in God's salvation! When a man can no longer rely upon himself, he cries to the Strong for strength. Thus the Spirit of God leads us to faith by driving us out of self-confidence.

Moreover, while attentively hearing, *we perceive the suitability of the Gospel to our case*. We feel ourselves sinful and rejoice that our great Substitute bore our sin, and suffered on its account, and we say, "That substitution is full of hope to me; salvation by an atonement is precisely what I desire. My conscience can rest here." We learn that Jesus came by water, to cleanse our nature as well as to take away our guilt, and we say, "That also meets my need." Studying the great doctrine of the Cross, it strikes us as being full of the wisdom and love of God, and as suitable for our case as bread is suitable for hunger, or water for thirst. And our moral instincts, by an inner witness which we cannot further describe, leap to the conclusion that this must be true and, therefore, we believe it.

You see, first we give an attentive *hearing* to the Gospel, then we *receive*, by the Spirit of God, a consciousness of our *need* of it, and then we discover the suitability of it to meet our need! And by that process we are led onward to genuine faith in Christ. There is but one more step, and that is, *we accept Jesus as set forth in the Gospel* and place all our trust in Him. He is set forth as the Savior of mankind, bringing life and peace to all who trust Him. We hear a voice that says, "Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely." We see the Savior, Himself, standing with outstretched arms and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

And being assured of the freeness as before we were of the suitability of the Atonement, we accept it, and thus we exercise the faith of God's elect. We have gone through a process which has divorced us from every other confidence and brought us to rest on that which God has set forth to be a Propitiation, even the finished work, the blood and righteousness of Christ. When the soul accepts the Lord Jesus as Savior, *she believes in Him as God*, for she says, "How can He have offered so glorious an Atonement had He not been Divine? How could God set Him forth to make propitiation for the sons of men had He not been equal to the task, a task requiring an Infinite Nature?" We worship the Son of God! In Him we rest and on Him we lean! We find in Him all that we need! This is why we believe, then, and the process is a simple and

logical one. The mysterious Spirit works us to faith, but the states of mind through which He brings us follow each other in a beautifully simple manner.

Now, in all this I see no room for a priest at all. For the preacher there is a niche, for, “how can they hear without a preacher?” But the priest with his authority as an interpolator, like the fifth wheel of a steam engine, he is of no possible service and a good deal in the way. He deserves to be called “a superfluity of naughtiness.” God’s Word convinces my reason, and God’s Spirit wins my heart to faith in Jesus—what more under Heaven do I need as a reason for faith?

That gentleman with the gown on has no more to do with the business than if he did not exist! His intervention to tell me, by authority, that the Gospel is true and that I am absolved, is as ridiculous as the conduct of that little African potentate who, as soon as he has eaten the few morsels of carrion which adorn his majestic table, bids a herald proclaim east, west, north, and south, that all other kings in the world are now permitted, by his gracious majesty, to have their dinners! Probably they have never heard of the permission and have suffered no evil from being ignorant of it. Who is this fellow, that he should take so much upon himself?

Having been brought to rest in Jesus as my Savior by a perfectly reasonable process, by a chain of argument in which not one link is deficient, I care nothing whatever for any official confirmation from the gentleman in the gown, who has no argument, but bids me believe because *he* has been ordained! I need no confirmation of what God speaks! Twice two will be four whether the parish priest says so or not, and God’s testimony is true quite independently of all the gowns and surplices in and out of the robe-maker’s shop. If Her Majesty should give me the title deeds of an estate, signing the transfer with her own hand and seal, I should smile at the lackey who should kindly offer to add his authority to her Majesty’s act and deed!

Where the word of a king is, there is power, and this is preeminently true where the Word of the King of kings is concerned! I have believed in Jesus Christ as He is set forth on the authority of God, Himself, and who are you, Sir Priest, to come between me and God? You tell the penitent, “You are to look upon the priest, as he is trustee from God, and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear and judge and absolve you.” Away with such blasphemous lies! We need no deputies, for we have Christ Himself! You and your authority may go packing.

II. Secondly, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT BELIEVERS ARE SAVED? That seems to be a grave question with some. “I trust Jesus, I believe in Him with all my heart, but am I saved?” My dear Friend, you ought not to raise that question, for it is finally settled by Divine authority. But as you *do* raise it, let us answer it for you very briefly. We know and are sure that every Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is saved because God says so, and is not that enough? *God declares in His Word*, even in that sure Word of Testimony—where you will do well to take heed as unto a light that shines in a dark place—that every Believer in Jesus Christ is saved.

The passages in which this is stated are far too many for us to quote them all. Only let us note that memorable one at the close of Mark’s Gospel, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” The Believer is saved! You have in those verses God’s Word for it! True, the Believer is bound to profess his faith by baptism, which follows upon his faith—but the second sentence shows that the *faith* is the all-important matter, for it is added—“He that *believes not* shall be damned.”

Faith is the vital thing which, if omitted, will involve damnation. How the whole of John’s Gospel teems with this Truth of God! Turn to the blessed third of John, and see how wondrously clear it is. In the 16th verse, for instance—“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Read the 18th verse—“He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Follow on to the 36th verse: “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Can anything be more plain and positive? Assuredly, he that believes in Jesus is a saved man! Turn to the 10th chapter of Romans. I shall only give you passages in which the Truth of God is as the sun in the heavens. Paul says, beginning in the fourth verse—“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in

your heart (that is, the word of faith, which we preach) that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved.”

Paul rejects all idea of salvation by works and lays all the stress upon *believing* in a risen Savior. To the same purpose speaks the Apostle in Romans 1:16—“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” This, indeed, is the great reason why the Bible is written, that we may believe on the Lord Jesus and have life through His name! And so John tells us in the 20th chapter of his Gospel at the 31st verse.

Don’t you see, then, Brothers and Sisters, if you believe in Jesus you are saved? And you can be sure that it is so because God declares it! If we, from now on, had no other witness, is not the witness of the Lord sufficient? It seems to me to be the essence of *unbelief* for a man to need a *minister* to tell him that if he believes he is saved, when God solemnly affirms that it is so! I could not conceive myself so forsaken of God as to assume that I could assure my fellow man of his pardon and affect to pronounce absolution by authority committed to me! Surely this were presumption to be answered for at the Last Great Day! God forgive those who are guilty of it!

Again, we know on the authority of Scripture that Believers are saved because *the privileges which are ascribed to them prove that they are in a saved condition*. Let us read in John again. John goes to the very root of every matter and in chapter 1:12 he tells us, “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” See, Brethren, everyone that believes on the name of Jesus is a son of God—and how can a son of God be a lost soul? Will He cast away His own children? God forbid! In the same Gospel, chapter 5:24, Christ, Himself, tells us, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

He is gone out, then, of the region of death and condemnation into that of life and acceptance, and surely no one will say that such a man is not saved! Our Lord tells us, too, that everyone that believes in Him has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, which could not be if he were not saved. Look at John, chapter 7:38-39—“He that believes on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. This He spoke of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.” So that the Holy Spirit dwells in every Believer, and where the Holy Spirit abides, salvation is certainly enjoyed.

Our Lord also promises the resurrection to every Believer. Read John 11:25, that glorious passage in which Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Resurrection to eternal life is not the portion of the unsaved, for they “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.” You see that John’s Gospel is rich with this precious doctrine. Nor does he, alone, thus reveal the blessed results of faith. Paul also speaks of these privileges in all his Epistles. If you turn back to the Romans, how full that Epistle is of the same Truth of God—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord by whom, also, we have access by faith into this Grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

You remember the passage we read just now in the Epistle of John—“This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith,” so that faith brings us victory from day to day, even as faith at the very outset brings us remission of sin as the Apostle tells us in the Acts 10:43. But I need not multiply proof texts—it would require several sermons to sum up the privileges of Believers—privileges quite inconsistent with the idea that a Believer can be an unsaved man. You can find these for yourselves, for they are as plentiful in Scripture as ears of corn in harvest! There are such privileges ascribed to Believers everywhere as could not be ascribed to them if they were not saved souls.

Once again, the *whole tone of Scripture regards the Believer as a saved man*. “Believers” is a common synonym for saints, for sanctified persons. And it is a truth to say the Epistles are written to Believers, for they are written to the Churches, and Churches are but assemblies of Believers. The Lord looks upon men as divided into Believers and unbelievers—and between these two there is a gulf of difference as great as that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in the day when the pillar gave light to Israel but darkness to the hosts of Egypt.

Do you believe in Jesus? You are in the favor of God. Do you not believe in Him? Then no priest can help you, nor can you help yourself! You are lost and ruined and undone! The only way of escape is that you believe in Jesus Christ!

Brethren, when the Word of God tells us so positively that having believed we are saved, can you see any earthly use in going to a person who says he is authorized of God, and asking *him* whether you are saved or not? I cannot, for one! I think it far easier, by God's Grace, to believe in Jesus than to believe in these gowned and bedizened clerics! And to believe in Jesus and in them, too, is like seeing by the light of the sun aided by the lamp of the glowworm!

What can the little men do? In the bad old times in the South a free Negro was forced to carry his papers about with him, but in that blessed day when the Jubilee trumpet sounded, and every African throughout the States was free, I can hardly imagine some little squire or country judge saying to the emancipated Negro, "Sam, I will make out papers for you, and for your consolation I will put my name, 'Jeremiah Stiggins,' at the bottom." Why, the emancipated man would have said, "I have seen the proclamation which has the name of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, at its foot, and I do not care a button for *your* name or anybody else's!"

Having believed in the Lord Jesus, I have salvation upon the authority of the Word of God, and on the Holy Spirit's authority I know that there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and therefore I would not thank an angel for his oath if he tendered it in confirmation! When the little man in the surplice comes to me and says, "I will give you a certificate that you are absolved," I reply, "I am very much obliged to you, but there are softer heads than mine, and you had better exercise your arts upon *them*. You cannot excite in me *any* feeling but that of *pity*, bordering on contempt." Before God the whole business is blasphemy, and before Christian men it is foolery and worse!

III. The last point is this, HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE BELIEVERS? It is clear that if we are Believers we are saved, but how do we *know* that we are Believers? First of all, as a general rule, *it is a matter of consciousness*. How do I know that I breathe? How do I know that I think? How do I know that I believe that there was once a Saxon Heptarchy? I know I do, and that is enough. Faith is, to a large extent, a matter of consciousness. A man is not always conscious of what is true, for a man might be in such a weak condition that he might say, "I hardly know whether my heart beats," and yet it will be beating all the time. Doubts may arise, and will—but as a general rule—faith is a matter of consciousness. I live, and if you ask me for proof I reply, "I know I do." I believe, and if you ask me how I know it, I reply, "I am sure I do."

Still, there is other evidence. How do I know that I am a Believer? Why, by *the very remarkable change* which I underwent when I believed! For when a man believes in Jesus Christ there is such a change worked in him that he must be aware of it. As in the case of the blind man when his eyes were opened he said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." That poor woman who had the issue of blood so many years—when she touched Christ's garment and was healed, how did she know it? We read that she felt in herself that she was made whole. She had touched the hem of the Lord's garment and was recovered—and in the same way the Believer knows that he has believed.

Suppose a child was born in a coal pit and has seen no light except that of the candles down below, and, that he is suddenly taken up the shaft to see the sun, the green fields and the sweet spring flowers? What a surprise! I cannot wonder if the child should think itself dreaming! But if you were to say to it, "Are you out of the coal pit? Can you *prove* that you are?" Why, notwithstanding that the child would hardly know where it was because of its vast surprise, yet would it be sure that it was out of the darkness—convinced by an argument within itself which nobody could refute! So do we know, Brothers and Sisters, that we are born again, for we feel a new life and live in a new world. Things we never dreamed of before we have realized. I remember one, who, when he was converted said, "Well, either the world is new or else I am." This change is to us strong evidence that faith is in us and has exercised its power.

Brethren, we have further evidence that we believe, for *our affections are altered*. The Believer can say that the things he once loved, he now hates, and the things he hated he now loves. That which gave him pleasure, now causes him pain. And things which were irksome and unpleasant have now become delightful to him. Especially is there a great change in us with respect to God. We said in our hearts, "No God." Not that we dared say, "There is no God," but we wanted to get away from Him. We would have been glad to hear that there was no God! But, now, how altered are our affections! Now our greatest joy is God! The nearer we can approach Him the better! The very sound of His name is delicious music to us! We know that this change was produced by our believing in Him, of that we are confident, for the matter is clear.

A certain master had a servant whose mind was very much poisoned against him by slanderous tales. Everything the master did the servant misconstrued because he considered him to be a tyrant and an oppressor. Now it came to pass that this servant, one day, learned more concerning his master, and found out that everything he had done was dictated by the

most generous motives and that his master, indeed, was one of the excellent of the earth. The moment that servant's thoughts of his master changed and he had faith in his goodness, he acted very differently, as you may well conceive! None could be more faithful and diligent than he.

Now we *prove* that we believe, because we feel towards God so very differently! He is loved in our inmost souls and we *delight* to serve Him! This would have been utterly impossible if we had not been changed in our feelings toward Him by being led to trust Him. We know, also, that we believe because, though very far from perfect, *we love holiness and strive after purity*. You that have believed in Jesus, do you not now pant after holiness? Do you not endeavor to do that which is right? And when you are conscious that you have failed, does not conscience prick you? Have you not gone on your knees in bitterness of soul and said, "My God, help me and deliver me, for I delight in Your commandments. Help me to keep Your statutes"?

Right, truth and peace are the things we now seek after, whereas time was when these were of small account, and our own selfish pleasure and our own perverted judgement were the rule of our being. By this change of conduct we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ! And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, we know that we have believed in Jesus Christ because now *we have communion with God*. We are in the habit of speaking with God in prayer and hearing the Lord speak with us when we read His Word. Some of us have spoken with our Lord Jesus so often that we have grown to be near and dear Friends—and whatever we ask in prayer He grants us.

Answered prayers are sweet testimonies to faith! When the Lord is pleased to deliver us out of trouble. When His Holy Spirit cheers us in depression. When He helps us under difficulties. When He makes us patient under pain—all these things become proofs that we have real faith in Him! Our faith has realized Him and brought Him near! It has taught us how to live upon Him and so strengthened us in His ways. Once more, only, upon this point, and then we will come to the practical application.

We know that we have believed in the Lord Jesus because we have, over and above all this, a secret something, indescribable to others, but well-known by ourselves, which is called in Scripture, the *witness of the Holy Spirit*—for it is written, "The Spirit, Himself, also bears witness with our spirit that we are born of God." First *our* spirit bears witness to our new birth, and then the Spirit of God comes in and bears witness with our spirit to the same effect! Do you know what it means? If you do not, I cannot tell you. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." There comes stealing over the soul, sometimes, a peace, a joy, a perfect rest, a heavenly deliciousness, a supreme content in which, though no voice is heard, yet we are conscious that it is there rushing through our souls, like a strain of Heaven's own music, the witness of the Spirit of God! We are sure of it, as sure as we are of our own being! And by that witness we know that we are, indeed, Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now mark, we may not *ask* for any witness beyond the testimony of God, nor will any other witness be given. I charge all of you here present not to say, "I will believe in God when I obtain the inward witness." No, you are bound to believe in God *first*, on the sure testimony of His Word. If you believe His Word you shall know the sweets of Divine Grace. To ask for more evidence, first, is as though a man should say, "Here is a medicine prepared by a physician of great repute, and it is said to be very powerful for driving out the disease from which I suffer. I will take it as soon as I see that I am improving by its means."

The man has lost his reason, has he not? He cannot expect even a partial cure till he has *taken* the medicine! He cannot expect the result to come before the cause. You must take the good physician's medicine as a matter of faith and, afterwards, your faith will be increased by the beneficial result. You must believe on the Lord Jesus, because of the witness of God concerning Him, for that is all the witness you ought to wish for and all that God will give you. After you have believed, other witnesses will spring up in your soul, as the results of faith. And so your confidence will be strengthened. But just now, Beloved, believe in Jesus Christ, and having believed in Him you shall know that you are forgiven for His name's sake.

In closing, let me ask every person here, do you believe in Jesus Christ or not? If you believe, you are saved! If you believe not you are condemned already, because you have not believed. Remember that. Let me next ask, are any of you seeking after any witness beyond the witness of God? If you are, do you not know that you are virtually making God a liar? For if God says such-and-such a thing is true, and you seek further evidence beyond His Word, you do, in effect, say

that God's witness is not sufficient and that God is a liar. I pray you behave not so insolently. Accept His naked Word, for it is surer than the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears.

Behold how the arch of Heaven stands without a single pillar, vast as it is—what sustains it but the Word of God? See how this round world hangs on nothing and yet strays not from her sphere—what maintains her in her course but the bare Word of God? That Word which rolls the stars along and has never failed to fulfill its purpose, is that on which you are asked to lean! Sinner, will you believe your God? If you will, you shall be established, blessed and enriched! But if you still say He is a liar, then you shall be as the heat in the desert which shall not see when good comes, but suffers perpetual drought.

If you rest in Jesus, trusting Him, you have done well, but yet you have only done Him justice. There is no merit in believing what is true! Who but a man of base heart would refuse to do so? To believe One who cannot lie is by no means a meritorious action and, therefore, salvation is by faith that it may be by Grace! Yet faith will bring to you life, love, joy, peace, immortality and all that Heaven can mean! May God grant you Grace to believe! But I pray you do not let the little man in robes stand between you and Christ. Let no one do so! I charge you, never regard anything I say as having any authority in it apart from the Word of God.

I reckon it of all crimes, the greatest, for a man to assume to mediate between men and God! Little as I respect the devil I prefer *him* to a priest who pretends to forgive sins! For even the devil has too much honesty about him to pretend to give absolution in God's name. There is but one pardoning Priest and He is the Son of the Highest. His one Sacrifice has ended all other sacrifices! His one Atonement has rendered all future oblations counterfeit. Today, as Elijah stood on Carmel and cried out against the priests of Baal, so would I! I count no words too severe! If my very speech should be a thunderbolt and every word a lightning flash, it would not be too strong to protest against the accursed system which once degraded the whole earth to kiss the Pope's foot and is degrading our nation still, and that through a so-called Protestant Church!

Oh, God Almighty, God of Latimer and Ridley, God of the martyrs whose ashes are still among us, will You allow this people to go back, again, to false gods, and saints, and virgins, and crucifixes, relics, and cast iron and rotten rags? For to this, also, will they come if Your Grace does not prevent it! Oh, my hearers, Jesus is the only Savior of the sons of men. Believe in Him and live! This is the only Gospel! At your peril reject it! I pray you receive it for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—I. John 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—554, 239, 232.

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