

POSITIVISM
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“We know...And we know...And we know.”
1 John 5:18-20.

IT is remarkable how throughout the whole of John’s Epistle he continually uses the word, “know.” It has quite refreshed me to carefully read through the Epistle and to observe how, as the clock strikes the same note again and again, John seems to have kept to this monotone—“We know, we know, we know.” In this age, when it is fashionable not to know anything, when the professedly learned would hold us in a state of perpetual doubt and our great poet tells us that there is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds—and everybody seems to be bewitched with what is called “modern thought”—it is quite cheering to one’s ears and delicious to one’s heart to hear the bell strike out again and again, “We know, we know, we know”! After all, there is something certain somewhere, some grip for our anchor, some foundation to build our eternal hopes upon—something that can be trusted, something besides cloud and will-o’-the-wisps! “We know, we know, we know.” Take your pencils and read through this first Epistle of John and underline the word, “know,” and you will feel the force of our remark. Look at the second Chapter—“Hereby we do *know* that we *know* Him.” “He that says I *know* Him.” “Hereby *know* we that we are in Him.” In the 13th verse we read, “Because you *have known* Him.” “I write unto you, little children, because you *have known* the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you *have known* Him that is from the beginning.” “We have an unction from the Holy One and you *know* all things.” “I have not written unto you because you *know* not the Truth, but because you, *know* it, and that no lie is of the Truth.” And so in the third Chapter, verse after verse. “The world knows us not, because it *knew* Him not.” “We *know* that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” The fifth verse “You *know* that He was manifested to take away our sin.” And so it is—on, on, on, all through the Chapter—“we know,” “you know,” and “they know.”

And why is this? It seems to me, first, that John had the echo of his Master’s words ringing in his ears. He laid his head upon his Master’s bosom and caught his Master’s spirit. Yes, more—his Master’s thoughts! Yes, more—his Master’s very words! Continually as you read John’s first Epistle you are reminded of passages in his Gospel. The Epistle seems to be the essential extract of this Gospel. John, the Beloved of Jesus, reproduces his Master more fully than any other Apostle. Listen to the Master’s words in the 14th Chapter of John, fourth verse—“I go to prepare a place for you. And where I go *you know*, and the way *you know*. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where you go, and how can we know the way?” (Seventh verse)—“If you had *known* Me, you should have *known* My Father also; and from henceforth you *know* Him and have seen Him.” Hear how the *know* rings out! Again, attend to our Lord’s prayer in the 17th Chapter of John—“Now they have *known* that all things whatever You have given Me are of You.” “They have *known* surely that I came out from You.” “O righteous Father the world has not *known* You: but I have *known* You, and these have *known* that You have sent Me.” The words of Jesus had so fastened upon John’s mind and had so deeply impressed his heart, that when his soul needed words, it caught at those which had rooted themselves so firmly among the most happy memories of his life! I attribute the preponderance of the word, “know,” which constitutes itself an idiom in the Epistle, to the fact that the expressions of the Master had been treasured up by the servant.

Furthermore, John is one in whom we see very little of mental conflict. Thomas had brain in excess of heart and hence he had his doubts, and exclaimed, “Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” By-and-by he became a grand believer and, indeed, a very leader in true Doctrine, for he was the

first that ever inferred the Deity of Christ from His wounds when, looking at the scars, he said, “My Lord and my God.” John was too intimate with Christ to doubt. And he had too much heart to be a questioner, too much of earnest, intense, loving life to be subject to those diseases which spring from preponderance of intellect over affection. His soul was, like his Lord’s, on fire with Divine Love, and it burnt up the chaff of doubt too rapidly for it even to have seemed to be there! It had only to be scattered over the flame to vanish at once. It is very beautiful to notice how positive John is in his writing. I like the commencement of his Epistle—it is so different from the wavering talk which we hear now-a-days! He begins thus, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (that is, intensely gazed upon) and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Is not this true “positivism”? Where will you find it if you do not find it here? Speak of dogmatism! Here is dogmatic teaching, indeed! He does not hesitate, or fear, or doubt for one moment! His evidence is too sure and his conviction too firm! And hence it is that he rings out that bell so, clearly, “We know, we know, we know.”

The full assurance expressed by the word, “know,” arises from the fact that perfect love always casts out hesitancy and doubt which are a form of fear and, as John tells us, “Perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment.” Love cannot endure a doubt. If love is crossed with doubt, it becomes jealousy, and that is cruel as the grave. A man had better meet a wolf in the depth of winter, or a bear robbed of her whelps, than a man in his jealousy, for his fury burns like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame. Love must have certainty. Those whom we dearly love must be beyond suspicion as to their reciprocal affection. As to a doubt whether there is a Christ, or whether He is the Son of God, or whether He loved us and gave Himself for us, this may be indulged in by those who love not—but where love is supreme it sits in state like God upon the cherubim—and the Dagon of doubt falls down and is broken in pieces! If the church of the present age loved Jesus better, she would speak much more confidently about Him and, in so doing she would speak more like the oracles of God. But where the dampness of lukewarm affection settles down, the cold chill of doubt is sure to follow—and it is in these wintry nights of declining love to Jesus that the frost of unbelief binds up the rivers of spiritual life. If the Lord quickens the love of His Church, as soon as it is done, her sons say, as John did, “We know, and we know, and we know”—and the grand old positive spirit of Luther and of Calvin, blazing with the enthusiasm which came with Whitefield and Wesley, will come back to the Church—and God will bless the world thereby!

I am about to speak upon the forms of Christian knowledge. “We know”...“and we know”...“and we know.” *Here I note, first, that Christians have this knowledge in seven different forms, of which the one draws on the other like golden links of a precious chain.*

I. And, first, we know, that is to say, we have INSTRUCTION. And herein we are saved from ignorance. The Christian is not ignorant of the Gospel and its great primary Truths of God, but he knows them by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by searching the Word. That use of the term, we have frequently in this Epistle. I will give two examples. The 10th verse of the Fifth Chapter—“We know that the Son of God is come, and that He has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true.” We know the fact of Incarnation and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have been so informed by the Scriptures. In the 16th verse of the Fourth Chapter we have another instance—“We have known and believed the love that God has to us.” We know the love of God, for it is revealed and we accept the witness of the Spirit concerning it.

We know the great facts of the Gospel and this is no small blessing. Myriads of our fellow creatures are unaware of the first principles of the faith, scarcely knowing that there is a God, and altogether ignorant of the wondrous plan of Redemption by the blood of Jesus. Even in this (so-called) Christian country, there is much ignorance about these things. I wish that Christian people would more frequently question others about what they know of Christ. No book is less read, in proportion to its circulation, than the Bible—and certainly no book is less understood! With all the preaching we have—and some of it is very excellent—there is a great ignorance of the rudimentary truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere! One is surprised to find that the language which is used in the pulpit is not understood at all by the mass of the people. They do not know where the preacher is—he is somewhere up in the clouds—they learn nothing from his big words! They suppose it is all right, and very good, and they listen to it—but as far as instruction is concerned, many a preacher might almost as well speak in Syrian! “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” It is a happy thing to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come in the flesh, that He took upon Himself the sins of His

people, that He bore the wrath of God on their behalf, that by believing in Him, men are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. It is a blessed thing to know that “in Him we have redemption through His blood,” and sanctification and eternal life! It is a blessed thing to know the Holy Spirit—to know that He converts the soul and comforts, illuminates, guides and sanctifies. It is well to know something of the future life. To know the Doctrine of Election, the Doctrine of Effectual Calling and the Doctrine of the Eternal Security of the Saints. Many there are who have not found out these Truths of God, but if we have done so, it is not a thing to boast of, but a matter to be very thankful for! I am afraid the Bible is so common that we are not duly grateful for it. And the preaching of the Gospel has become so usual a thing to us that we are not sufficiently mindful of the high privilege conferred upon anyone who is permitted to hear it. Be glad, dear Friends, that so far as instruction in the Gospel is concerned, we are not left in the dark, but we can say, thanks be to God, *we know*, for we have been taught—some of us from our youth up. We know, for we have searched the Scriptures. We know, for we have listened to a Gospel ministry. We know, for we have weighed, judged and studied these things for ourselves.

II. *There is a far higher knowledge than this, which I shall speak of secondly.* By knowing is frequently meant APPREHENDING and understanding. This kind of knowledge is opposed to a mere hearing of Doctrine and facts without understanding their inner meaning. To wit, a man may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died, but He may not understand the great Truth of Substitution and why Jesus died. Now, I do not say that any very deep understanding of the Truth is necessary to salvation, but I do say that it is an inestimable privilege to be able to go deep into these things and to know not merely the facts, but the reason of the facts—and the teaching of the facts. A nut is very well, but I prefer to crack the shell and get the kernel. It is delightful to read the Word, but to meditate upon it and understand it is the great matter! In instruction we are like the cow when cropping the grasses. But *apprehension* is like the same creature ruminating—when she lies down and chews the cud! It is then that the real nourishment is gained. John uses the word, “know,” in that sense in the second clause of the 20th verse of our text—“And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may *know*.” That is, He has taught us what is meant by His coming. From our very childhood we knew that Jesus came in the flesh, but perhaps it is only a little while ago that we understood how—

*“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire”—*

and how He stands as our Representative before the Throne of God at this moment. We know the Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness as a matter of fact, but, perhaps, we have not even now entered into the full sense of our acceptance in the Beloved. I urge upon everyone who knows the Truth of God to pray daily for a deeper understanding of its innermost meaning, that he may know the marrow and fatness of the Covenant, may dig into the mines of Revelation and turn up those masses of gold which surface readers never discover! The Scriptures do not at once yield up the whole of their wealth even to a student. He must dig and dig, and dig and dig again. Jerome used to say, “I adore the plenitude of Holy Scripture.” And well he might, for there is a mighty fullness in it. I think it was Henry Martin who, when he had to translate the Bible into the Persian language, said that he never knew the Word so well as when he had to go over every syllable of it. You remember Uncle Tom spelling “L-e-t let, n-o-t not, y-o-u-r your, h-e-a-r-t-s hearts be troubled,” and so on, and how he said that every letter of it was sweet. After you have thought over a verse for hours, you feel persuaded that you have found out its full teaching. Perhaps you have looked to learned authors and noticed the correct text and many good thoughts thereon, and yet further on a new meaning pops up—and perhaps weeks after, when that text has been abiding under your tongue like a sweet morsel, you all of a sudden say, “I never saw this before! Here is something fresh and still more wonderful! Now I know the inmost sense of this delightful Scripture.”

How I wish that all Christians in this sense *knew*, so that they could say “We know, we know, we know.” We ought not merely to assert our belief in an orthodox creed, but we should know the meaning of it. We should not merely confess that such-and-such are our doctrinal sentiments, but we should go into the Truths of God like bees into the cups of the flowers and find out where their honey lies! O that we could all feel that we have gone into the secret caves of Revelation, the Spirit of God holding a flaming torch and leading us into all Truth! O that we might all see the innumerable sparkles of those precious gems which glitter in the deep places where the lion’s whelp has not trodden, far down where only the

Spirit of God can lead—and where only an eye that has been touched with heavenly eye-salve can see! Oh, for a Church made up of people who understand and, therefore, know!

III. *We know by instruction and we know by apprehension, but there is a sweeter sense than this. We know, in a third sense, by personal acquaintance.* You will find that meaning in such passages as the Second Chapter, at the 13th and 14th verses—“I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning.” Our text is another specimen. “We *know* that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may *know* Him.” I will not quote all the texts—there are many of that kind. Thus we know the Lord Himself! A friend comes to you and he says, “Do you know such a person?” You say first, “I know there is such a person”—that is instruction. Being further asked, “But, do you know him?” You answer, “Well, I know that he was a fine tall man, a soldier in the infantry, and that he went to the Crimea.” That is a sort of knowing him by apprehension, but does not fully answer the question, “Do you know him?” You say, “Well, I cannot say that I know him, for if I were to see him, I could not recognize him, I have never even spoken to him.” To be acquainted with a man is a higher order of knowledge than the former, and in that sense Believers know God, know Jesus Christ and know the Holy Spirit. They are acquainted with God! “No, man has seen God at any time,” but we have spoken to Him and He has spoken to us. We have not heard His voice with these ears, but we are sure that we have heard Him in our hearts. Our spirits know His voice. We have sometimes been bowed down with terror as He has spoken and brought us under the spirit of bondage. But now we know the sound of His voice as a Spirit of Love and we respond to it, crying, “Abba, Father.”

We know the voice of Jesus. We are like the sheep who will not follow a stranger, “for they know not the voice of strangers.” But we know Jesus, and when He speaks to our souls we answer to His call. We not only know His voice, but we know *Him*. We have come into personal contact with the Christ of God, not in mere imagination, but in fact. As surely as we live, the eternal God in Jesus Christ has looked upon us and has touched us—no, more, has worked a miracle on us and has made us new creatures, “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” I speak not of you all. I speak only of those of whom it is true that they do know the Lord. The Lord Jesus has become our familiar Acquaintance. We tell Him all our griefs. There is not a trouble but we carry to Him, not a sorrow but we pour it into His bosom! And He, on the other hand, reveals His heart to us, for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”

True Believers, especially full-grown Believers, when they are advanced in the Divine Life, know the Lord Jesus Christ as they know their friends—yes, as they know their very selves! They speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. They even know Him as they cannot know their friends, for they have received Him into themselves and they have become one with Him. They have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and He is in them and they in Him with an intimate knowledge excelling all other knowledge beneath the sun! Though they do not profess to know all that is to be known of Christ, for there is a love of Christ that passes knowledge, and heights and depths that are beyond all mortal ken, yet they do know Him and their daily aspiration is to know Him more and more fully!

See, then, that as apprehension surpasses instruction, so acquaintance rises far beyond apprehension. May you and I know with this third knowledge and live in the sweet enjoyment of it all our days!

IV. *Out of this rises a fourth degree of knowledge, namely, that of CERTAINTY as opposed to skepticism.* When we are under instruction, doubts may arise. When we apprehend and understand, doubts may still trouble us. But when we come to be acquainted with Jesus, they are less likely to haunt us. Out of fellowship with Jesus springs the higher state of absolute certainty as to Divine things! John himself was very certain. I read to you the commencement of his Epistle just now, and you saw how confident he was. And we find him writing all through his Epistle with equal strength and force of assurance. He says in the Third Chapter, the fifth verse, “You know that He was manifested to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin.” And in the 24th verse, “And hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.” In the Fifth Chapter read verse nineteen—“We *know* that we are of God.” And few as he felt that his brethren were and the whole world engaged on the other side! In the spirit of Athanasius, he cries, “The whole world lies in the Wicked One.” He allows no force to the evidence even of a contradicting world, because one man abiding in the Truth has more weight in his witness than millions under the power of the Father of Lies!

Now Brothers and Sisters, this is a blessed state to get into—that of certainty! I am utterly amazed at hearing it continually asserted that the thoughtful public teacher must make great allowances for “the spirit of the age, which is one of

earnest skepticism.” I do not believe it! The spirit of the age is that of thoughtlessness and trifling! But what have I or any other Christian to do with the spirit of the age? The spirit which is in us by which we ought to speak is the Spirit of God—not the spirit of the age! In what spirit are Christian ministers to speak? The spirit of the first century, while the first century lasts, I suppose? The spirit of the second century when the second century comes in and so, from age to age the spirit of the Christian is to alter? Can it be so? You remember when they condemned Leighton because he did not speak according to the times? He replied, “If all of you are speaking for the times, let one poor Brother speak for eternity.” Was he not correct? Surely the Spirit of the Truth of God never changes, for the Truth of God is Immutable! Surely the Spirit of God never alters, for He is Divine! Have we one medicine for one age and another medicine for another? Does it run thus—“Go you into all the world and *adapt the Gospel* to every century?” I find it not so written! Our standing orders are, Preach *the Gospel*, the *Gospel*, the *same Gospel* to every creature, thoughtful or thoughtless, philosophical or ignorant, civilized or uncivilized. *Semper idem* is the motto which the Gospel may write above her temples! There let it stand. She cannot alter. For her to alter were death to the Truth of God and treason to Christ! Though we believe not and though the age grows doubting, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you are not certain about these things, may God grant that you may be certain! Oh, to be uncertain whether the Savior loved me and gave Himself for me—it would be as death to my soul! Some find delight in pulling down, as far as they can, the eternal pillars of the Temple, but to see a sacrilegious hand laid on the least of them is painful in the extreme! There hangs my hope on yonder bloody tree where the Incarnate God offered up expiation for my sin! If you can disprove the Doctrine of Atonement, my comfort is gone! I care no more to live, there remains nothing for me. Therefore is my soul driven back by sheer necessity to fundamental Truths of God and cannot be content till she casts away the rubbish of human opinion and gets down to the rock against the sheer granite of eternal Truths which God has spoken, which are, “yes,” and, “amen,” in Christ Jesus! Labor after this Brothers and Sisters! Let it not be to you a question whether there is such a thing as regeneration—it cannot be a question if you, yourself, are regenerate! It will not be a question whether there is such a thing as justification if you are justified! You cannot doubt as to sanctification if you are consciously sanctified, any more than angels in Heaven will doubt whether there is a Heaven while living there and enjoying the glory of it! May we get up to this fourth point, which is that of *absolute certainty* as opposed to skepticism.

V. *But now, fifthly, there is a knowledge of another kind, very useful in these days, namely, that of DISCERNMENT as opposed to a readiness to receive erroneous teaching.* That meaning was intended by John. Read in the Second Chapter, beginning at the 18th verse—“Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and *you know* all things.” He does not mean that the saints know everything, but they judge, they discern, they know the Truth of God from error. When Doctrine presents itself to you, you know whether it is of Christ or of antichrist, and act accordingly. You are able to judge, to discern, and to distinguish. In the Fourth Chapter you have it again, at the second verse—“Hereby know we the Spirit of God (or discern the Spirit of God). Every spirit that confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” “Hereby,” says he in the sixth verse, “know we the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error.” We know which is which, even as our Lord says—“A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” And again, “I know My sheep, and am known of Mine.” There is a spirit of discernment and it is needed much now-a-days. It comes to us in the following way—instruction, apprehension, acquaintance, certainty—these bring discernment to detect the false from the true.

Very delightful, too, is it to my mind to see how the least instructed Christian who does not know his Lord and love Him, is not to be led astray. Mere professors like to hear a man who can speak fluently. And if he will use very pretty phrases and talk about waterfalls, and the rippling rills, and the skies, and the clouds and Heaven knows what besides of mimic poetry, they mightily cry up the orator! The child of God thinks not so, for he has another way of judging. He says when he hears such rhetoric, “There was nothing for me.” “What do you mean? There were plenty of flowers.” “I cannot eat flowers,” he says. He judges whether he was fed or not, and he knows what he can eat. Nobody teaches sheep what is good for food and what is not—they know by instinct. I do not suppose they could preach a sermon upon healthy herbs

and unhealthy plants, but they know by some means—and so do Believers. They could not write it down. They could not compose an essay upon discernment, but they know what they can feed upon and they know what they cannot feed upon—and they have very sure tests within them. “Ah,” says the Believer, “that will not do for me. There is no Christ in it. Away with it.” They listen to some humble preacher who loves Jesus Christ and lifts Him high, and they say, “Ah, well. He puts his *h*'s in the wrong places and his grammar is deficient, but we were blessed, for when he exalted our Master and preached of Him, our very hearts danced within us for joy!” I have felt just that myself—I have sat and cried as if my heart would break to hear Jesus Christ spoken of by a plain working man—but have felt indignant when I have listened to a learned thinker confusing the minds of the simple by words worth nothing at all!

Yesterday I was in a certain place, needing refreshment. It was pressed upon me to purchase something which was said to be very good to eat. And as far as I could make out, when I partook of it, it was *nothing* beaten up and blown out to a great size and a little sugar powdered over it! And it reminded me of the sermons that I have read in which there was nothing whatever—only blown out extensively, developed into a great size and a little sugar of rhetoric put to it! Hungry souls cannot feed on wind! They will not have it. They very soon go away. Of course the fine fashionable people—the empty professors who look for words, only, say, “Oh, you must not be uncharitable. We cannot expect doctrine in every sermon,” and so on. Thus like the wild asses they sniff up the wind and are satisfied! But not so the people of God—they feel that time is too short and eternity too long—and Hell too terrible, and Heaven too precious—to have their Sundays frittered away by pretty little essays which have as much connection with Mohammedanism as with the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of such preachers around—and an abundance of gentlemen who will pat them on the back and say, “These are highly intellectual brothers and are fit to occupy large spheres.”

Our business is to preach Jesus Christ—and if we cannot preach Him, let us take to tailoring, or plowing, or cobbling, or some other honest way of earning one's livelihood! To preach anything else but Christ crucified is to betray our Lord and Master! And most assuredly to bring upon ourselves confusion and condemnation in the Last Great Day of account! Dear Brothers, may we have given to us the spirit of discrimination that we may know the precious from the vile, for if we do so as preachers we shall be as God's mouth! And may we as hearers have the same discrimination, that we may always be able to receive that which is of God, and to reject at once with solemn determination that which is according to the spirit of the world and not after Jesus Christ!

VI. *I pass on from that form of knowledge to another, which is this—knowledge in this Epistle is frequently meant ASSURANCE in opposition to anxiety.* That is the frequent use of the term, here, as in the Second Chapter, the third to the eighth verses—“Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby *know* we that we are in Him.” Then in the 14th verse of the Third Chapter—“We *know* that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” In the 24th verse—“Hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.” Far too seldom do Christians reach this point. They should do so and they should come up the ladder by the steps I have described, but many seem to think that it is almost necessary for them to always say most timorously, “I hope I am in Christ. I trust I am saved.” They dare not say, “I know that I am in Him, and that His Spirit is in me.”

Now, if they have never reached this rung of the ladder, God forbid we should condemn them, for some of God's children remain trembling and doubting for many a day, yet they should not be content to be there. It ought to be the desire and aim of every one of us to know whether we are saved or not, because it is not a question that we can afford to leave in doubt. Any person here who has invested his money in any commercial enterprise, who should have it hinted to him this evening when he reaches home, that it is an unsound concern, would not be at all likely to be quiet until he had discovered whether it was so or not. And, therefore, our soul's eternal interests, which are far more important, cannot be allowed to remain in suspense. As soon as ever the question is raised, a sensible man will be unsatisfied till it is settled! “Can it be settled?” someone asks. “Can it be?” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, believe me—many of us do know our calling and election! Why? Because God has given us Infallible tokens. He says, “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” We do believe in Him! We trust Him with all our hearts and God has said that we are saved and have everlasting life! Shall we doubt God? Then “we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”

ren.” If we feel a hearty love to God’s people, Inspiration tells us that we have passed from death unto life! Shall we doubt it? No, we will believe it!

“Well,” says one, “that seems to me to be presumption.” Do you think so? Suppose you promise your children to-night that you will take them out tomorrow morning and one of them says to you, “Well, Father, I hope you will.” There is no joy in his countenance—why? Because he says he does not think you will. He is afraid it would be presumption to believe you! Do you not think it is presumption in him to doubt you? Look at that other little one. You say, “Jane, I shall take you out tomorrow.” She claps her hands with delight! The thoughts of doubting you never enters her little head. Is she presumptuous? What? Presumptuous to believe her father? Surely it never can be presumption to believe God! To disbelieve God and to think highly of yourself—that is presumption! But to trust God and to believe His Word—is there any presumption in that? “Ah,” says one, “but if I knew for certain that I was saved, I am afraid that I would grow careless.” Why? Full assurance is the very thing that makes men watchful! They feel it such a great joy to be loved of God that they are afraid of doing anything to grieve Him! The man who does not know whether he has any money or not is not likely to be very watchful over the box which may, perhaps, contain something, or may not. But if he knows that he has a treasure there, he will take good care that nobody shall rob him of it! Brothers and Sisters, if we were slaves under the spirit of bondage and had to be whipped to do what was right by the fear of being sent to Hell, that would be one thing—but the children of God are not slaves—they are sons and daughters and because God’s everlasting love to His own dear children can never turn into hate, do they, therefore, disobey their heavenly Father? God forbid! Assurance is the mainspring of holiness in a Christian!

VII. *The last work is this. There is another knowledge, namely, the knowledge of UNSTAGGERING FAITH which knows a thing which is not AS YET.* You have an instance in the second verse of the Third Chapter. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but *we know* that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” Why, O great Apostle, did you not say, “We *hope* that when He shall appear”? No, no! He did not hope it at all—he knew it! He was sure of it. But do we not generally say, “We trust that when Christ shall appear it will be so?” So far true, but oh, it is better when faith reckons the things that are not as though they were. A man will take a thousand pound check from his neighbor and say, “I have the money.” “My dear Sir, you have not! You have only a piece of paper.” “Ah,” he says, “but it has a good name to it. It is as good as gold.” Surely the promise of a God that cannot lie is as good as the check!

I bless God that for some little time instead of worrying myself about a thousand things which concern this Church, and the College, and the Orphanage, and the Colportage—whenever I have any sort of trouble, it has been my sweet privilege to breathe a prayer to God and leave all my anxieties at His feet. I do the best I can to keep things right and then I leave them with the Lord. If the works are not His work, then let them go to pieces! If they are, then He will attend to them. I am an instrument in His hands and as such I do the little I can, and leave the rest to Him. It is wonderful how smoothly things go when we trust them with the Lord! Your fidgeting and worrying do all the mischief! Something gets between the wheels and they will not work—and I will tell you what that something is—it is your own finger—and when you feel such a squeeze that you cannot bear it, it is a lesson to you. Take your finger out and let it alone. The best way to do with a great trouble is to pray to God about it and then put it on the shelf and never take it down again.

You have come here on a week-night, some of you, with a heavy burden. All the time the preaching is going on, and the praying, and singing you have lost your load, or have not felt it. But just as you get outside, you say, “I have left my burden inside! Let me go and take it up again!” And you feel it on your mind as heavily as ever! Beloved, this is not the way to trust God. The way to trust Him is to cast your care on Him altogether. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Be sure that when you pass through the rivers they shall not overflow you, and through the fires, they shall not burn you. Be sure that as your days so shall your strength be. Be sure that God will bring you through, for He will deliver His people out of all troubles and give them a sure admittance into His eternal Kingdom and Glory. We should speak with certainty of troubles and trials—and deliverance from them—and of all the future we should say, as our text has it, “We know, and we know, and we know.” That is how Paul spoke. “We know that all things work together for good.” He did not say he thought it and he hoped it, but, “we know.” “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” and by its assuring power “we know, and we know, and we know.”

Now, dear Hearer, if you are unconverted, what do you know? If you know not the Lord, what do you know? Nothing that is of any use to you spiritually, by any true knowledge. Oh that God might make you know this—that you are lost by nature and, unless forgiven, you will be lost forever and ever! And when you know that, I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to make you know that there is a Savior—and that He is able to save unto the uttermost! And then may He make you know in the fullest sense that He loved you and gave Himself for you! So may you know Him and be found in Him when He comes in the clouds of Heaven. Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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