

No.
182.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

The Grounds Set Forth
in the 1st Epistle of John.

"BY THIS WE KNOW".

An Address (revised) at

Forest Gate. E. 7.

9th February 1922.

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"BY THIS WE KNOW".

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

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It is a good thing to know we have eternal life, but HOW do we know it? If we go to many and say to them, "How do you know you are saved"? we shall have an answer of this character - "I know in my own experience; I FEEL that I am saved; I realise what salvation means". I doubt the sufficiency of that answer. There are myriads who have felt they have been saved, who have never been saved at all. Feelings must not take the place of Divine testimony; they must be carefully tested WITHIN the sphere of Divine testimony. There are others who will say, "Saved? Undoubtedly. God has declared in the Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I believe Him. I am saved". Personally, though respecting the underlying thought, I doubt such an answer. When FIRST we are brought near through helplessness to the Saviour of guilty ones, then our sole assurance is the finished work of One Who died for the worthless; but when we have owned the Name of the Lord for a year or even for six months, though the ground of salvation remains exactly the same, such answers are not quite satisfactory. They may imply a one-

sidness^{ed} in the Christian life, or a merely mental faith.

Thanks be to God an unsatisfactory answer does not prove that a man is wrong in his heart-condition. Those to whom God's servant Paul came at Ephesus in Acts 19 answered in a very unsatisfactory way. You will sometimes find those who do not know how to answer, but who are better in their spiritual experience than their words. Yet we ought to know how to answer every one.

Does God give us any hint as to the true manner of assurance of salvation? Because, though assurance is not salvation, but dependent on salvation, nevertheless without the assurance of salvation there is not the joy of salvation; consequently, assurance, though it adds nothing to salvation; is a very blessed accompaniment of salvation - helpful in witness, helpful in our own happiness, and to the glory of God in our manifestation of that which He so richly gives to His Own.

Shall we take in connection with this subject, one book of Scripture to-night? We will ponder the epistle of John - and see how this book handles right knowledge, and sets before us a rich, definite and fixed knowledge. In other words we ask "HOW can we know"? What is GOD'S answer? and if we find it is altogether, or at least, largely different from the usual reply, it is time that we examined the usual reply, for Satan always tries to lead to a wrong mode of answering, even when he is dealing with those who know, in measure, the real facts. The expression which comes in the epistle of John

again and again is the expression "IN THIS WE KNOW". THAT is the term which the heavenly Analyst uses. We are pondering the profession of faith. How can we know that a man is saved? "IN THIS WE know". "IN THIS we know". "IN THIS we know" - sometimes rendered in ^{A.V.}(our) version, "Hereby we know" and so forth. If we find that God says we know by feelings, let us accept the statement, but if we find God emphasizes other ways of knowing, let us accept His statements. The expression "In this we know" is manifestly a favourite expression with John, whereas we hardly find it in the epistles of Paul. It is true that both through Peter and Paul the Holy Spirit uses the words "This knowing", but "In this we know" seems particularly the Holy Spirit's message through John alluding back to the gospel promise- "In this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one toward another" (John 13. 35).

In 1 John 2. 3 it is written, "And hereby we do know that we know Him IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS". Here is a death-blow to sentimentalism. The OPENING statement cuts at the root of sentiment. "Hereby we do know that we know Him " - because we feel so happy over it? No, it is delightful to have a happiness by grace, but that is not the subject of this verse - "In this we know that we know Him, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS". One steps forward and says, "I know that I am a child of God because I have such happy experiences; I feel that the Lord speaks to my heart; I know I am saved". It may be so, but be careful. If any one says to you, "Oh, I

have such a love and such experience I never had before", and you come to the same person and bring the Lord's commandments forward, and there is a holding back; be careful, be very careful. Some of the prettiest language of apparent spiritual experience I have found uttered when one was on more than an inclined plane to entire separation from God. You say, "Were the words true"? Undoubtedly the words could not have described the real spiritual experience, but the froth of emotion may appear very beautiful. I am not pleading against emotion. I want you to have more emotion, I want to have more emotion myself, I want us to be filled with holy emotion. "My inward affections were moved for Him" says the bride in the Song of Songs. You cannot make the Song of Songs a cold book; you cannot read lukewarmness into that or any other part of Scripture. I have no faith in mentalism, any more than sentimentalism; we all become crippled and onesided very very quickly. We need to be those who are centred around our beloved Lord and "growing up unto Him in all things". There is always a danger that Satan will seek to bring onesidedness.

But just now we are considering what the Holy Spirit says as to the KNOWLEDGE of salvation. If I know I am saved in the right way, then there is a call to me to show the joy of salvation; there is a call to me to live above the petty trials of this passing scene; there is a call to me to have a deep emotion of love to the One Who saved me; but let me KNOW I am saved, let my emotion come in connection with my

knowledge. The first statement therefore, is "IF WE DO HIS COMMANDMENTS". Come to verse 5. "Whoso KEEPETH His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him". The same message over again. "Hereby we know". How? By our inner attitude to the WORDS OF GOD. Let us go on further. Let us see if this is the testimony throughout the book.

Chapter 3. 16. This will help us to understand our subject, though it is a slightly different aspect. "Hereby perceive we the love of God; because He laid down His life for us". Ah, then, God's love is manifested by what He DID. If I love, this must be manifested by what I do. "We OUGHT". The word "love" has some strange companions in Scripture, - strange from the HUMAN standpoint. The Holy Spirit emphasizes love in connection with giving, serving, doing commandments, and the word "ought". "Oh, we feel love", says one. True, true, and the word "feel" is primarily linked with love in present-day language; but the Holy Spirit says "By love, serve". "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". "Love ought". Love is nought, unless it is the Lord's OUGHT. Love is not afraid of the word "owe". "Owe no man anything, but to love one another". Love is a debt. "Oh", you say, "I like to feel free". Paul said he delighted to feel bound. "Paul a bond-servant". LOVE'S ought. My condition affects my view of my position. When I stand on the top of a pinnacle, I do not resent the railing around, if I am in a condition of sanity, and, therefore, thankful for true protection.

Thank God for PROTECTION of His commandments. They are not grievous, when there is love. Therein is all the difference, let me repeat it, all the difference. You know the condition in your own physical life. One day you are unwell and have no appetite at all. Another day you are well; the weather is cold, and you feel the refreshment of food. Do you say, "What a trouble I have to eat my meal?" No, the CONDITION decides everything: We write everything from our own standpoint, we write our biographies from our own standpoint before God. The THINGS which please us one day displease us another day; THE THINGS have not changed. WE have changed. Love never resents an "ought". Sentimentalism hates the word "ought". Fleshly emotion dislikes commandments, "I want to love just as I like", but grace leads us to love just as the Lord likes. Love MISPLACED leads to some strange things; it will spend a lot of time in preparing spices which are not needed. Martha was very lovingly preparing for Christ extra things which He did not want, and because she wanted to love Him in her own way she became cross. She was quite willing to do many things for Him, provided she could have the ARRANGING. There are many who are willing to love and do ever so much, if you will let them arrange for themselves what they are to do, but true love loves the Lord's "ought".

Chapter 3. 18. 19. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him". So singing hymns is not a PROOF of love in deed and in truth.

Oh that we may grow up unto Christ in ALL THINGS. Love is devoted, love gives, and spends and is spent.

Chapter 3. 24. "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us". Stranger still! There are some who quickly tell us, "I was led by the Spirit". The Spirit of God does guide. But beware, those who are led by the Spirit of God do not so often TALK about it. You will find those who will immediately tell you. "I prayed about this; I was led of the Lord; I sought the Lord's guidance". Be careful! Many temperaments can often ~~find~~^{find} a leading which SEEMS the Lord's leading, and can feel happy in that which they "feel sure" is a distinct arrangement from the Lord, - Satan is disguised as an angel of light. Notice here that the guidance of the Spirit is in the same verse as the keeping His commandments. "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him. And HEREBY we know" - "IN THAT". We cannot know Him unless we keep ^{His} commandments. We can imagine, we cannot know. Surely the Holy Spirit repeats this, AGAIN AND AGAIN, with a very definite object.

Chapter 4. 2. does not refer to a personal experience, but rather to an examination of OTHERS, yet it helps our meditation as to ourselves, and chapter 4. 6 gives a sidelight. "He that is not of God HEARETH NOT US. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth". We come along further. Chapter 4. 13. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit". This is explained by 3. 24. The

Spirit of God NEVER leads against the words of God. Now let us come to 5. 2. How do we know that we love the children of God? This takes our mind back to the similar expression of 3. 14 - "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren". "Oh", you say, "now we have reached something which is plain, clear testimony". And you add "If we feel we love the brethren, then we know we have passed out of death into life. This is what I want. Feelings decide it". How do you know you love the brethren? You say, "I FEEL I love them". I doubt it. I doubt your feelings. You say, "Doubt my feelings? you have no evidence against them". I doubt them. "Why do you doubt them?" Because you lay such a stress on them, that is why I doubt them, I doubt boasted feelings. How do you know what you feel? "Feelings are quite easily understood". Wait a moment. Feelings may be only temporary; let us see if we can really tell that we do love the brethren. Chapter 5. 2. "BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE LOVE THE CHILDREN OF GOD, WHEN WE LOVE GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS". In almost every passage where we have "In this we know", the Holy Spirit brings before us keeping commandments. What a legal book the Epistle of John is! It is crammed full with that legal word "love". It is crammed full with the legal word "commandments", and finds no contradiction between love and commandments. Actually you will find commandments, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the same verses. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom". Freedom from commandments? Not at all. Freedom to commandments.

What is freedom? Is self the centre or the Lord? Freedom with self the centre is bondage. The drunkard shows this in extreme form. Every child of God knows the miserable feelings of his own way granted to him as a chastisement. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul". Who is the happiest child? The child who has his own way? Not at all, his will is not happiness, his will is not freedom. The Spirit of the Lord gives the real freedom, the freedom with the Lord as the Centre. Well, then do I really love the children of God? There is a man of the world who says, "I love people, my religion is to do as much good as I can to others; I love them. I am a good father, I am a good husband. If I see anyone in need I go to him. Surely I am showing love? I will not go to church or chapel so-called, but I am more consistent than many church or chapel going people. If I see a man who is down I will help him up gladly". Wait a moment, friend. You say you show love? What if you are a murderer, you may be kind to your children, but while you do not lead them to Christ (and you cannot unless you have come to Him yourself), you are leading them to destruction. Do you call it love if a man gives a meal and makes you at home, offers you a night's rest and kills you in the night? You say, Treachery! There is more treachery in the world's love than we realise. What about the believer? Is it love to another unless you lead him to the will of the Lord? "Feelings" will not do instead of this. Is it love to another unless you lead him to the Lord's

commandments? THAT will receive reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Is it love to the children of God unless you love them on the line of the truth? Love is not flippant and amusing talk; love is not the mere singing of enjoyable hymns; love is not an emotional shake of the hands. Love is deeper, and involves a concern for the welfare of others' souls. "Oh", you say, "I see it". Now comes in another danger - a mental grasp of this is most dangerous. If love without commandments is not love, commandments without love are not commandments, IN OUR EXPERIENCE. Love obeys; obedience without love is not love and not obedience. You see it? NOW LET THE FEELINGS COME IN, let them be rich and deep and lasting. The Lord has given you the sphere of love- seek grace to fill it with the feelings of obedient joy in the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, beloved friends, let us SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER in this subject, and by our lives illustrate it in the might of the Lord. We feel our need for His power that truth may be enjoyed in its living freshness.
