



Assurance!

by Mark Brunner

## *When To Pass/When To Run!* (Matthew 19:16)

Were you ever in a situation where, despite the fact that there was little or nothing you could do to affect the outcome, you just felt that you had to do something? No? Well, how about the last time you watched your favorite team play foot- ball on TV? The quarterback hands the ball off to the halfback on a third and long and he gets smothered four yards from the first down marker. “Why didn’t you pass the ball? You should have passed. Anyone knows that on third and long you pass the ball!” you shout at the television despite the very real fact that neither the coach nor the quarterback can hear your rebuke. Yet, for those split seconds, your mind and heart believe that someone must be listening.

Assurance. There are some situations we can do little about other than laying down and accepting the outcome.

Here’s a story: Sometime when you’re in an airport, observe the difference between passengers who hold confirmed tickets and those who are on standby. On the one hand you are looking at those who are assured of a seat on the plane; on the other there are those who have no such assurance. The ones with confirmed tickets read newspapers, chat with their friends or sleep. The ones on standby, however, hang around the ticket counter, pace and smoke, smoke and pace. The difference is caused by the confidence factor. Those with confirmed

tickets relax in the comfort of assurance. While those without can only speculate and wonder whether or not they will get a seat. (Source Unknown)

If you knew that in fifteen minutes you would have to stand in judgment before the Holy God and learn your eternal destiny, what would your reaction be? Would you smoke and pace? Would you say to yourself, “I don’t know what God’s going to say--will it be ‘Welcome home, child,’ or will it be ‘Depart from me; I never knew you’? When it comes to our eternal life, there is nothing we can do to affect the outcome other than to believe that our Heavenly Coach and quarter- back, Jesus Christ, has everything under control. And, rest assured, on third and long, He knows when to pass and when to run the ball.

*“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*

## *Hey! The Water’s Fine!* (Luke 21:14-19)

It’s human nature to believe that there is no one better able to judge our safety and comfort than we ourselves. You know--you go on vacation and everyone piles down to the beach. There’s always that one brave soul who leaps right into the water without so much as testing a toe to see whether it’s warm or cold. They dive in and come up always refreshed and beckoning. “Hey! Come on in. The water’s fine!” “Right?” you say. Then you put a toe in and a shiver goes up your spine. You know if you dive in you’ll be fine. But, there’s always that hesitation--that reluctance to believe the voice of reassurance. “Come on. Look at me! Trust me! The water’s fine!”

Assurance. We can’t realize the benefits unless we’re willing to trust the giver.

Here’s a story: A climber in the Alps had come to a perilous gap in the ice where the only way to get across was to place his foot in the outstretched hand of the guide. Told to do this by the guide, the climber hesitated a moment as he looked into the gloomy depths below. For all the obvious reasons, it just didn’t seem like the safe thing to do. Seeing the hesitation, the guide said, “Have no fear, sir, that hand never yet lost a man.” The guide smiled and stretched out his hand again, reassuring the climber. Tentatively, he reached out his foot to the

guide who firmly grasped it in the palm of his hand and, with a lift and a pull, tugged the climber to safety on the other side of the ice gap. (Sunday School Times)

When we commit ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ, we can be sure that we are committed to the strong, sure keeping of hands that have never yet lost a man. The Bible tells us that even when the world threatens us with its most dire persecutions, “Not a hair of y(our) head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life” (Luke 21:18). This is not to say that believers will be exempt from physical harm or death. Rather, he was saying that none of his followers would suffer eternal death. Jesus calls to each of us, “Come in, the water is fine!” With that assurance we can plunge into a life of good works and spiritual health; reassured that He would never ask us to jump unless the water was truly very fine.

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## *The Peace That Came to Stay!* (Isaiah 53:6)

Often I am troubled by the times that we live in. God’s people seem complacent; content to look to themselves and often putting the good of others on hold. It’s easy to be discouraged. Yet, the other day I did something that I hadn’t done in years. I pulled out an old book I have that contains all the great American documents of freedom. I turned to the Declaration of Freedom and began to read. “When in the course of human events . . .” When I was finished I had gained a feeling of reassurance. I simply haven’t reached for them often enough to be reassured.

Assurance. Sometimes its just a matter of looking in the right places.

Here’s a story: In a Gospel meeting a penitent woman was seeking salvation. The evangelist comforted her anxious soul with the assurance of a verse from the prophet Isaiah, and led her to simply take God at His Word, and to depend upon Christ for the forgiveness of sin. She went home rejoicing, but the next morning came downstairs with tears in her eyes. Her son, who had been with her in the meeting the night before, asked, “Mamma, what’s troubling you?”

“Oh,” was the answer, “last night I felt that I was saved. But now it seems like a dream. I’m not sure now.” “Mamma,” said her son, “get your Bible and turn to that verse in Isaiah.” She did so, and read, “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” “Mamma, is the verse still there?” “Yes, my son.” “Then your sins were laid on Jesus,” said the wise son. The mother saw the truth. She took God’s Word without regard to her feelings, and then God’s peace came to stay. (James H. McConkey)

Knowing that God will work good in your life here and in eternity is far different from presuming that He will do it. When we presume we focus on ourselves for confidence in what we believe. When we know that it is true, we rely on a knowledge that only God can give us in and by His Word. If you want to be confident in the knowledge that God is in control, seek Him out where He is found; within the pages of your Bible. There and only there will you find the “peace that came to stay.”

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## *An Old Red Leash!* (Exodus 4:17-20)

Ginger, my big yellow lab, has been gone now for several years. She rests up on Dog Hill along with Cinders and Jetta, our two other beloved Labradors. Even though its been years, I still miss her. She was a special dog and walked with me every morning for years. Each day began when I put on my jacket and then reached for her tattered red leash that hung beside the stove in the entryway to the garage. Ginger would slowly raise herself, wag her big yellow tail and walk over to have her leash clipped on. Even though she’s been gone a long time, I still reach for that leash every morning. I pull it down and tuck it neatly in the pocket of my jacket. Tucked away there, it gives me a strange sort of assurance.

Assurance. There are many things in life that give us hope and build us up. Some are mundane and others not.

Here's a story: Edith E. Adams writes: "Remember when we were standing in front of that great big (they were big to us then) crowd of parents and students, when our time came for recitation, Mother had drilled and drilled and encouraged us that we could do it; and then we forgot to start of that next sentence. We looked at Mother, whose countenance was radiant and with the smile of confidence and assurance, it just simply put fresh hope and courage in us, and that next word just came right out . . . It is like Jesus! When we are trying so hard, and the result looks like momentarily, complete failure, the 'help of His countenance' is all one needs to sustain and give new courage."

When you and I face uncertainties in life, there's nothing wrong with reaching out for the familiar, something that has meaning--something that we love and cherish. The Bible gives us many pictures of this. Moses had his staff. David had his sling. Both gave their bearers courage and reassurance. Both reminded the bearer that God was with them. When they needed reassurance, these things reminded them of God's presence in their lives. Like a mother's face or an favorite dog's old leash, the things we love do the same. They sustain and reassure that God is never far from us. We only need to grasp the familiar, hold on and not let go.

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## *Don't Walk Into The Night!* (Romans 8:38)

One of the worst feelings in life has been the feeling of abandonment. I remember years ago waiting at school for my dad to pick me up after a basketball game. It was getting dark and I was miles from home. By nature, worrier that I am, the "where is he?" instinct kicked in pretty quickly for a kid who always lived by timing. He said he would be there and I had to trust that. But, he wasn't there and it wasn't long before I began to feel abandoned. I could have started to walk home. But, he said he would come and, despite my inner feelings, I just had to believe he would come. It was a matter of faith over feeling.

The apostle Paul was bothered by similar feelings. Yet he wrote: “I know this Christ who dwells in me, and I live in Him. And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Faith! It overcomes through assurance all of our fears.

Here’s a story: One afternoon a man went to visit a sick man. Since the man was near death and he a Christian, he asked if he was a Christian. “I am.” the man said. “What church do you belong to?” said he. “I belong to the church of Christ.” “Yes I know, but what persuasion are you of?” “Well, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Albert P. Graves)

I think that is about the same kind of persuasion that the apostle had in mind here when he said, “I am persuaded that He is able.” That is, Jesus is able “to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” We are surrounded, to be sure, by unseen powers of evil; that creepy feeling that made me feel abandoned when my dad didn’t show up on time. But when we are reminded that Christ is “able” to save us, no matter what, it is faith that keeps us from walking into the night when we should be staying put waiting on Him. This is a Christian’s most blessed assurance.

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