

CONSOLATION

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The soul sustained by hope rising to ASSURANCE

Heb. 6:11

It is a very serious and interesting question, whether a believer may in this life attain to an infallible certainty of his ultimate salvation. Nor is the problem a new one. The times of the Reformation, three hundred years ago, were much occupied with this very inquiry. The finding of the genuine gospel among the old ruins of superstitious ceremonial and semi-pelagian dogmas, shed such a sunshine over the Christian world, that there were multitudes whose hope was so exalted as to expel all doubt. This was consolation indeed; for such a certainty of bliss was peculiarly suitable in a day when it was needful to suffer for Christ, and when martyrdoms began to reappear in the church. The reformers, one and all, testified that a man might be assured of his eventual salvation.

But this doctrine found many adversaries. It comported well with the denial of final perseverance, to deny this. The same people were the opponents of both. In the first place, the Papists admitted no certainty concerning one's being in a state of grace, beyond what was conjectural. They even maintained that such a certainty was not desirable, and that it tended to relaxation of morals. It would have been more honest, if they had maintained that it tended to relaxation of the priestly tie, and diminution of the papal majesty. For he who is assured of God's love, and hears his remission from his judge, will feel little concern about human absolution. Here is a death-blow to 'Catholic masses' for the soul's health, and the merits of 'dead saints' laid up in store for the behalf of sinners, vows, pilgrimages, penances, indulgences, and universal monkery. There is no need of these—to one who has the peace of God shed abroad in the heart.

There were other adversaries of triumphant grace, and they set themselves to deny 'assurance of salvation'. The old Arminians (in this differing very much from the modern Wesleyans) united in holding that it was neither laudable nor useful to be placed above doubt. They admitted

a 'conditional certainty'—but none that was real. For how can they who admit the danger of falling from a state of grace have any assurance for eternity? They may fall away tomorrow. They may fall away under the next temptation. They may make shipwreck in the very haven, and lose Christ after they have become speechless in death.

It suited well with a 'slavish and legalistic' system to deny the possibility of assurance. Having no knowledge of a method of grace, and the ingenuous, grateful, willing service which is rendered by a renewed soul—they dreaded to let the convinced come from under this yoke of bondage. They thought that the moment he was sure of escape from hell, he would live in sin; that there could be no Christianity, save under the lash of Moses. The effect of such a scheme is apparent, to a melancholy degree, in the character of many estimable, and of some great men. A remarkable instance is that of the celebrated Dr. Johnson. It would be difficult to point out a more gloomy record of experience, than that which is contained in his religious meditations and diary. These extend through a period of forty-six years. They are solemn, affecting, and undoubtedly sincere. But they lack one thing, and that all-important, namely the idea of free salvation by Jesus Christ. Dr. Johnson had learned that all assurance was enthusiasm. He knew no motive but fear. He is perpetually lamenting over sin—but never cherishing a sense of pardon. Almost until his last hours, he was in bondage through fear of death. He never willingly allowed conversation in his presence to turn on this painful subject, and sometimes repressed it with his characteristic and boisterous indignation. Now how far did this absence of that assurance (which he so strenuously denied to be possible) tend to the development of Christian character? Let us read, amidst his lamentations over lost time, and his petty fasts and austerities, the record on his fifty-sixth birthday, Sept. 18, 1764. "I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving, having from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing." His error with regard to the certainty of final glory, is the error of thousands, who maintain the same scheme of partial grace.

In opposition to all this, the doctrine of the Reformed Theologians has uniformly been, that there is an assurance of God's love, which may be attained in the present life—and it is the nature of this **ASSURANCE** which we shall now in the first place consider.

The word rendered *full-assurance*, is one of striking import. It carries with it the idea of fullness, such as of a tree laden with fruit, or of a vessel's sails when stretched by a favoring gale. It is unwavering conviction, persuasion which defies all doubt, and expectation rising to certainty. And it stands distinguished from a conviction and persuasion of any or all the propositions of revealed truth, as involving an application of that truth to our own proper case. The former is called *the assurance of faith*; the latter (of which we are now treating), *the assurance of hope*, and sometimes the full assurance of hope. Heb. 6:11. As faith unfolds into hope, so the

assurance or highest measure of faith into the assurance or highest measure of hope. They therefore often coexist; yet they are distinguishable.

The assurance of **Faith** is the acme of unwavering and undoubting confidence that the revealed propositions are the very truth of God—a persuasion so firm, as to be the basis and resting-place of all Christian reliance. It is saving faith carried to its height. It sees Christ, and believes in him. The assurance of **Hope** is a settled, unshaken, well-grounded, immovable persuasion and certainty, that I, as an individual, have thus believed; that I am in Christ; that God is my reconciled Father; that I shall never come into condemnation; and that my heaven is secure. The former is a universal duty; the latter is a gracious privilege. One is possessed by every believer; the other is a sovereign gift to a part of the flock. By one, I believe that God is true; by the other, that he is my God. By the one, I see Christ to be an almighty and a willing Savior; by the other I am assured that he will save me in particular. By one, I lean on Christ as my only and all-sufficient supporter; by the other, I am made certain that I have actually done so, and hope without wavering that I shall eternally rejoice in him. One is opposed to unbelief, the other to despondency. One connects with Christ; the other reveals the connection. They stand to one another as the blossom to the fruit; or as the deed to the possession; or as the sentence of acquittal. One may coexist with many fears; the other casts out all fear. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever." Whether saving faith, by its essential quality, would not necessarily result in assured hope, provided such faith were only great enough in degree, is a question which would lead us into niceties of disquisition, which at the present time we may profitably wave. That the two have a perceptible difference, must appear from what has been said; and we are thus far enabled to gain some glimpse of the nature of full assurance. But we may look still more nearly at the subject, in a series of particulars.

1. This assurance of hope, is peculiar to true believers. It is possessed by no others. There are, indeed, powerful persuasions in the minds of some—presumptions which may outlive the pang of dying, and knock at the very gate of heaven, and be repulsed only by the Master's word, 'I never knew you!' There are counterfeits of all that is precious; and Satan is the grand artificer of simulated good; and herein is one of his chief devices; and false enthusiasm may show elations and raptures more heady, vociferous and boastful than humble faith. But the hollowness and falsity of such impressions must not be allowed to accomplish Satan's purpose, of cheating us into the opinion that there is no genuine assurance. God is able, not only to renew a soul—but to give an infallible persuasion that it is renewed.

2. The assurance of hope, is not a supernatural revelation of new truth. Inspiration can unquestionably thus communicate; but in the wise

and wonderful economy of grace, inspiration has ceased. Here it is that enthusiasts and fanatics have gone astray. They have shut out all exercise of reason in this matter, all examination of evidences, and sometimes all grounds of Scripture; and have relied on visions, trances, dreams, voices, and bare impressions. Nothing is more immovable than their convictions. Argument is vain—that which came in without reason, cannot be driven out by reason. They are a Scripture unto themselves. In vain do you ask their evidences. They know 'because they know'. And it is important to say thus much upon this delusion, lest any should mistake the path to real gospel comfort, and seek it as a direct, special, immediate, heavenly manifestation, unconnected with the general exaltation of the life of God in the soul. True assurance is after all, founded on the recorded Word.

3. The assurance of hope rests on the promises of God. It is allied to faith; no, it grows out of faith. Where there is no faith, it cannot exist; and it increases with the increase of faith. It results from a firm, unshaken trust in God's gracious declarations. To see ourselves accepted, we must previously "see the things that are freely given us of God." As it is the open view of gospel promises of free salvation through Jesus Christ, which first brings us into vital union with our Redeemer—so it is the further application of the same promises to our own case, the seeing of ourselves as included in them, which gives us the joy of assurance.

4. The assurance that we are in the favor of God, is connected with the existence of Christian evidences in our hearts. It is to a certain extent founded on these. There are some who, in their zeal for grace, and for the efficacy of faith, go so far as to discard all examination of evidences, as legal. They declare, that all true gospel-comfort is to be obtained by a simple looking at the word of promise, and a bare, undoubting faith—without any reflex consideration of what Christ has wrought in us. Now I trust that the tenor of this whole volume is such as makes it superfluous to say, that I attribute all faith to the word of promise, and all justification to faith; yes, that it is this simple, direct, instant faith, to which I would vehemently exhort every unconverted sinner. This is what a sinner must do, to be saved; and what a saint must do, to abide in Christ.

But it is a very distinct matter, when the question is, "By what means shall a soul know that it is born of God?" It is a new case, when the anxious inquiry is suggested, "How shall I ascertain that this experience, of which I am conscious, and which I call faith, is the very faith of God's elect?" And it is no derogation from the justifying and saving power of naked faith, to agitate the inquiry, "May I employ the fruits of holiness within me, to confirm my persuasion that I am born of God?" It is agreed on all hands, that faith is the beginning of a transformation in the soul; a series of new principles, habits, and actions; that this work is wrought only in God's people; only by a divine influence; and that certain virtues, graces, or states and acts of the soul, are denominated the 'fruit of the

Spirit'. These things, I say, we are agreed in. It is as undeniable, that results of this kind are patent and palpable, within human cognizance, subject to our consciousness, and susceptible of comparison with the Word of God. No one will refuse to admit, that the presence of these graces is demonstrative of regeneration. He who has these fruits, has the Spirit, is born of God, is a new creature.

Now is anyone hardy enough to declare, that while the presence of such exercises is conclusive evidence of a gracious state, the believer is not allowed to look at them? Must his eyes be bandaged shut, in regard to that which affords conviction of his being saved; that, moreover, which is always with him, in his own bosom, a part of himself? Yet this extreme position must be maintained by those—and such there are—who deny the value of gracious evidences, in regard to our estimate of our own relation to the covenant. That this is not the ground of justification, we all admit. That this is not the sole ground of assurance, will appear in the sequel. That the search among experiences may be carried too far, so as to produce despondency, and so as to supplant direct acts of faith by those which are reflex, is freely acknowledged. Nevertheless, we must maintain, that **the Holy Spirit may and does employ those graces of which he is the author, as the marks of his own work, and thus as means of assurance.**

This appears to be expressly stated in not a few passages of Scripture. Thus the presence of the spiritual influence is a mark of being in Christ. 1 John 4:13, "Hereby we know that we dwell in him—because he has given us his Spirit." The effectual leading of the same Spirit is a mark of grace. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God—they are the sons of God." The existence of brotherly love and obedience is a like testimonial—"We know that we have passed from death unto life—because we love the brethren. 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. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him and he in him."

We must despair of establishing any point by Scripture citation, if these passages do not prove that the examination of the heart and life is a legitimate method of arriving at serene and satisfactory views of our own state. And I should not have spent a word on the opposite opinion, if it were not a morbid growth from a genuine branch of Christian doctrine—an abuse of the precious truth, that in seeking justification, the eye of the soul should be directly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. It might be naturally inferred, from what has been said—that the full assurance of hope is the accompaniment of elevated piety. If graces are evidences of a renewed state, then where there is little grace, there can be little evidence. Where the divine work in the soul

is faint, the evidences must be obscure. It would contradict the whole economy of holiness, if high joys and triumphs of assured love were granted to lukewarm and groveling religion. The exaltation of divine exercises in the soul is, therefore, the brightening of evidence. And we have little cause to wonder that we have so little assurance, when we look within, and discover that we have little faith, little love, and little self-denial. We are prepared, therefore, to expect that in producing assurance of God's love, it will be a part of the Holy Spirit's work to exalt the piety of the heart; to lift up the graces so as to bring them into view; to kindle the affections to a visible and palpable glow; and so to multiply the fruits of holiness, that old things may pass away, all things become new, and every habit and act afford a testimony of the new creature.

This is in truth a part of sanctification. By making us more holy, God makes us more assured. Our religion becomes more profound, more vital, more energetic, and so more undeniable. The doubts we now have would be speedily dispersed, if we were enrapt in the transport of heavenly emotions. A stronger faith would carry us away, as on the wings of the wind, towards the object of our soul. A coal from the altar, brought to our lips by seraphic hands, would purge our iniquity, and enkindle our hopes. The work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, in awakening, and multiplying, and deepening Christian exercises, tends directly to create just so many evidences of the new nature, and to give assurance of God's love. Increase of grace brings increase of security; and thus the danger of licentious presumption is avoided.

6. But is there not, over and above this, a distinct and direct influence from on high, promoting the assurance that we belong to Christ? We rejoice to think there is. It is possible to conceive of a high state of gracious affections, without any reflex acts, that is, without these affections being used by the individual as tokens of his acceptance. In his character as Paraclete or Comforter, the adorable Spirit has been pleased to pour joys directly into the soul—not independently of experience—but over and above it, giving hope; "for patience works experience, and experience hope, that makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given unto us." The witness of our own consciousness of change is something; but here is a greater and a better witness. "The Spirit bears witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." It is a heavenly seal until the day of redemption. It is a heavenly pledge of the future possession. It may sometimes operate upon the mind to quicken its faculties, so as to discern the correspondence between the experience and the word. But inasmuch as all grace is from a divine agency, I see no reason why we may not admit an immediate operation on the soul itself, producing this persuasion as its immediate result, and overflowing the heart with a sense of heavenly love. In whatever way this result is attained, it is to be firmly held that it proceeds from the Author of all good, and is accompanied with the higher exercises

of piety.

7. This consideration, that the assurance of God's love stands among a cluster of holy gifts, and that it bears some proportion to the degree of holiness in the soul, effectually shuts the door against one great objection.

If assurance is the fruit of holiness, then licentious, carnal ease is something spurious. Some may urge that a great motive to exertion is removed, when we take away the fear of eventual shipwreck. God may use fear, even servile fear, as a means of stimulating his people; but this is not his usual manner. There is a keener stimulus than the fear of falling—it is the mingled agency of faith, and hope, and gratitude, and love. He who is surest of the crown, will not be the first to trample on it. He who is certain of meeting Christ, will not be most ready to insult and grieve him. Paul was never more prepared for labor and endurance, than when he said—"I know in whom I have believed;" and when he exulted, "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

In what has thus far been said, we have answered the question, as to the nature of full assurance, and have discovered that it is attainable. There is a second inquiry, which will now be made easy, so as not to detain us long. It is this. **Is assurance of personal salvation essential to saving faith?** Some have maintained the affirmative, and have taught that no man can be a regenerate person without knowing himself to be such. But the negative is clearly the doctrine of Scripture. Bearing in mind the distinction already suggested, between the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope, you will readily perceive that one may have a justifying faith without any necessary reference to the question, whether he is himself regenerate or not. And inasmuch as any the least degree of faith is justifying, as uniting the soul to Christ, you will as readily perceive that **faith may apprehend Christ, when as yet it falls far short of that which produces assured hope.**

Some truly good men, making their own lively experience too much the rule and criterion for others, have taught that saving faith is a belief that Christ died for me in particular. But the grave defect of this hypothesis is, that there is nothing like it in the Bible. Indeed the highest and most seraphic faith may be so absorbed in the great object, Jesus Christ, as to lose all regard to self, or even its own salvation. Saving faith is not a belief that I have saving faith—but a belief in Christ the Savior, and a receiving of him as offered in the Word. The delightful inference, that I am a saved soul, may be true—may follow logically from the truths believed, and my act of believing—may, therefore, in some sort, be involved in the proposition, I believe; and yet it is no part of that faith which is saving. The Bible nowhere enjoins it as such. It is a happy fruit of faith.

But some will ask—Can so great a change take place without the subject being conscious of it? We answer, no. The subject is conscious; but

something more than his consciousness is needful to assure him. He knows there is a change—but is it *the* change? We are asked—Can it be possible for a prisoner to be loosed from such a bond without knowing it? We answer, Peter was released by an angel from prison, "and went out and followed him, and knew not that it was true which was done by the angel—but he thought he saw a vision." So it may be with the emancipated soul.

The Scripture seems to teach that this certainty of renewal may follow the renewal itself. Eph. 1:13, "In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Here, you will observe, the sealing is separated from the believing, by an interval of time. If, as we have seen, this assurance is connected with active growing graces, as evidence, it is natural to believe, that those may be faint and dim, in their earliest stage. God has nowhere given this as an indispensable criterion. Let us not offend against weak or desponding brethren, by making that weakness and despondency a token of wrath. Let us not break the bruised reed, by decreeing, beyond our authority, that everyone who doubts of his salvation is the enemy of God. How many of Christ's faithful servants would be cut off, by such a rule? The safer opinion is, that **a man may be truly regenerate, and yet have doubts in regard to his personal acceptance.**

But while this is true, it is not less true, that such a state of doubt is a most undesirable state. It is not the healthful condition of the soul; nor the condition in which pious affections are most in exercise. It is a valley through which the Christian may journey—but where he cannot willingly dwell. He may wait long for this dayspring from on high to visit him—yet there is provision made for his enjoying it; and he should never rest without it. Surely it is not a matter of indifference, whether I am an enemy of God—or his child; whether, if I die today, I drop to hell, or rise to glory! If it be possible to escape from such a region of clouds and darkness, it should be attempted; and we should use all diligence to the full assurance of hope—it is the desire of the apostle and the precept of the Word. Heb. 6:11.

It is so signal a prize, that it claims the intense and concentrated effort of every power, through every moment—"all diligence." By what means it should be sought, might be inferred from what we just now learned, as to the way in which this assurance rises in the heart. It is the fruit of faith. Would you have assurance? Be sure that you have faith. Is it as yet too weak? Let your prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith!" How is faith to be cultivated? Plainly by converse with the object of faith; by looking unto Jesus; by dwelling more on him than on ourselves; by going out of ourselves, to fall into his arms. More definitely, as the promises of Scripture are the vehicles by which Christ is offered to us, it is the

contemplation of these promises which brings him into our believing hearts. These are called "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of a divine nature." Those who have had most abiding assurance of God's love, are those who have been most in meditation on the written assurances of that love. It is in the study of authentic and valid title deeds, that we are most certain of our rights. The great propitiatory work, above all, is the object which should be held before our eyes, for the removal of doubts and fears.

It is further to be considered, that a low condition of piety is not the soil for this amaranthine flower. Sorrow and tribulation cannot blight it—but it withers under the sunshine of worldliness. Professors who take their pleasure in this life do not seek it, and do not find it. In chambers of disease and mourning, on death-beds, at the stake, or amidst the wild beasts, it has risen to exultation. In the days of primitive piety, it seems to have been enjoyed by all the martyrs. God was pleased to vouchsafe it, as an indemnity for all they surrendered. In our day of 'half-way Christianity', when the children of this world are mingled with the children of light, it is less prized, and less freely bestowed. If we had higher graces, we would have more assurance. In a better day, when the universal Christianity shall shoot up to a loftier stature, it will reappear. And wherever among the throng, any shall rise to superior eminence in holiness, his melting heart, fused into a flow of tenderness and love by the heavenly ray, will experience the pressure of this pledge and seal.

I will venture the suggestion, that cold and formal churches will produce, among their members, a rank crop of weeds, in the shape of manifold distrusts and fears and doubts; and that the graces of individual saints will be most joyful, when the collective body shall be warmed through and through. Let a whole church be lifted up, in renewed faith, and love, and zeal, and cross-bearing, and earnest labor, and these doubts will give way to assurance. Such a church is in a state of revival. Such churches ours might be, and ought to be. Let Him who dwells between the cherubim shine forth; and in his light we shall see light.

It is scarcely reasonable to expect this blessing amidst prevalent sin. If we would know what hinders it, in our own particular case, we should inquire into our unmortified sins. There may be some latent root of bitterness; there may be some temper indulged within us repugnant to forgiveness, meekness, and brotherly love. There may be some cross which we refuse to bear; some indulgence which we will not crucify; some duty which we shudder to attempt. In the attempt after universal holiness, the unspeakable favor of full assurance is to be expected.

But since assurance is, after all, the gift of God, to whom shall we go but unto Him? It is the operation of the Comforter. And if we, being evil, know how to give good things to our children, how much more shall our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him? "You have not

because you ask not. Ask, and you shall receive." Make this great attainment a separate object of deliberate choice and fervent effort. Until you are no longer able to live without it, you will not use that diligence, that instant zeal, that importunity, which takes no denial—that agonizing struggle that wins the prize.

It may come to your window, like a hovering dove, with the "olive-leaf plucked off;" at some moment when weakness and confinement shall make you prize it more than you do now. This angel of peace may draw your curtains, at dead of night, amidst tossing and weeping, and bring to you that white stone, in which is written the mysterious new name. You may, perhaps, remember these things, in some time of unexpected anguish. Our voyage is not exempt from tempestuous weather. You may see no tokens of it at present. Your seas are in the glassy calm of summer. You are listless in regard to these assurances of God's love. But I seem to behold a change of scene in the future. Years have gone by; comforts have become fewer; clouds have gathered; fears are in the way. You are embarked upon troubled waters. The ship is now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves, and the wind is contrary. You have been long in this turbulent state, for it is the fourth watch of the night. But one approaches in the moment of extremity, walking on the sea. O, troubled soul! cry not out for fear; hearken to the well-known voice—"It is I; be not afraid!" In such an hour of sorrow, bereavement, temptation or doubt—the visits of assuring love are beyond all price.

Defer not the attainment of some reasonable confidence until your day of peril. In a world so frail and precarious, it is well to live fore-armed. The sudden blow of the messenger of death may so stagger and benumb your powers, that amidst the languor or the consternation, you may find no good time to put these precepts into practice. And yet, at what moment can full assurance be so valuable as at the moment of death? Thanks be unto God, he sometimes grants it in that moment! When flesh and heart fail, his strength is near. Yes, we have seen the dying visage lighted up with the angelic smile of triumph, and have heard the song of rejoicing from lips already cold. A preternatural glimpse of worlds beyond has been granted even here. Hear the eminent theologian, Andrew Rivet, just before his departure—"I shall shortly no more know the difference between day and night. I am come to the eve of that great and eternal day, and am going to that place where the sun shall no more give light. The sense of Divine favor increases in me every moment. My pains are tolerable, and my joys inestimable!" Hear the dying Halyburton—"For those fourteen or fifteen years I have been studying the promises; but I have seen more of the book of God this night than in all that time." Hear good President Finley—"I am full of triumph—I triumph through Christ. Nothing clips my wings but the thought of my dissolution being prolonged. O that it were tonight! My very soul thirsts for eternal rest!" "Have you any doubts, my dear friend?" asked a pious woman of a mother in Israel (Mrs. Graham), well known in this city, who had been speaking of her

sins. "O no," she replied, "I have no more doubt of going to my Savior than if I were already in his arms. My guilt is all transferred—he has cancelled all my debt; yet I could weep for sins against so good a God." How beautiful an illustration of what was said, that the highest assurance does not relax the moral sensibilities or promote connivance at sin.

There is something inexpressibly beautiful in the Christian old age of one who, having long since committed all to Christ, has set down to wait until his change comes. It is, indeed, a land of Beulah. And when such a one, by gentle degrees, approaches the end of life, how fair the spreading prospect beyond. Let me represent his exercises, in the words of a gifted believer; "This river has been a terror to many; yes, the thoughts of it have often frightened me; but now, methinks, I stand easy—my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bore the ark of the covenant stood, while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, does lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by faith—but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. His voice to me has been most sweet, and his countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun."

The reader may justly be exhorted to "use all diligence," for the prize is great. To seek it is to seek eminent holiness. Look for it in the employment of those means which cause one to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

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