

ASSURANCE AS A TREASURE-CHEST IN GOD'S STOREHOUSE OF LOVINGKINDNESS

We've been looking at the **discovery** that David had made as recorded in Ps 63:3—that God's lovingkindness is better than life! David said that—but did he **really feel** that way? I believe he did—and I believe God **wants us** to feel the same way! God wants us to make the **same discovery**—and to have the **same conviction**—that to **have the favor of God** shining down upon us is better than the **best this life** has to offer!

But in order for us to believe that, we need to know **what** the lovingkindness of God **is**. Two weeks ago, I compared the lovingkindness of God to **our Baptist Buffet dinner**—it is **loaded** with all kinds of good stuff! We can also think of it as a **storehouse full of treasure!** In other words, the lovingkindness of God is comprised of **many** good things—**not just one!**

We must not forget, though, that it is **only a child** of God that can **really and truly** say that God's lovingkindness is better than life. Why is that? Because **unless you are a child of God**, God's lovingkindness **ends when your life does!** God's lovingkindness will **not follow you to hell**—it is not there! There are **no second chances** once you pass out of this life and into eternity **without** Christ! Jesus Himself warned that “wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many there be** which go in thereat:” (Mt 7:13). Jesus also warned us in John 3:18 that “he that **believeth not** is condemned already” and John 3:36 reminds us that “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

How do we become a child of God? We talked about that two weeks ago when we looked at the parable of the prodigal son. Please turn to Luke 15 so we can see again for ourselves how God wants us to come to Him. We must come to God in repentance and faith—just like the prodigal came back to his father.

We see **his repentance** in vs 18: “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have **sinned against heaven**, and before thee...”

In vs 19, we see him **accepting consequences** of his sin: I am “no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.”

You know what **we don't see**, though, in these verses? We don't see the prodigal trying to **clean himself up**—and we don't see him trying to **appease his father** by bringing him gifts. He **came as he was**—broken...and dirty... and humble...and desiring forgiveness—the same way **we need** to come to God!

But he also came **in faith**, didn't he? We see that in vs 20 “And he arose, and came to his father...” His faith was **weak**—he wasn't exactly sure **what kind** of reception he would get from his father—but he did have **enough faith** to return home and seek his father's forgiveness.

What happens **to us** when we come to God in humility and repentance and faith? The **same thing** that happened to the prodigal—we are **met by a loving God** who is watching and waiting for us...and throws His arms around us...and embraces us...and forgives us!

God does not **make us a hired servant**—and He does not place us on probation as a **pardoned criminal**. Instead, God welcomes **us as a son!** Look at verses 22 and 23: “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.” There was a joyous celebration because his son had come home!

Do you know that there is **celebration in heaven** just like that **when a sinner comes to God** for forgiveness? Notice Jesus' words in vs 7: “I say unto you, that likewise **joy shall be in heaven** over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

Acceptance by God, then, is **the door** that opens His lovingkindness to us as individuals. But now that we are in the **buffet line**, so to speak—or **inside the storehouse** filled with treasure—what is it that we will find there?

As I've mulled over the lovingkindness of God, it seems to me that one of the **main courses**—or one of the **treasure chests** in the storehouse—would most certainly contain the blessing of **assurance from God**. That is what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

Is assurance a blessing? **Fanny Crosby** certainly must have thought so when she penned the words, “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine; O what a foretaste, of glory divine.”

Why was assurance a blessing to Fanny Crosby? I can’t speak for her, but what I can do is tell you how **different aspects** of assurance are a blessing **to me**.

Let’s consider first: **1. The assurance of forgiveness**

Although “I love you” might be words we **want to hear the most**, “I forgive you” are the **most important words to hear—especially from God!** I really want to drill down into this one because **for me personally**, I don’t know anything that **blesses my heart more** than to know that I am **forgiven by God**.

You know my wife and I are big fans of the movie “It’s a Wonderful Life!” Not sure how familiar you are with the plot, but George Bailey is granted the opportunity to see what life **would have been like** for his family and friends **if he had never been born**. After seeing **how impactful** his life really had been, he tells God that he **wants to “live again.”** Shortly after that, his **prayer is answered**—he is back to the present where he has a bloody lip...and Zuzu’s petal in his pocket...and a warrant for his arrest because of the missing \$8000!

Remember what he did at that point? He leaves the bridge and begins to run to his home, slipping and sliding on the snow, all the while shouting, “I’m alive again! Isn’t it great; I’m alive again!”

Why do I bring that up? Because that scene describes **how I feel** about being forgiven! “I’m forgiven; isn’t it great! God has forgiven me! My sins are paid for—and I get to go to heaven! I will live again—in heaven—with God—for ever! Hallelujah! What a wonderful Savior, is Jesus my Lord!”

A. The fact of forgiveness

Please turn to Psalm 32, beginning with vs 1.

--vs 1. “Blessed” [Happy] “is he whose transgression is forgiven...” **Is** forgiven—**not might be** but is!

--vs 2. “Blessed” [Happy] “is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity...”

“Impute” means to reckon...to add to...to attribute to someone’s account. Happy is the man to whom God **does not count his sins** against him—they are not “added to his record,” so to speak. Not only are they **not added**, but the ones that **were there have been removed** because Jesus paid for them!

“Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe! Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow!”

--mid of vs 5. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Again, God forgave the iniquity. He did it; it is a fact!

And let’s not forget Jesus’ words to the repentant thief in **Luke 23:43** “...Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” I said it Sunday School two weeks ago and I’m going to say it again—**No one got more assurance of forgiveness** than the thief on the cross!

B. The fullness of forgiveness

What sins does God forgive? **How many**—and **how often**? He forgives **them all**, doesn’t He?

Isaiah 38:17 “Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast **all my sins** behind thy back.”

I John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us **from all sin**.”

I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us **from all unrighteousness**.”

Anyone know the 3rd stanza of “It is Well With My Soul”?

My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—My sin, not in part but the whole.

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul!

We have the **fact** of forgiveness—God will forgive us if we come to Him in humble repentance and faith.

We have the **fullness** of forgiveness—God will cleanse us from all sins—not just some of them.

Lastly, we have... C. The “foreverness” of forgiveness

How long does God’s forgiveness last? For ever! Please turn to Psalm 103:12. We’ve looked at this verse before, but it is good to be reminded of the truth that our sins **are gone forever!** “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

How far is the east from the west? **When** does going east **turn into** going west? It doesn't! You can go east forever, round and round the globe and never go west. That is not true of going north to south or south to north, though!

--Notice vs 17 "But the mercy of the LORD is **from everlasting to everlasting** upon them that fear Him..."

--You don't need to turn there, but Psalm 136 has 26 verses. Every one of them ends with this phrase: "for His mercy endureth for ever."

What would happen if God's mercy **didn't endure** forever? Stated another way, what would happen if God's **forgiveness ended** after a certain point in time? What would happen if, while we were in heaven, God **chose to remember** our sins and iniquities?

Our time in heaven would **come to a screeching halt**, wouldn't it? We would be cast out of heaven—and into hell! Aren't you thankful for the foreverness—and the fullness—of forgiveness? Aren't you glad for the promise of **Hebrews 10:17** "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What about you? Are **you** forgiven? You can be! God **delights in forgiveness**—and is ready to forgive! **Psalm 86:5** "For thou, Lord, art good, and **ready to forgive**; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."

We've seen the assurance of forgiveness; let's consider next...

2. The assurance of our future with Christ

Question for you: What happens when you die? Depends on **who** you ask, right?

--If you ask a **medical** person, you will probably get an answer about what happens to **your body**.

--If you "ask **Google**"—or "DuckDuckGo"—you will of course get **all kinds of answers**. Here were a few of the articles that popped up: "What Happens When You Die, Scientifically, Practically, And Spiritually."

--JW.Org makes the claim that we simply **cease to exist**—and gives a Bible reason why! Here is their answer: "Because Adam was disobedient, God said to him: "Dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19). Before God created Adam "out of dust from the ground," Adam did not exist (Gen 2:7). Likewise, when Adam died, he returned to dust and ceased to exist."

--Their answer is from the Bible, but Is it the **right** answer? It might be if the **only book** in the Bible was Genesis! But this answer ignores the **rest** of the Bible—and what Jesus Himself said!

And then there was the article entitled: "Here's what **really** happens when you die..." Sadly—but not surprisingly—the so-called "expert" that gave the "real" answer as to what "**really**" happens when we die was nothing more than a **medical doctor** with **an opinion**.

When it comes to what happens after we die, we should want more than just the **opinions of men**! We should want to know what **God declares**—not what man thinks! So how does God answer the question, "What happens after we die?" Can't spend a lot of time on this, but let's consider first...

A. What Jesus said

Jesus assured the forgiven thief "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). In other words, people **can know before they die** that they are heaven-bound!

But Jesus did not teach **that everyone** was heaven-bound. In **Luke 12:4-5**, we see Jesus giving a very **solemn warning**: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath **power to cast into hell**; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

So from these to verses—uttered by Jesus Himself—we see that those **who are forgiven** go to be with Jesus after they die—but that there is a **place called hell** where the unforgiven go after they die!

What Jesus says should be more than enough, but God in His goodness and wisdom gives us a lot more to "hang our hat on," so to speak.

B. What God said through Paul

Let's turn now to II Corinthians 5:6-8. Self-explanatory, isn't it? Vs 6 says if we are **in the body**, we are absent from the Lord; vs 8 says if we are **absent from the body**, we are where? **Present with the Lord!**

Paul makes a similar statement to the church at Philippi.

Phil 1:21, 23 "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul is talking about literal, physical death.

²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"

--Paul doesn't say, "I have a desire to depart so I can be in a **state of non-existence!**"

--And he doesn't say, "I have a desire to depart so I can enjoy some well-deserved **soul sleep!**"

What does he say? "I want to depart—and be with Christ!"

--Not sure about you, but **I'm not quite** there yet. I'll be content to depart **when it is time**—but I'm okay with staying around a few more years 😊! Please don't misunderstand me—I'm **ready to go** and I know **without a shadow of a doubt** that I have a **certain and secure future** in heaven with Jesus! And if I was diagnosed with cancer tomorrow and told I have only 6 months to live, I would not fall into a state of depression or start kicking and screaming.

Why? Because—like Paul wrote to Timothy in **II Tim 1:12** "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

I am certain that my future will be in heaven with Christ because my soul is in His hands. What about you?

What's inside the treasure chest labeled "assurance" that we find in the storehouse of God's lovingkindness? First, the assurance of forgiveness. Second, the assurance of a future with Christ.

Third... **3. The assurance of God's presence now**

How often does God **forsake** His children? What is the "tipping point" that causes God to **leave us**? **There isn't one**, is there? He is **always with us**, regardless of how bleak the circumstances.

--He was with Noah during the flood --He was with Lot when He hurried him out of Sodom

--He was with Moses in the wilderness...and Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace...and Daniel in the lion's den

--He was with the disciples in the storm...and with Jesus on the cross...and with Peter in prison. He was with His children during Hurricane Ian—and is with them now as they pick up the pieces of their lives.

--If He took some of His children to heaven during the hurricane, He is still God—and still good!

--If He kept them alive, but they lost all their things, He is still God—and still good!

--And regardless of what God brings into **our lives**, He is still God—and He is still good! And God always keeps His promises! Jesus said in **Mt 28:20**, "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Hebrews 13:5 states, "...for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Lastly, let's consider... **4. The assurance of God's never-ending power**

God plainly states that He is all powerful! In Gen 17:1, He refers to Himself as **Almighty God**. In Ps 33:9, God says that He **spoke the world** into existence. In Heb 1:3, we read that God **upholds all things**—the world included—"by the word of His power." In Jer 32:17, we see there is **nothing too hard** for God. In Lk 1:37, we read "For with God **nothing shall be impossible.**"

It is important for us to remember that God **has not changed!** God was **not just** All-Powerful in the past—He is still All-powerful **now**—and always will be!

How does that bring **comfort**? How does that bring **assurance**? How does that bring **calm** to us in a chaotic world? Because God is **ultimately in control!** God is not trying to out-do—or **out-duel**—Satan like the Democrats are trying to out-duel the Republicans! God **doesn't try to do anything**—He just **does it!**

Let that sink in! God **doesn't just try** to do things—He **does** them! Does the Bible say that?

Yes, it does! **Psalms 115:3** says, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."

God does whatever **pleases Him**. He does **what** He wants...**the way** He wants...and **when** He wants.

Daniel 4:35 “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth **according to His will** in the **army of heaven**, and among the **inhabitants of the earth**: and **none can stay His hand**, or say unto Him, What doest thou?”

Can it be any plainer? God does what He wants **in heaven**—and **on earth**—and **no one can stop** Him! God is **in control**—period! God **will win**—period! Evil men and Satan **have limits**, placed on them by God—period!

Does that mean we don’t have **to do anything**? Does that mean we **can idly sit by** and do a whole lotta notta? No; it doesn’t mean that at all!

--We need to **know what is right**—and **do** what is right!

--We need to **love and serve God**—and love and serve others!

--We need to obey...and pray...and vote!

--We need to witness...and work...and watch out for one another!

But **after** doing these things—and even **while doing these things**—we need to **trust God**.

--We are **not to fear**...we are **not to panic**...we are **not to get all worked up**. Name me one instance in the Gospels where we see Jesus wringing His hands and saying to Himself, “I don’t know what to do!”

There isn’t one, is there? Jesus is our great example of how to trust the Father.

Are you doing that? Are you “being still” because you know that God is God? Based on Him being All-powerful, that is what we ought to do.

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First and foremost, are you forgiven? Do you have the assurance and joy of knowing that your sins have been forgiven by God and that you are His child? If not, come to God the way the prodigal came to His father—in repentance and faith!
2. Second, are you standing firm on the promise that He will never leave you nor forsake you? Don’t let Satan—or storms—make you question whether or not God is still there. Believe the words Jesus says to you, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world!”
3. Third, are you living a life of anxiety...and fear... and frustration? If you are, you are doubting God’s power! God is God—and knows the end from the beginning—and has everything under control. Trust Him! Be still and know that He is God!
4. Lastly, all these things I shared with you require faith, don’t they? Where does faith come from? Romans 10:17 says, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” You want your faith to increase? Get in this book—memorize God’s promises—meditate on them often.
Assurance—God’s peace—will flood your heart when you do that!