

“Scriptural Hymns of Fanny Crosby” Part 2

Various Scriptures

Rev. Ted Wood

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Ted: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You. We praise You for Your great goodness and mercy toward us, undeserved. We thank You that on the cross You paid it all, and all to You we owe.

We pray especially for Tabatha. We pray for Jeff and the family, that You will intercede and move in their lives in ways that we can't even begin to hope or dream. We pray also for our various churches that we come from. We pray for their protection and their provision and their prosperity in the gospel. Build them up and make them a place where the good news and the truth may be heard. And we pray this in Your name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Ted: Okay. “Blessed Assurance: The Gospel Music of Fanny Crosby,” for the second time. Just a little background: you don't have it on your sheets there, but reminders of some things that I talked about. Remember, she was born in 1820. She lived to be 95. She started off with President Monroe and she ended up with President Wilson.

But she was the queen of gospel hymn writers. And there was that one comment that I pulled up; I just have it at the top there: “Gospel Hymns.” This was a genre of music that started right before the Civil War. Gospel hymns have the distinction of being America's most typical contribution to Christian music. *“Gospel hymns have been a plow, digging up the hardened surface of paved minds.”*

I repeated that from last time, but I just like that. *“Gospel hymns have been a plow, digging up the hardened surface of paved minds. Their obviousness has been their strength; it is the music of the people.”*

And this is an example: not one of Fanny Crosby's hymns, but one of the hymns that Don played for us—the tune—did any of you recognize that hymn that he played? Do you know which one that is?

Ron Baling: “Jesus Paid It All.”

Ted: “Jesus Paid It All.” It was written by Alvina Hall in 1865, right at the end of the Civil War. And she was a Methodist. She heard a sermon and the Lord inspired her to write this poem, this lyric. And she pulled out her hymnal; it was the flyleaf in the hymnal. And of course that ruined the hymnal.

She wrote it out and she showed it to her pastor. The pastor took her to the organist. She and the organist put together a hymn, and it was “Jesus Paid It All.. The author says about gospel hymns that *“their obviousness has been their strength; it is the music of the people.”* I'm just going to read you these words. The first verse goes:

*“I hear the Savior say,
Your strength indeed is small.
Child of weakness, watch and pray;
Find in Me your all in all.”*

Then comes the chorus:

*“Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left its crimson stain;*

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He washed it white as snow.”

Every one of those verses is very powerful.

*“Lord now indeed I find
Your power and Yours alone
Can change the leopard’s spots,
And melt the heart of stone.”*

Remember “*change the leopard’s spots?*” Is that from Proverbs? It’s a reference to the fact that who can change the leopard’s spots? The leopard can’t change—

Don Maurer: It’s Jeremiah actually.

Ted: Jeremiah; thank you. So anyway that was just an example. These are very powerful hymns. And as I shared with you last time—I’m back to Fanny Crosby—at the age of thirty Fanny Crosby had a dramatic conversion. The year before that there was a cholera outbreak. It was in the city where she was living. She was a student at the New York Institute of the Blind, and a lot of her fellow classmates died during the cholera outbreak. This happened frequently during the summers in the 19th century.

And then she realized and she said that “*I had been trying to hold the world in one hand and the Lord in the other.*” She came to realize that. She gave her life completely to the Lord.

I think about that because she was quite a religious young woman up to this point. I mean, if she’s saying, even as a religious and good and moral person, that she was trying to hold the world in one hand and the Lord in another, I wonder about my own life; I feel pretty intimidated.

I also thought about that great quote from Samuel Johnson, the great 18th-century writer and journalist. And he wrote this about death. And he wrote this about death. Maybe you’ve heard this quote before. He says: “*When a man knows that he is to be hanged in a fortnight*”—that’s two weeks—“*it concentrates his mind wonderfully.*” And I think that was true in my own life. If I had continued in the way I was going when I was a young man I would have been dead. And just the realization of that concentrated my mind wonderfully.

Transcriber’s Note: At this point Michael Rush enters the room.

Ted: Mike!

Michael Rush: Sorry.

Ted: No; that’s okay. Good to see you. I talked about the fact that Fanny had written 8,000 hymns plus—some that are still being found and some that are still being put to music.

But I also found out that she sometimes composed six or seven hymns each day, and that she memorized up to a dozen before she could dictate them. So she had already dictated six or seven in a day, but she had a dozen more in her mind, just waiting for somebody to come along to dictate to. It was an example of her prodigious hymn-writing gift. “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.” I don’t know that one very well. In certain churches they would sing that quite a bit: “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.”

One of her music writers, one of her tune writers, William Doane, arrived at her house in 1868. And he said, “Fanny, the train leaves for Cincinnati in forty minutes. I have a tune; can you write some words for it?” And Doane relates that he sat there quietly. And there is Fanny sitting there and that’s him sitting there, and for twenty minutes not a

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sound. And then she turned to Doane and said, “It’s all done; I have it.” She dictated the verses to Doane and he made his trade.

And so the hymn that she produced was:

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast.
There by His love o’ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.
Hark! ‘tis the voice of angels,
Borne in a song to me.
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.”*

The words are very flowery: we wouldn’t sing that way today. But in 19th-century America that was a lot of the language that was used.

Remember that in the 1860s Dwight L. Moody was beginning his evangelistic crusades. In 1870 he teamed up with Ira Sankey. Sankey played the piano and sang when he preached. And he later ascribed to Crosby the success of their crusades because of her music. Sankey also included in his hymnbook that they used in the crusades Horatio Spafford’s hymn “It is Well with My Soul.” So all that kind of music was being produced at this time.

I’ve been educating myself about it. It has just been amazing what I’m finding, and I just need to know more. I’ll give a couple of Fanny Crosby’s words of wisdom and then get into “Blessed Assurance.”

She said a lot of amazing things. She said, *“Two of my secrets for staying happy and healthy are to control my tongue and to control my thoughts.”* I would be a lot happier if I was doing that.

Jim Hamilton: We all would.

Ted: We all would, yes. She talked quite a bit about her blindness because people would express a lot of sympathy for her, and she tried to turn that away. And one of the things she said is *“I have not for a moment, in more than 85 years, felt a spark of resentment against the doctor who treated me when I was an infant.”* Remember, she had an eye infection. The doctor treated her and that probably caused the blindness; it was bad treatment. But you know, this was 1820.

So she said, *“I have not for a moment in more than 85 years felt a spark of resentment against the doctor who treated me, because I have always believed that the good Lord by this means consecrated me to the work that I am still permitted to do.”* She credits her blindness with allowing her to focus intently and to memorize all kinds of things.

Anyway, “Blessed Assurance,” it’s a great hymn from 1873. I told you the story. Phoebe Napp who was one of her tune writers along with William Doane, once played a tune for her and asked her “What does this say?” I think I told you this. “What does this tune say to you?”

And she immediately said, “Well that says to me: ‘Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!’” I mean, this is the way her mind worked. So her friend Phoebe Napp plays a tune and she says, “What are the words that come to your mind?” And that’s what came up immediately.

So let’s look at this hymn; I think it’s right there. Don, I’m going to have you play this; they seated you too soon.

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Don: Oh, okay.

Ted: I don’t trust these guys to sing *a capella*. Okay, while Don is getting up there, let’s look at the words.

*“Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”*

Then comes the chorus:

*“This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

Then the second verse:

*“Perfect submission, perfect delight.
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

Then the third verse:

*“Perfect submission; all is at rest.
I in my Savior am happy and blest.
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.”*

Don: I can play it now.

Ted: Okay, go ahead. I’m trying to think whether we want to sing it now or have some comments and then sing it. That’s what I’m trying to decide.

Don: Okay.

Ted: We’re going to sing it.

Transcriber’s Note: Dion Maurer plays and the men sing.

Okay, let’s look at the words of this hymn, because I’ve said often that it’s easy to get caught up in the tune and think, well, this is a great hymn. And then you look at the words and the words are not very strong or powerful or substantial or even true. So let’s look at the words of this song. And I want you to tell me what kind of ideas or themes or messages jump out from this page. What is Fanny Crosby trying to communicate to the singers? What are some of the things that jump out there?—Scriptural things, theological ideas?

Mike Davis: In verse 9 I see “*heir of salvation.*” That’s position. Positionally we’re changed.

Ted: Yeah. Excuse me; I didn’t—

Mike: Positionally we have changed.

Ted: That’s right—from not being children of God to being children of God, right? To heirs from not being heirs. Okay, that’s great. What else?

Ron: The last line: “*Born of His Spirit,*” being born again.

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Ted: Being born again. And also the application of Jesus’ death to our lives which cleanses us from our sins. Okay, what else can you see from these? What else jumps out there?

Ron: The first verse says “*a foretaste.*” The Scripture talks about tasting of the Spirit. Where does he talk about that—the taste of the Spirit?

Ted: I wish I could tell you. But yes, “*A foretaste of glory divine.*” The assurance is the foretaste of glory divine, right? Yes, Don?

Don: I think what Ron might be thinking of is that the Holy Spirit “*is a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*”

Ron: Yes.

Don: That might be what she had in mind there with “*a foretaste of glory divine.*”

Ted: Right. Okay, what else do you see She talks about perfect submission. Do you think that’s something she’s achieved from what she says there in the hymn?

Don: No. I was wondering about that too, whether she’s slipping into perfectionism or whether she wishes that—

Ted: I thought about that too.

“Perfect submission, perfect delight.

Visions of rapture, ... angels descending.” I guess it’s something she’s kind of envisioning. “*Echoes of mercy, whispers of love*” doesn’t sound like great statements of mercy and love; it’s kind of echoes and whispers.

Paul Sedlock: I don’t think she’s saying that about herself.

Ted: Yeah.

Paul: Like you said, she’s envisioning.

Ted: Right, yeah.

Don: Isn’t it interesting? I use this kind of language too.

“Perfect submission, perfect delight.

Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.”

Ted: Yeah. Okay.

Don: It’s very interesting.

Ted: Okay. Would you like to expand on that, Don?

Don: I’ll say that frequently. “It’s nice seeing you.” What I mean by that is being with you, experiencing your presence. And I think that’s what she has in mind here. In her mind’s eye, in her imagination, she’s so close to Christ that she “sees” these things through the eyes of faith. It’s something that I long for more of; I’m sure all of us do.

Ted: Right.

Mike: Perfect submission: it says it twice there.

Ted: Yes, it does.

Ted: Perfect submission would bring perfect delight. Perfect submission would bring all this.

Ted: Yes.

Mike: So this is actually quite a statement of a lot of Scripture combined.

Ted: It really is. And putting this all to music is a way to get people to remember the great truths of Scripture. I was thinking the other day when I joined my fraternity in college. This is back in the ‘60s; we would join fraternities. And one of the things we had to do as a pledge was to learn the Greek alphabet.

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Now just to try to memorize the Greek alphabet if you have not been exposed to it is nigh impossible, especially if you’re a college kid doing things besides studying. But they put it to music. (*Ted sings some Greek letters*) It went on like that. And that’s how we memorized the Greek alphabet. So when you got quizzed on Hell Night and you were about to become a brother, they would have you give the Greek alphabet and you could sing it because you could remember it. And that’s what singing does; it makes you remember things you otherwise couldn’t memorize.

Mike: And I was just thinking here that another thing is that what brings us confidence, what brings us blessed assurance, is telling ourselves the truths of Scripture.

Ted: Right.

Mike: We tell ourselves who we are in Christ:

*“Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”*

Whenever I’m depressed, whenever I’m struggling with the quality of life and what’s going on in life, I tell myself that this whole thing, this whole song, is telling yourself the truth.

Ted: Right, beautiful. And I remember that Bruce once talked about the fact—and it has helped me a lot in kind of living a more consistent life—he said that you have to remember who you are in Christ. What is your identity, versus what you might be distracted to believe at any one moment?

Okay, so “blessed assurance.” As I did last time I grabbed the word *assurance*, because I think it’s a very important thing to talk about, because there is false assurance and there is true assurance. And Fanny Crosby tells us what her blessed assurance is based on. It’s based on some of the things that Mike just talked about, being an heir of salvation.

You know, it’s interesting. Horatio Spafford in his hymn “It Is Well With My Soul” also talked about blessed assurance. We remember:

*“It is well, it is well,
With my soul, with my soul.
It is well, it is well with my soul.”*

That’s the chorus. But I think it’s the third verse of that hymn:

*“Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control.”*

What is that blessed assurance that will control under the attacks of Satan? Well Spafford says:

*“That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has shed His own blood for my soul.”*

So the mercy, that assurance for Spafford, was based on the mercy of God, and that God did something about it by shedding His blood. So I want to talk about assurance. What is assurance? Well, there’s a definition in the dictionary for it: *“a positive declaration intended to give confidence.”*

That’s not going to be very helpful because I actually think that how the word is translated from the original languages is better. But let’s think about what assurance is.

Now for a lot of people—and I think the Mormons would fit into this—their assurance is based on what they say. “I have a testimony.” And the testimony is that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and the book of Mormon is the word of God.

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And they say, “How do you know that?” What assurance do you have that that’s true? And it’s interesting. A lot of you know that Mormonism has a number of holy books. There is The Holy Bible—the King James Version. There’s also *The Book of Mormon*. There’s also *Doctrine and Covenants*, about 125 revelations which Joseph Smith received. There is also *The Pearl of Great Price*, and there is also *The Book of Abraham*. So those are all considered sacred scriptures. And in one of those sacred scriptures, *Doctrine and Covenants*, revelations #20 and 21, Joseph Smith through a revelation said, “You’ll know what I’m saying is true because your bosom shall burn within you.” I’m talking about the early 19th century. Your bosom is going to burn within you.

What he meant is that you’ll get a strong feeling. And if you’ve had Mormon missionaries visit and they make their presentation, they will say that you’ll know this is true. “Here, just read this section in the Book of Mormon. It says to pray about it. Will you please pray about whether this is true, and see if God does not give you a warming in your heart?”

So for them that’s their assurance is based on, and they will say that. “I have this testimony that Joseph Smith is a prophet and that the Book of Mormon is true.” And they will say that’s based on the fact that they have this strong burning in their bosom. They have a strong, really good feeling about it.

For other people assurance is the lack of doubt. And that’s something my mother never achieved. I shared this before. My son and I talked to my mother for about a year-and-a-half about her salvation, and she was getting more and more in-firmed. And I had many conversations with her. Some would last an hour-and-a-half over the phone about the Lord and about the things of the Lord.

My son would go over to her. He worked in Waynesburg; she lived in Waynesburg. And with every lunch he would take his lunch off and he would go sit down with her and go through Scripture and pray with her. But my mom never came to any assurance. I would say, “Mom, what do you think?” And there would be a long pause. And she would say to me, “How do you know for sure?”

And I would say, “Mom, let’s go over this again.” So I’d go over it again. And she would say, “How do you know for sure?” That’s what she always said.

Finally I said, “Mom, either Jesus is or He isn’t.” And she said, “That makes sense; mm-hmm. But how do you know for sure?” (*Laughter*)

So the Mormons are looking for a feeling of assurance. My mom was looking for some kind of argument that would win over any kind of skepticism or doubt.

Bruce used to talk about “I know that I know that I know.” It’s kind of a certainty or a settled thing in his mind.

Sometimes assurance is based on what we’ve done. Well, how do you know you have eternal life? Well, the pastor said to pray a prayer and receive Jesus into my heart. And I did, and now I’m guaranteed a place in heaven. So really that assurance can be based on the prayer that you’ve said or something you’ve done.

And then sometimes for me and folks like me Jesus seems like the best option, the option that makes the most sense if you weigh all the options that are available. Don talked earlier about this atheist that had written in Quora and given an answer for “What do you find disconcerting about the Jews?” And the answer was because it’s a falsehood, it’s a lie that has been perpetuated, and now $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world believes that lie. But then what did he say, Don?

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Don: “At certain moments, whenever I reflect, sometimes I have to wonder.”

Ted: Yeah. That was the end of the response. “Sometimes I have to wonder. Maybe it’s true.”

I’ve quoted this before. I listened to an interview with Jordan Petersen and the astrophysicist Lawrence Knapp. He’s the fellow that discovered dark matter, that the universe is full of dark matter. He used to think the universe was empty. And now he says that he’s found that he can prove that it’s full of dark matter.

And Petersen pressed him about God. That’s interesting because Petersen is not a Christian. He’s a theist, but he’s not a Christian. And Lawrence Knapp said that there is no obvious purpose for the universe. “*We make our own meaning. Our experiences in life are momentary accidents.*”

So that man was a materialist. He presents this option. This is your option, Ted. Or Jesus said, “This is My option.” Which do you think makes more sense? Which one would you rather live under: a universe that has no purpose and no meaning, or one that does have meaning and purpose?

I think I’m getting to the handout right now. How does Scripture describe assurance? Well there’s an Old Testament word in Hebrew and there’s a New Testament word in Greek. The Old Testament word is used 108 times. It’s the word *amman*. And it means “to build up or support; to foster as a parent or a nurse; to be firm or to be faithful; to trust or believe; to be permanent or quiet, and to be true or certain.” All of those can be translations of that word *amman*.

You find this in Hebrew. When you try to translate Hebrew into English you get lots of potentially different meanings for it. And so I just pulled out a few. Psalm 78, verses 22, 32 and 37, all that section includes that Hebrew word for *assurance* that we translate *assurance*. Those verses deal with Israel’s lack of assurance and lack of faith in the wilderness. Verse 22 says:

*“Because they did not amman in God,
And did not trust His saving power.”*

That’s why they were having all the problems, “*because they did not have assurance in God.*” Verse 32:

*“They still sinned despite His wonders.
They did not have assurance in God.”*

They did not *amman*, despite all the things He showed them. Verse 37:

*“Their hearts were not steadfast toward Him”, (that is, the Lord),
“And they were not faithful to His covenant.”*

They did not have assurance in His covenant.

And finally Isaiah 7:9 warns: “*If you are not firm in faith you will not be firm at all.*” Or “If you do not have assurance in faith, you will not have assurance at all.”

So I don’t think the Hebrew tells us a lot about that meaning, to get our arms around it, except as another word for faith, or to be firm, or to trust or to believe.

That’s different than the New Testament, because in the New Testament we have an unusual word for *assurance*. It’s used only ten times. I’ve given five examples there, and I’m going to have you do the work as we talk here about what that means. It’s a more visual word. And I’ve given you the Greek there.

But it comes from two words. This one word is taken from two words that are put together. Greek does that a lot in two or three words. Germans do it and they get words

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That are thirty letters long. But in Greek they do somewhat the same thing. It’s made up of two words: *plerus* and *phero*.

From *plerus* we get our word *plenty*. So *plerus* means *full* in Greek. And *phero* means “to bear” or “to carry.”

Think about this: the name of a saint, probably a fictitious saint: Christopher. *Christos Phero*, “the one who carries Christ, Christopher. So this word *phero* means “to carry, to bear or to wear.”

It’s often translated in the English as “giving full assurance.” But it properly means wearing or bearing the work of God to the fullest extent.

Now I want you to think about that. Versus thinking about assurance as being sure, or to have faith in, this has more of a picturesque, a more vivid meaning of actually bearing or wearing God, that is, to the full capacity of the individual believer who is fully persuaded by God. So let’s look at those. Any thoughts at this point before I go on?

Let’s look at these five places where this word appears and is translated “assurance” or “full assurance.” Colossians: “*I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you, that your hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God’s mystery which is in Christ.*” To reach all the riches of wearing or bearing the understanding of the knowledge of God’s mystery.

Hebrews 10: “*Since we have confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, (that is, through His flesh), and since we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith,*” or wearing or bearing faith. “*Let us hold the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*”

Hebrews 6: “*Beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end,*” wearing or bearing hope until the end, “*so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*”

Romans the fourth chapter: “*Abraham did not weaken in faith. But he considered his own body, (which was as good as dead, since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised.*” Wearing or bearing that God was able to do what He promised. “*That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness.*”

And finally in the first chapter of Colossians: Epaphras was a fellow worker of Paul. “*Epaphras is always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.*” Bearing or wearing all the will of God.

So that’s a lot of Scripture. I also think about other verses that are kind of related to that—wearing or bearing. And we think about Romans 14: “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” It’s kind of like putting on clothes. “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.*”

Romans 13: “*Put on the armor of light.*” Galatians 3: “*As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*”

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Ephesians 4: “Put on the new self.” Ephesians 6: “Put on the whole armor of God.” Colossians 3: “Put on the new self.” 1 Thessalonians: “Having put on the breastplate of faith,” etc.

Okay. So based on these readings, I want you to tell me what these Scriptures tell us about the idea of having assurance or being fully assured. What do these Scriptures tell you? When I teach the adult class at my church I ask a question. When somebody gives me a canned answer I say, “No, don’t give me the canned answer or a cliché. What does the Scripture actually say there?” So what does the Scripture tell us about being fully assured about wearing or bearing something? Yes, Don?

Don: Well, I think that this is elementary and that it goes without saying that it is possible to have this assurance. And contrary to the doubt in your mother’s question, “How do you know for sure,” there are people who believe that you can’t know, that it’s presumptuous to say that you’re going to heaven, that you can be sure of that.

Ted: Right.

Don: And yet the Scriptures that you’ve read and 1 John 5:13 say that you can know that you have eternal life. So it’s possible to have that assurance, and it’s desirable.

Ted: Okay. I’d like to point out what Don just said. Sorry, Don. Thank you, straight man. *(Laughter)* Don is talking about certainty. But that’s not what the Greek word means. It means “to fully wear or bear.”

Think about that. It’s very hard for your minds; we say that assurance means to be sure or certain. But there’s another idea here. The Hebrew is more like that. But in the Greek, in the New Testament, it’s a different idea. Go ahead, Mike. Were you going to say something? Okay; I kind of watched you gasp for air there. *(Laughter)* I mean, look at the Scriptures there. You look at them and you tell me what they attach to full assurance or fully wearing and putting on. What does the Word say? I mean, there are some sentences where Paul goes on what? Ten verses? Yes?

Paul: It kind of makes me think of when you said that the definition of *glory* was weighty or heavy.

Ted: That’s glory.

Paul: It almost sounds similar to that. Maybe this is the wrong word, but it’s kind of like a weight. It’s kind of like the guy in *Pilgrim’s Promise*, when the guy carries the pack.

Ted: *Pilgrim’s Progress*. And he got rid of that pack.

Paul: He did. But in this case, is it a weight?

Ted: It could be a weight, yes. The world would certainly see it as a weight.

Paul: That thought or that word?

Ted: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The world would say that’s a weight.

Don: Excuse me. What is your name?

Paul: Paul.

Ted: The apostle. *(Laughter)* I’m glad he could make it this Friday. *(Laughter)* That’s great; thanks, Paul. Good work in Tarsus.

Mike: It sounds like very one of these Scriptures has something of a struggle attached to it as well, essentially to the death.

Ted: Okay. So what would that mean if you’re going to put on, if you wear or bear that? Is that part of the assurance? Am I being too obscure here? I’m struggling with this

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because when we say “assurance” we mean certainty or surety. But the word has more to do with fully wearing or fully bearing.

Don: Would it be that maybe it’s talking about what Paul talks about in Ephesians with the armor of God?

Ted: Yes.

Don: And so I would think that part of fully wearing certainly means having the word of God in your consciousness. That sounds Eastern, doesn’t it?

Ted: Oh no, that’s fine.

Don: In your memory, knowing it, believing it, being convicted of its truth, etc. Is that part of it?

Ted: I think it is. I’m just trying to think about the image there. So if we put on what he calls assurance, if we are bearing or wearing something, what happens when we wear something or put on something?

Don: It becomes a part of you. It becomes your identity, doesn’t it?

Mike: “I laughed, I cried. It became a part of me.”

Ted: Keep going.

Mike: You’re in with both feet.

Ted: So to have full assurance means in large part to take on this new identity, which can be glorious and it can also be suffering as well, as you’ve said. “Aren’t you one of His? Didn’t I see you with Him?” Remember Peter in the garden? “Aren’t you one of those Galileans?”

Ron: That reminds me of the Scripture where Jesus says, “*The kingdom of God is within you.*”

Ted: Yeah.

Ron: In a way, what that says to me is that if you love God and love His righteousness, it’s almost as if that’s your state of mind you can’t be in hell if you feel that way.

Ted: Right.

Ron: I don’t know if that relates to this.

Ted: This is what I do when I get into Scripture. I wrestle with this stuff, because I think, what does assurance mean? Does it mean what my mom meant when she said, “How do you know for sure?”

Well Mom, maybe what you need to do is “*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.*” She was not willing to do that because her flesh, not putting on Jesus, meant that she could still accept her son—my brother—who is gay. And her flesh told her that to become a Christian meant to reject her son. So I wanted her to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And I wanted her to make no provision for the flesh.

And I said, “Mom, just let God have His way and let God take care of Tom, and don’t you try to take care of him. You don’t have to sort this out.” Yes. Mike first, because you’ve already talked.

Michael: I find that peace is in here, in the first verse, the fruit of the Spirit. You can find anything you want. (*Unclear*)

Ted: Yes, please, Jordan.

Jordan Obaker: Another thing I just noticed with each of these references you provided is to look at the adjective that precedes assurance.

Ted: Sure.

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Jordan: Full, full, full. I can give my daughters a glass of milk. And they can say, “This isn’t a full glass of milk. Where’s the rest of it?”

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: I hate to go back to your mother. But all of us—and I think the *Westminster Confession of Faith* talks of this—“*True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in many ways shaken, diminished or intermitted.*”

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: “*By negligence in preserving it, by falling into some special sin, wounding our consciences, grieving the Spirit.*” There are people with assurance that is not full. And it’s our responsibility as Christians with all diligence to make our assurance full and to receive the benefits of that.

Ted: Okay. From what you just read in the Westminster Confession, in the Scripture would you call that full assurance? It says that you can have assurance, but basically that you can also have these doubts.

Jordan: I would say that it’s not full assurance.

Ted: Okay.

Jordan: I would say that you can have assurance as a Christian the same way you can have strength or you can have faith as a Christian, and it can be weak or strong.

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: Jesus often told His apostles that “you have little faith.”

Ted: Yeah.

Jordan: A faith as small as a mustard seed is enough to grab hold of the full Jesus.

Ted: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: But I think it’s our job as Christians to further mature ourselves, to strengthen our faith and to strengthen our assurance. I think there can be degrees of both.

Ted: Right.

Jordan: And often in those areas where we’re feeling like we’re lacking in one or the other—lacking in faith, lacking in assurance—it’s often that we’re the problem. We’re the ones who are struggling with the tensions of what we know about God in the Bible and what we experience in life. Our experience doesn’t always line up with what we know about God, and we struggle with that tension. But the mature Christian is able to set aside the experiences, to reaffirm that this is what the Bible tells me who God is, and I will not change my thinking. I will not change my posture, to say that even though I don’t understand what’s going on, this is who I know God is, and I will wait upon God in this.

Ted: Okay. Good, Jordan; that’s a lot. Yes, Rich?

Rich Clark: “*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*”

Ted: Right; okay. And you will do that—and I’m getting back to Mike here—you will do that when you believe it’s true. You will come to Jesus if you are weary and heavy-laden. Otherwise you won’t come to Jesus, and you’ll find some other way to resolve the weariness and the heavy-ladenness. And to tie in with what you said, Mike,--and my notes follow here to say this,--is that it happened to me in my conversion; I’ve shared this a number of times.

Steve in college kept talking to me about Jesus. And then one day I realized that the Bible was talking to me personally, and it was true. Now I didn’t have anything else at

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that point except those two convictions. But those were enough to carry me forward into the Christian faith, because at that point if Jesus was true then I would come to Him when I was weary and heavy-laden.

My mother never got to the place where she thought it was true, because she kept on saying, “How do you know it’s true?” And when you put on that, then you put on a new person. And that begins to change everything. Your desires change. And as a result of your desires changing your actions change. And that’s the beginning of the process.

But I have a daughter today who has walked away from the faith. And I want her to know the truth. But I drove her around to get her car maintenance done yesterday and we had a chance to talk. And we don’t talk about this because she gets very defensive, but I said to her, “You know, what are you thinking about God these days?”

And she said, “Well I believe in God, but in a different way.”

And I said, “Do you mean in a different way than how you were raised?” And she said, “Yes.”

So I set that aside, and we’ll come back to it later. She said, “Every time you ask me this I think you’ve got a right answer that you’re expecting.”

And I said, “No, I’m not expecting a right answer. I just want your answer.” So my mom and my daughter as of yet has not realized that it’s true. Then after you realize that it’s true, you can be doing all kinds of sinning. But that truth will begin to infect everything else from that point on. And you will in a sense take on Christ. You will bear Him from that point on. You’ll put Him on at that point.

You’ll form a new identity. That identity will not only shape you inwardly but outwardly, because people will have different expectations of you, and they’ll look at you. “Oh, he’s a Christian. Why did he say that?” Well, I guess I’d better not say that anymore; that’s not good.

I’ll finish up right here. To me the critical elements of assurance—of putting on Christ, of putting on faith, all the things it talks about in those five sections—the critical elements are that the gospel is true, and it’s true to me; it’s personal. It’s not just a bunch of ideas out there; it’s not some factual thing. It’s true and it’s true to me.

I then desire to know God and to know myself as God sees me, and to act in love toward others. And the third thing is that I experience in this process of bearing Christ, of bearing faith, of bearing this new identity, I experience God’s mercy. And I respond with gratitude and with a desire to serve others.

Those to me are the elements of assurance. It’s not simply having certainty; it’s actually taking on a new identity. And in that identity you have this certainty. God is true and it’s about me. I desire to know Him and myself. And I experience God’s mercy and respond with gratitude, and I seek to serve others.

That’s how I wanted to talk about assurance; just a different way of looking at it. It’s difficult and I’m still struggling with it. Any other thoughts? Well, good being with you guys today. Okay, Don?

Don: And to me that just underscores the importance of believing the word of God. Inerrancy comes into play there. How can you be sure of something you don’t believe?

Ted: Right. But once again I want to steer a little bit away from that. Not that it’s not true, but it’s almost like are you certain? Are you sure? Well, I’m still in the flesh. I’m going to have doubts; there’s no way around that.

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So are you sure; are you certain? Well yes, as much as possible. But do you know what I am? I’m walking with Jesus. I’ve taken on Jesus Christ. I’m wearing Him. That’s my identity. And if you identify with Jesus all kinds of things are going to happen, both glorious and gory. And that’s really more of the assurance that we want.

I don’t know if I’m so certain. But I know that I am in Him and He is in me. And that goes a long way to getting the peace that passes understanding.

Michael: *“Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!”*

Ted: Yes. *“Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!”* Well, grace and peace to you. We’ll see you next Friday. *(Applause)*