

Hebrews 7:11 (Edward Cross) 135924

Scripture Truth: Volume 1, "Full Assurance" (7:11)

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Its Significance as found in the New Testament.

The places in which this expression occurs are, Hebrews 7:11, "full assurance of hope;" Hebrews 10:22, "full assurance of faith;" Colossians 2:22 "full assurance of understanding;" and 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "with much assurance."

The true meaning of the word "plerophoria," translated "full assurance," is bringing the matter to its fullness or completeness.

It is found only in the New Testament, and in patristic writings. It is not in the language of common life. The thing represented by it having no place in the world, the world has no need of the term: but with the coming of the gospel a new light is presented to faith, and a new term is provided to express it. A cognate word in a verbal form "plerophoreo" occurs also in the following passages, which we shall consider in the order in which they occur, placing in italics the words which are equivalent in the authorized version.

Luke 1:1. — "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." Here is a most important statement, made by one who was a contemporary of the events which he records, and who, speaking in the name of others, who were eye-witnesses of these things informs us that they were "most surely or fully believed among them." It is the fashion today to throw doubt on all that rests accredited on the authority of Scripture, as though its testimony was insufficient; but, apart altogether from the fact of its being "divinely inspired," no testimony could be of a higher order than that of men who were "eyewitnesses" of the facts and "ministers of the word," and who, having no worldly object to gain thereby, but contrariwise standing to lose all they had, even life itself, being opposed, as they were, both by Jewish bigotry and by Pagan hate, still saw enough in what passed before their own eyes, to hand down to us in this incontrovertible manner, the statement that these things were "most surely believed" among them.

Romans 4:24. — The same word is used of Abraham who was "fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform." In this fact he found strength in faith and thereby "gave glory to God." True, the promise was a mighty one, — as the stars of Heaven for multitude, "so shall thy seed be." And how was this to be accomplished? By what power was it to be effectuated? The forces of nature were dead; all human hope had failed, as a river dried up from its source. What then remains for him? The promise of God and His power-power that could quicken the dead, and call things that are not as though they were. This was the "full assurance" of his soul: by this he gave "glory to GOD;" and therefore, the comment of the Spirit upon it runs, "it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Romans 14:5. — Similarly when questions of doubtful disputation arise, and one man is weak in the faith, while another is of a different cast of mind, the strong is apt to despise the weak the weaker to judge the stronger. Thus will works in both, and God is left out by them. In such matters, and there are many such, where there is no explicit scripture for definite direction, each should let the other alone to the exercise of his own judgment before God, and not meddle in what he could not settle for another's conscience. How naturally we fall to meddling in matters other than our own! how anxious we are to press our views on other people, and after all, what should we gain if we succeeded? We should but falsify our own position, by assuming an authority we do not possess, and we should ruin the conscience of our weaker brother by coming between his soul and God. How simple and how perfect is the Scripture, and how completely it settles all such cases: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

2 Timothy 4:5. — Again, in view of the evil days depicted by the apostle, when teachers and taught would forsake the truth and turn aside to fables, Timothy is exhorted to that sobriety and watchfulness of mind, which refuses every false influence; to endure afflictions; to do the work of an evangelist; and so, as our word here used again imports, to "make full proof of his ministry," to fill it up to the full measure, and there can be nothing more important, or more encouraging than this. The tendency is when things get slack to get slack with them. You play a losing game and you have no heart for it. You have no back to support you, no future to attract you. But here it is all the reverse. God is the first and the last of everything. Christ has died and risen again, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, waiting to take to Himself His great power and reign. And so the apostle encourages Timothy to the greater energy, as there was the greater need; and is there not a voice in this to the servant of God today to cheer, and to encourage him to trust and not be afraid; but to continue according to the grace given, to serve the Lord in all humility and faith, seeking to "fill up to the full measure" the ministry allotted to him, however small and inconspicuous that service may be?

2 Timothy 4:17. — So under circumstances of exceptional trial, the apostle tells us that the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him, so that through him the preaching should be fully made, using the same word as before (2 Timothy, 5:5), as though to encourage him thereby; and thus the last testimony he left behind was as complete in itself, as that of his happiest and most favored days.

How perfect is the Scripture; how encouraging for the child of faith, and how fully it maintains the glory of God with undiminished luster from the beginning to the end.

The consideration of the foregoing Scriptures will enable us more intelligently to apprehend the force of the word, which forms the heading of this article, and which occurs as follows:

Hebrews 6:11 — Here the apostle urges on them to show “diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.” He earnestly desired this on their behalf. It is one thing to enter on a course; it is another thing to pursue it patiently to the finish. The path of faith demands constant exercise of soul. To the slothful it is strewed with difficulties; but the way of the righteous is raised up like a causeway above them all. The danger for the Hebrews was, lest, like their fathers of old, through an evil heart of unbelief, they should depart from the living God, instead of holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end. But seeing that God had promised, there was sufficient security in His word, backed up by His oath, to give not merely a hope, but the “full assurance of hope” right through to the consummation of it.

Hebrews 10:22. — But more than that, not only was the journey through the wilderness thus provided for right into the Promised Land, but the way into the very holiest of all — the sanctuary of God’s immediate presence, is opened now for faith, as will Heaven itself be in fact by-and-bye, by the blood of Jesus. In Judaism a perpetual round of sacrifices was kept up, which could never put away sin, nor perfect the conscience, nor give the offerer a righteous title to draw near into the presence of God. The veil remained, a lasting sign that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. God had not yet appeared in the glory of His grace to man: man had as yet no title to approach the glory of the divine presence.

But now in language alike simple and magnificent, positive and consequential, and in which a title and a command is given to every child of faith, the contrast between Judaism and Christianity is strikingly set forth in the words with which the apostle concludes his argument, “having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: (1St), Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ... ; (2nd), Let us hold fast the profession of our hope — [A. V. reads “faith”] — without wavering: for He is faithful that promised; and (3rd), Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works... and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

Colossians 2:2. — The ministry of Paul had a twofold character: he was minister of the gospel, Colossians 1:23, and he was also minister of the church, Colossians 1:25. To this latter ministry belongs the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints, with all the wealth of the glory of it among the Gentiles-Christ in them the hope of glory. This is the completion of the Word of God, (vs. 25); the top stone of the revelation, in its most extensive and far-reaching results; the climax of the purposes of God in the creation first, and in the final reconciliation of all things to Himself by Christ.

The glories of Christ are wonderfully set forth in this epistle — His glories as Creator and His glories as Redeemer. As to the first, He is:

1st, The true image of the invisible God.

2nd, He takes precedence of every creature.

3rd, As Creator He gives its character to creation.

4th, He is the active instrument in creating it, as well as,

5th, The end for which it was created.

6th, He is before all things.

7th, By Him they all subsist together.

But there is the power of death to deal with, and, either He must annul it, or, as we should say, humanly speaking, be annulled by it. But having annulled it, He is, in this new sphere, where “there is no more death,” (Rev. 21:4),

1st, Head of the body, the church.

2nd, As the beginning of it, He takes precedence there too, as before in creation, that in all things He might have the first place.

3rd, All the fullness is pleased to dwell in Him.

4th, He is the maker of peace by the blood of His cross.

5th, He is the Reconciler, restoring everything into right relationship with God.

6th, He is the fulfiller of the Word of God, giving it its whole scope and the fullness of all that was expressed or implied in it.

7th, He is the true wealth of the glory of the mystery among the nations, “which is Christ in them the hope of glory.”

Plainly this is a subject of indeterminate scope, of boundless extent. Who can understand it? It is beyond all human thought: outside the range of all human conception: and the mind lies prostrate at its portals, waiting for a guide to introduce into the contemplation of the mysteries within. No wonder, then, that the apostle tells us of the great combat he had for them, “that their hearts might be encouraged, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Thus, while the problem is the greatest that can engage the mind of man, we are encouraged to address ourselves to it in humble dependence on the Spirit of God, in the knowledge that His desire for us in respect of it, is that we should reach out intelligently to all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 — It is very interesting to note the power and freshness of the gospel, and the reciprocity of affection between the apostle Paul and his beloved converts at Thessalonica, coming out as it does in such a salient manner in this Epistle.

The full import of the cross is not the subject of his preaching at Thessalonica.¹ Here he has to do with Jews and Pagans pure and proper; and we learn the effect of his preaching amongst them, how they "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath"; for indeed, as he says, "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance."

Colossians 4:12 — We have already noted the great conflict which Paul had for the saints, so now we find a similar conflict on the part of Epaphras, his "dear fellow-servant," who was one of themselves, and perhaps also among the first of those who preached the gospel there, that they might stand perfect, (i.e., in the maturity of full growth in Christian manhood), and "FULLY ASSURED,"² in freedom and dis-enthrallement from doubts and misgivings, in everything connected with the complete will of God, ranging as that will does over the vast sphere of all created things, with a view to His good pleasure, according to the wisdom that forecast it all to the glory of the "Kingdom of His dear Son."

Into the full assurance and the fellowship of this we are called according to the invitation of His infinite love. And how, in view of all this, ought we to be stirred, as were Paul and Epaphras, to labor fervently with renewed, or perhaps newly awakened energy in prayers, for ourselves and for one another, that we might more intelligently apprehend and stand firmly without wavering in that for which we have by divine grace been apprehended.

These are the passages in the New Testament in which this word is used; and in a day when everything is called in question by the presumptuous meddlesomeness that can disturb everything and can settle nothing, it is well to know objectively, and to enjoy subjectively, in the undisturbed repose of our souls, the full assurance which God has in His mercy provided as the heirloom of His people here.

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