

fact. He cannot describe it, but he "just knows" that he is a child of God.

More cannot, perhaps, be said of the actual process by which the Spirit bears witness with our spirits; but nothing less than such an assurance would justify the terms of strong confidence in which the characters, with whom we are made familiar by the New Testament, speak of their relation to God. In illustration of this compare Rom. 8 chap.; Gal. 4 chap., and 6-7 v.; Eph. 1 chap., and 13-14; also 4 and 30; II Cor. 1 chap. 21-22; I. John 2 chap. and 27, also 3 and 14; also, 4 and 13; and 5 and 19.

But in speaking of the strong confidence given by the witness of the Spirit, we must not confound that with the faith which precedes it. We have before stated that this witness is borne to a fact already existing. A person must be a child of God before he can have the Spirit's witness to the fact. But Paul says, Gal. 3 and 26: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." The process is not—as a penitent is very likely to suppose—to believe in Christ because he is assured he is a child of God; but by faith in Jesus to become a child, and then he is assured of his adoption by the Spirit. To this a captious person may urge that it is knowing oneself to be a child, just because he believes it. But there are two convincing objections to this statement. First: It is not usual that we can know anything to be just as we have determined to believe it. For instance, we could not know some of the severe days of the past winter to be warm, by simply determining to believe them so. Believe as we choose,—stinging cheek and aching fingers made us know the days were cold. A strong assurance that anything is, is something more than simply believing that it is. And farther, the Bible says the person's assurance that he is a child comes from the Spirit's bearing testimony to that fact, not from the simple circumstance of his believing it. There is, first, faith in Jesus, then adoption, then the witness of the Spirit given to the newly adopted child. Probably no person in reviewing his experience can discriminate in point of time between the exercise of faith and receiving the witness. A train comes into the station. As a matter of fact, the first car reaches the station before the last, yet in speaking of the arrival we would, correctly enough, say the passengers in the first car and the last came along together. So the Scriptures assure us that we become children of God by faith,