

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE

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1. Introduction.

In previous volumes we have expounded at some length (though not in this precise order) the great truths of Divine Election or Predestination unto salvation; the Atonement or perfect Satisfaction which Christ rendered unto the Law on behalf of His people; fallen man's total impotency unto good; the miracle of Regeneration, whereby the elect (who are born into this world dead in trespasses and sins) are quickened into newness of life. Also justification by faith, whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the Law, the righteousness of Christ being reckoned to his account; the believer's Sanctification, whereby he is set apart unto God, constituted a temple of the Holy Spirit, delivered from the reigning power of sin, and made meet for Heaven. It is therefore fitting that we should now take up the complementary and completing truth of the final perseverance of the saints, or the absolute certainty of their entrance into the Inheritance purchased for them by Christ and unto which they have been begotten by the Spirit.

This blessed subject has been an occasion for fierce strife in the theological world, and nowhere is the breach between Calvinists and Arminians more apparent than in their diverse views of this doctrine. The former regard it as the very salt of the covenant, as one of the principal mercies purchased by the redemption of Christ, as one of the richest jewels which adorn the Gospel's crown, as one of the choicest cordials for the reviving of fainting saints, as one of the greatest incentives to practical holiness. But with the latter it is the very reverse. Arminians regard this doctrine as an invention of the Devil, as highly dishonouring to God, as a poisoning of the Gospel fountain, as giving license to self-indulgence and being subversive of all real piety. In this instance it is impossible to seek a golden mean between two extremes, for one party must be extremely right and the other extremely wrong.

While we have no doubt whatever in which of these two camps the truth is to be found, yet we are far from allowing that Calvinists have always presented this doctrine in its Scriptural proportions; yea it is our firm conviction that during the last two or three generations especially it has been dealt with by many novices in such a manner as to do far more evil than good. Large numbers of men have contended for the "Security of the Saints" in such a crude and lopsided way that not a few godly souls stumbled, and in their revolt against such extremism supposed their only safeguard was to reject the whole subject in toto. Such a course was wrong: if some amateur would-be-bakers turn out uneatable loaves, that is no reason why I should henceforth decline all bread-I should be the loser if I acted so radically.

We have no sympathy whatever with the bald and unqualified declaration, "Once saved always saved." In a publication issued by a widely-known "Bible Institute" appears the following. "I went to the death cell of that condemned man in--prison a few days ago. I went to tell him of a pardon from my King. I had no right to offer him a pardon from the State . . . but I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary's cross, offering eternal redemption from the penalty of sin, so that he could be justified before the 'Judge of all the earth' in the court of Heaven, for all the endless ages. Thank God! I found that man clear on the plan of salvation, for years ago under the ministry of--he had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour. But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost

his *fellowship* with his Lord, not his *salvation*. And the result was a life of sin. It took an awful experience to turn him from his self-willed way; but as I talked with him in his prison cell, I was convinced that he was born again and repentant for his crime.”

While it lies entirely outside our province to form any judgment as to the eternal destiny of that murderer, yet a few comments on the preacher’s account of the above incident seem to be called for. What impression is likely to be made on the mind of the average light-headed professor by the reading of such a case? What effect is it calculated to produce upon those church members who are walking arm in arm with the world? First, we are told that this murderer was “clear on the plan of salvation”: so also is the Devil, but what does such mental knowledge avail him! Next it is said that years before this condemned man “had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour” under the ministry of a certain well-known “Revivalist.” But before any soul can receive Christ as Saviour, he must first throw down the weapons of his rebellion, repent of his sins, and surrender to Christ as *Lord*.

The Saviour is the Holy One of God, who saves His people “*from* their sins” (Matt. 1:21) and not *in* their sins. He saves them from the love and dominion of their sins. How different was the preaching of Spurgeon from that of the cheap-jack “evangelists” who have followed him. Said he, “Go not to God and ask for mercy with sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt and with the declaration of his rebellion on his breast? Surely he would deserve double doom for thus mocking his monarch while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife has forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask his pardon leaning on the arm of her paramour? Yet so it is with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God and yet harbouring and indulging your lusts . . . cast away thy sin or He cannot hear thee. If thou lift up unholy hands with a lie in thy right hand, prayer is worthless on thy lips” (C.H.S., 1860).

Returning to the above incident. This preacher declares of the man in the condemned cell, “But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost his *fellowship* with his Lord, not his *salvation*, and the result was a life of sin.” Such a statement is a flat contradiction in terms. Salvation and sin are opposites. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Divine salvation is a supernatural work which produces supernatural effects. It is a miracle of grace which causes the wilderness to blossom as the rose. It is known by its fruits. It is a lie to call a tree good if it bears evil fruit. Justification is evidenced by sanctification. The new birth is made manifest by a new life. Where one makes a profession of being saved and then follows it with “a life of sin” it is a case of the dog turning again to his vomit and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22).

Before dismissing this case a word should be said upon the preacher’s statement, “I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary’s cross,” which occurs, be it noted, at the beginning of the narrative. Surely the first thing to press upon a murderer would be the awfulness of his condition: to remind him that he had not only grievously wronged a fellow-creature, but had sinned against the Holy One; to faithfully set before him the solemn fact that in a few days he would have to appear before the Divine judge. Then he could speak of the amazing grace of God which had provided a Saviour for sinners, even the very chief of sinners, and that He is freely offered to all by the Gospel, on the terms of repentance and faith. But the Scriptures nowhere warrant us to tell any indifferent, impenitent sinner that Christ, “took his place on the cross”: the substitutionary work of Christ is a truth for the comfort of believers and not a sop for unbelievers. O the ignorance and confusion now running rampant in Christendom!

In the New Testament the salvation of God is presented under three tenses: past, present, and

future. As a work “begun” (Phil. 1:6), but not completed in a moment of time: “Who *hath* saved us” (2 Tim. 1:9), “*work out* your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), “now is our salvation *nearer* than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11). These verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect. First, God saves from the pleasure of sin, causing the heart to loathe what it formerly loved. That which is displeasing to God is made bitter to the soul, and sin becomes its greatest grief and burden. Next, faith is communicated by the Spirit and the penitent sinner is enabled to believe the Gospel, and thereby he is saved from the penalty of sin. Then it is he enters upon the Christian life, wherein he is called upon to “fight the good fight of faith,” for there are enemies both within and without which seek to bring about his destruction.

For that “fight” God has provided adequate armour (Eph. 6:11), which the Christian is bidden to take unto himself. For that fight he is furnished with effective weapons, but these he must make good use of. For that fight spiritual strength is available (2 Tim. 2:1), yet it has to be diligently and trustfully sought. It is in this fight, a lifelong process, a conflict in which no furloughs are granted, the Christian is being saved from the *power* of sin. In it he receives many wounds, but he betakes himself to the great Physician for healing. In it he is often cast down, but by grace he is enabled to rise again. Finally, he shall be saved from the presence of sin, for at death the believer is forever rid of his evil nature.

Now it is that third aspect of salvation which concerns us in this present series of articles, namely, the believer’s perseverance: his perseverance in the fight of faith. The doctrine which is to be before us relates to the Christian’s being saved from the power of indwelling sin during the interval which elapses between his being saved from its penalty and the moment when he will be saved from its presence. Between his being saved from Hell and his actual entrance into Heaven he needs saving from himself-saving from this evil world in which he is still left-saving from Satan who as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour. The journey from Egypt to Canaan lies *not* for the most part through green pastures and by the still waters but across an arid desert with all its trials and tests, and few who left that House of Bondage reached the Land of milk and honey. The great majority fell in the wilderness through their unbelief-types of numerous professors who begin well but fail to endure unto the end.

There are multitudes in Christendom today deluded with the idea that a mere historical faith in the Gospel ensures their reaching Heaven-who verily suppose they have “received Christ as their personal Saviour” simply because they believe that He died on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all those who repudiate their own righteousness and trust in Him. They imagine that under the influence of religious emotion and the pressing appeals of an evangelist who assures them that “John 3:16 means what it says,” all is now well with them-that having obtained a ticket for Glory they may, like passengers on a train, relax and go to sleep-confident that in due time they shall arrive at their desired destination. By such deceptions Satan chloroforms myriads into Hell. So widespread is this deadly delusion that one who undertakes to expose its sophistry is certain to be regarded by many as a heretic.

The Christian life commences amid the throes of the new birth, under acute travail of soul. When the Spirit of God begins His work in the heart, conscience is convicted, the terrors of the Law are felt, the wrath of a sin-hating God becomes real. As the requirements of Divine holiness begin to be apprehended the soul, so long accustomed to having its own way, “kicks against the pricks,” and only in the day of God’s power is it “made willing” (Psa. 110:3) to take the yoke of Christ upon it. And then it is that the young believer, conscious of the plague of his own heart, fearful of his own weakness and instability, aware of the enmity of the Devil against him, anxiously cries out, How shall I be able to

keep from drowning in such a world as this? what provision has God made that I shall not perish on my way to everlasting bliss? The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad; but unless He *continues* to exert His sovereign power on my behalf, I shall be lost!

Moreover, as the young Christian holds on his way he observes how many of those who took up a Christian profession walk no more in the paths of righteousness, having returned to the world. This stumbles him and makes him ask, Shall I also make shipwreck of the faith? Ah, none stand more sure and safe than those who feel they cannot stand, whose cry is, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa. 119:117). "Happy is the man who feareth always" (Prov. 28:14). Happy the soul who is possessed of that holy fear which drives him to the Lord, keeps him vile in his own eyes and causes him to ever depend upon the promise and grace of a faithful God, which makes him rejoice with trembling, and tremble with hope.

In the case which we have just supposed-and it is one which is true to life-we discover an additional reason for taking up the present subject. It is necessary that the young and fearing Christian should be further strengthened in the faith, that he should be informed the Good Shepherd does not leave His lambs undefended in the midst of wolves, that full provision is made for their safety. Yet it is at this stage especially that heavenly wisdom is needed by the instructor if he is to be of real help. On the one hand he must be careful not to cast pearls before swine, and on the other he must not be deterred from giving to the children of God their rightful and needful Bread. If he must be on his guard against ministering unlawful comfort to carnal professors, he must also see to it that legitimate comforts and cordials are not withheld from saints with feeble knees and whose hands hang down because of their discouragements.

Each of the dangers we have alluded to will be avoided by due attention unto the terms of our theme and an amplification thereof. It is the final perseverance of the *saints* we shall write about, the enduring of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and *not* those who have been whitewashed by *self*-reformation. It is the final perseverance of saints along the Narrow Way, along the paths of righteousness. It is their perseverance in the fight of faith and the performance of obedience. The Word of God nowhere teaches that once a man is born again he may give free rein to the lusts of the flesh and be as worldly as he pleases, yet still be sure of getting to Heaven. Instead, Scripture says, and the words are addressed to believers, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom. 8:13). No, if a man is truly born again he will desire, purpose and endeavour to live as becomes a child of God.

There has been some deliberation in our mind as to which is the better title for this doctrine: the *preservation*, or the *perseverance* of the saints. At first sight the former seems preferable, as being more honouring to God, throwing the emphasis on His keeping power. Yet further reflection will show that such preferableness is more seeming than real. We prefer the latter because rightly understood it includes the former, while at the same time pressing the believer's responsibility. Moreover, we believe it to be more in accord with the general tenor of Scripture. The saints are "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5). He does not deal with them as unaccountable automatons, but as moral agents, just as their natural life is maintained through their use of means and by their avoidance of that which is inimical to their well-being, so it is with the maintenance and preservation of their spiritual lives.

God preserves His people in this world through their perseverance-their use of means and avoidance of what is destructive. We do not mean for a moment that the everlasting purpose of the Most High is made contingent on the action of the creature. The saints' perseverance is a Divine gift, as truly as is health and strength of body. The two sides of this truth, the Divine and the human, are brought together in, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which *worketh*

in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13)-it is *God* who works in the believer both the desire and performance in using the means, so that all ground for boasting is removed from him. When God begins His work of grace in a soul the heart then turns to Him in penitence and faith, and as He *continues* that work the soul is kept in the exercise of its graces. As we seek to unfold this theme our emphasis will change from time to time according as we have before us those who *repudiate* it and those who *pervert* it-when we shall treat of the Divine foundations on which it rests or the safeguards by which it is protected. O for wisdom to steer clear of both Arminianism and Antinomianism!

2. *Its Importance.*

The theme of this present series of articles is far more than a theological dogma or sectarian tenet: it is an essential portion of that Faith once and for all delivered to the saints, concerning which we are exhorted to “contend earnestly.” In it is displayed, respectively, the honour and glory of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and therefore they who repudiate this truth cast a most horrible aspersion upon the Character of the triune Jehovah. The final perseverance of the saints is one of the grand and distinctive blessings proclaimed by the Gospel-being an integral part of salvation itself-and therefore any outcry against this doctrine is an attack upon the very foundations of the believer’s comfort and assurance. How can I go on my way rejoicing if there are doubts in my mind whether God will continue to deal graciously with me and complete that work which He has begun in my soul? How can I sincerely thank God for having delivered me from the wrath to come if it is quite possible I may yet be cast into Hell?

Above we have said that the honour and *glory of Jehovah* is bound up in the final perseverance of the saints: let us now proceed to amplify that assertion. God the Father predestinated His people “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29), which conformity is not fully wrought in any of them in this life, but awaits the day of Christ’s appearing (1 John 3:2). Now is the Father’s eternal purpose placed in jeopardy by the human will? is its fulfillment contingent upon human conduct? or, having ordained the end will He not also make infallibly effectual all means to that end? That predestination is founded upon His love: “I have loved thee (says the Father to each of His elect) with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). Nor is there any variation in His love, for God is not fickle like we are: “I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). Were it possible for one of God’s elect to totally apostatize and finally perish it would mean the Father had purposed something which He failed to effect and that His love was thwarted.

Consider God the Son in His mediatorial character. The elect were committed unto Him as a trust by the Father: said He, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them (to) Me” (John 17:6). In the Everlasting Covenant Christ offered to act as their Surety and to serve as their Shepherd. This involved the most stupendous task which the history of the universe records: the Son’s becoming incarnate, magnifying the Divine Law by rendering to it perfect obedience, pouring out His soul unto death as a sacrifice to Divine justice, overcoming death and the grave, and ultimately presenting “faultless” before God (Jude 24) the whole of His redeemed. As the good Shepherd, He died for His sheep, and as the great Shepherd it is His office to preserve them from this present evil world. If He failed in this task-if *one* of His sheep were lost-where would be His faithfulness to His engagement? where would be the efficacy of His atonement? how could He triumphantly exclaim at the end, “Behold I and the children which God hath given Me” (Heb. 2:13)?

The Person of the Holy Spirit is equally concerned in this vital matter. It is not sufficiently realized by the saints that they are as definitely indebted to the third Person of the Godhead as truly as they

are to the first and second Persons. The Father ordained their salvation, the Son in His mediatorial character purchased it, and the Spirit "applies" and effectuates it. It is the blessed Spirit's work to make good the Father's purpose and the Son's atonement: "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). Said Christ to His disciples, "I will not leave you orphans (though I leave this world): I will come to you" (John 14:18). That promise given on the eve of His death was made good in the gift of the Spirit. "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send *in My name*, the same shall teach you all things" (John 14:26). Christ's redeemed were thus entrusted to the love and care of the Spirit, and should *one* of them be lost where would be the Spirit's sufficiency? where His power? where His faithfulness?

This, then, is no trivial doctrine we are now concerned with, for the most momentous considerations are inseparably connected with it. We are satisfied it is because of the failure of so many professing Christians to perceive not the seriousness of their assenting to the opposing dogma-the *total apostasy* of saints-that they have fallen for Satan's ploy. If they understood more clearly *what was involved* in affirming that someone who is truly born again could fall from grace, continue in a course of sin, die impenitent and be eternally lost, they would be slower to set their seal unto that which carried such horrible implications. Nor may we regard it as a matter of indifference where such grave consequences are concerned. For *one* of the elect to perish would necessarily entail a *defeated Father*, who was balked of the realization of His purpose; a *disappointed Son*, who would never see the full travail of His soul and be satisfied; and a *disgraced Spirit*, who had failed to preserve those entrusted to His care. From such awful errors may we be delivered.

The importance of this truth further appears from *the prominent place* which is accorded it in the Holy Scriptures. Whether we turn to the Old Testament or the New it makes no difference. Whether we consult the Psalms or the Prophets, the Gospels or the Epistles we find it occupies a conspicuous position. If we were to cite every reference we should have to transcribe literally hundreds of verses. Instead, we will quote only a few of the lesser known ones. Here is one from the Pentateuch: "He loved the people, all His saints are in Thy hand" (Deut. 33:3). One from the Historical books: "He will keep the feet of His saints" (1 Sam. 2:9). One from Job: "When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). One from the Psalms: "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me" (138:8). One from the Proverbs: "The root of the righteous shall not be moved" (12:3, contrast Matt. 13:21). One from the Prophets: "I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). These are fair samples of the Divine promises throughout the Old Testament.

Observe the place given to this truth in the teaching of Christ. "Upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if possible even the elect" (Mark 13:22)-it is not possible for Satan to fatally deceive any of the elect. "Whosoever cometh to Me and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently upon that house, and *could not shake it*; for it was founded upon a rock" (Luke 6:47-48). "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that *of all* which He hath given Me I should *lose nothing*" (John 6:39). The writings of the Apostles are full of it. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James 2:5). "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5). "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they no doubt would have *continued* with us" (1 John 2:19). "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24).

The tremendous importance of this doctrine is further evidenced by the fact that it involves the very *integrity of the Scriptures*. There is no mistaking their teaching on this subject: the passages quoted above make it unmistakably plain that every section of them affirms the security of the saints. He, then, who declares the saints are insecure so long as they remain in this evil world—who insists that they may be eternally lost—yea, that some of them like king Saul and Judas have perished, repudiates the reliability of Holy Writ and signifies that the Divine promises are worthless! O my reader! weigh this well: the very *veracity of the Lord God* is concerned therein. He has promised to keep the feet of His saints, to deliver them from evil, to preserve them unto His heavenly kingdom, and “God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Num. 23:19).

Elisha Coles the Puritan used a forcible argument from the less to the greater, the substance of which shall here be given. Since the Lord made good His word in things of a lower consideration, how much more will He in the eternal salvation of His people. If certain persons were destined by Him to eminent service *in this world* notwithstanding the greatest of difficulties and natural impossibilities which stood in the way to obstruct it, how much more certain is the accomplishment of His purpose concerning those vessels of mercy which He has ordained for *heavenly* glory! God promised Abraham that his seed should have the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7). Years passed and his wife was still barren, but a miracle was wrought and Isaac was born. Isaac married and for twenty years his wife remained childless, when in answer to prayer the Lord gave her conception (25:21). They had two children but the Lord rejected the elder, and the younger to whom the promise belonged was in daily danger of being killed by Esau (27:41), and to save his life he fled to Padanaram.

While in Padanaram Laban dealt harshly with Jacob, and when he decided to return home his father-in-law followed him with evil intentions, but the Lord interposed and warned Laban in a dream (Gen. 31:23, 24). But no sooner had Jacob escaped from Laban than Esau comes against him with four hundred men, determined to revenge his old grudge (32:6), but the Lord melted his heart in a moment and caused him to receive Jacob with affection. When Simeon and Levi so highly provoked the Canaanites there appeared to be every prospect that Jacob and his family would be exterminated (34:25), but the Lord caused such a terror to fall on the Canaanites that they touched not a single one (35:5). When a seven years' famine came on the land, threatening to consume them, by a strange providence the Lord provided for them in Egypt. There, later, Pharaoh sought their destruction; but in vain. By His mighty power Jehovah brought them forth from the house of bondage, opened a way through the Red Sea, conducted them across the wilderness and brought them into Canaan. Shall He do less for the spiritual seed of Abraham to whom He has promised the *heavenly* Canaan for an everlasting heritage?

Joseph was one whom the Lord would honour, and in several dreams intimated he should be exalted to a position of dignity and pre-eminence (Gen. 37). Because of that his brethren hated him and were determined to frustrate those predictions and slay him (v. 18). And how shall Joseph escape? for they are ten to one and he the least. In due course they cast him into a pit where it seemed likely he must perish; but in the good Providence of God some Midianites passed that way ere any wild beast had found him. He is delivered into their hands and they bring him to Egypt and sell him to the captain of Pharaoh's guard—a man not at all likely to show kindness to him. But the Lord is pleased to give Joseph favour in his master's eyes (39:3, 4), yet if Joseph's hope now rose, how quickly were they disappointed. Through the lies of his mistress he was cast into prison where he spent not a few days but many years. What prospect now of preferment? Nevertheless the counsel of the Lord was made good and Joseph became lord over Egypt!

God promised the kingdom of Israel unto David and while yet a youth he was anointed to it (1

Sam. 16:13). What! notwithstanding all interventions? Yes, for the Lord had said it and shall He not do it? Therefore if Saul cast a javelin at him, unsuspected, to nail him to the wall, a sharpness of eye and agility of body shall be given David to discern and avoid it (18:11). If Saul determined evil against him, Jonathan is moved to inform him (19:7). If David is in a city that will betray him and no friend there to acquaint him of his peril, the Lord Himself is his informer and sends him out (23:12). If Saul's army encompasses him about and no way to escape is left, the Philistines invade Saul's land and the king turns away to meet them (23:26, 27). Though there were none on earth to deliver, "He (said David) shall send from Heaven and save me" (Psa. 57:3). Shortly after, Saul was slain and David came to the throne!

"And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, *Josiah* by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (1 Kings 13:1, 2). Most remarkable was this prophecy. The kingdom of Judah had been despised and deserted by the ten tribes, yet a day will come when the house of David should so recover its power that a member of it would demolish that altar. Nothing seems more contingent and arbitrary than the giving of names to persons, yet here the name of this man is foretold centuries before his birth, and in due time he was called Josiah. During the interval of three hundred and fifty years between this prediction and its fulfillment (2 Kings 23:15, 16) things transpired which *seemed* to make its accomplishment impossible. Athaliah determined to destroy all the royal seed of David, but Joash is stolen from the rest and preserved (2 Kings 11:2). Hezekiah falls sick unto death, but fifteen years is added to his life so that Manasseh, who must be Josiah's grandfather, would be born (20:6, 21).

Paul was a chosen vessel, appointed to preach Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) and at last to bear witness of Him at Rome (23:11). This must be done although bonds, imprisonment and death itself do attend him in every place. If, therefore they lie in wait for him at Damascus and watch the gates night and day to kill him, he shall be let down by the wall in a basket and so escape them (Acts 9:24, 25). If all Jerusalem be in an uproar to kill him, the chief captain shall come in with an army and rescue him (21:31, 32) though no friend to Paul nor to his cause. If more than forty men had bound themselves with an oath that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed Paul, his kinsmen shall hear of it, and by his means the chief captain shall be his friend again and grant him a sufficient convoy (23:14-23) . . . not his being once stoned, nor his thrice suffering shipwreck, nor anything else, shall make void the purpose of God for his bearing witness of Christ at Rome" (Elisha Coles).

Now my reader, *why*, think you, are such instances as the above recorded in the sacred Scriptures? Is it not for our instruction and consolation? Is it not to assure us that the promises of God are unimpeachable, that His counsel *shall stand*, that once the word has gone forth from His mouth all earth and Hell combined is powerless to negate it? If the Lord was so exact in carrying out His word in these *lesser things*, which related only to time and earth, executing His purpose despite all outward oppositions, working miracles in order to accomplish His pleasure-how much more will He be punctilious in securing the *eternal welfare* of those whom He has appointed to Heavenly glory! If He bore His people of old "upon eagles wings" (Exo. 19:4), above the reach of danger; if He kept them as "the apple of His eye" (Deut. 32:10)-with all possible care and tenderness-till He brought them to Himself, think you that He will now do less for any for whom Christ died?

One of the outstanding *glories of the Gospel* is its promise of eternal security to all who truly believe it. The Gospel presents no third-rate Physician who is competent to treat only the milder cases but One who heals "all manner of sickness," who is capable of curing the most desperate

cases. It proclaims no feeble Redeemer, but One who is "mighty to save"-though the world, the flesh and the Devil combine against Him. He cannot be frustrated. He who triumphed over the grave cannot be thwarted by any feebleness or fickleness in His people. "He is able (which would not be true if their unwillingness could thwart Him) to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25). Those whom He pardons He preserves. Therefore each one who trusts in Him, though conscious of his own weakness and wickedness, may confidently exclaim, "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" (2 Tim. 1:12).

The importance of this truth appears clearly if we *suppose the opposite*. Assume that those who flee to Christ for refuge should finally end in the regions of Hell: then what? Why, to what purpose would be the proclamation of a Gospel which announced "so-great salvation" only for its participants to be eventually disappointed?-it would be no better than a beautiful mirage seen by parched travelers in the desert-presenting to their view a life-giving stream, only to mock those who sought it. Why, to what purpose did Christ offer Himself as a sacrifice to God if His blood avails not for those who trust in it? Why, to what purpose is the Holy Spirit given to God's children if He is unable to subdue the flesh in them and overcome their proclivities to wander? To what purpose is the Divine gift of faith if it fails its possessor in the ultimate outcome? If the final perseverance of the saints be a delusion, then one must close his Bible and sit down in despair.

3. *Its Nature.*

We propose dealing with this theme, and particularly with that aspect of it which is now to be before us, in rather a different manner than that which was followed by most of the Calvinistic divines in the past; or rather, we propose to throw most of our emphasis upon another angle of it than what they did. Their principal object was to establish this truth by rebutting the error of Arminians, who insist that those who have been redeemed by grace and regenerated by the Holy Spirit may nevertheless totally and finally apostatize from the Faith, and so eternally perish. Our chief aim will rather be to counteract the crude manner in which this doctrine has been only too often handled in more recent times and the evil use to which an adulterous generation has put it. While Arminianism has by no means disappeared from Christendom, yet it is the more recent inroads of Antinomianism (the repudiation of the Divine Law and the turning of God's grace into lasciviousness) which have wrought the most damage in our own lifetime.

It is not sufficiently realized by many of the Lord's own people that far more harm than good is likely to be done by immature "Gospellers" who have more zeal than knowledge, and who expect to reap a harvest (secure "results") before the ground is plowed and harrowed. Many an ignorant evangelist has given his hearers the impression that once they "accept Christ as their personal Saviour" they need have no concern about the future, and thousands have been lulled into a fatal sleep by the soothing lullaby "once saved, always saved." To imagine that if I commit my soul and its eternal interests into the hands of the Lord henceforth relieves me of all obligation is to accept sugar-coated poison from the Father of Lies. When I deposit my money in the bank for safe custody, then my responsibility is at an end: it is now their duty to protect the same. But it is far otherwise with the soul at conversion-the Christian's responsibility to avoid temptation and shun evil, to use the means of grace and seek after good lasts as long as he is left in this world.

If our ancestors erred on the side of prolixity-their descendants have often injured the cause of Christ by their brevity. Bare statements, without qualification or amplification, are frequently most misleading. Brief generalizations may content the superficial who lack both the incentive and the patience to make a thorough examination of any subject, but those who value the Truth sufficiently to

be willing to “buy” it (Prov. 23:23) appreciate a detailed analysis. Their contemplation thereof enables them to obtain an intelligent and balanced grasp of an important Scriptural theme. The man who accepts a piece of money—be it of paper or metal—after a cursory glance is far more likely to be deceived with a counterfeit than he who scrutinizes it closely. And they who give assent to a mere summarized declaration of this doctrine are in far greater danger of being deluded than the ones who are prepared to carefully and prayerfully examine a systematic exposition thereof. It is, of course, for the latter we write.

Much confusion and misunderstanding has been caused through failure to clearly define terms. Those who assail this doctrine usually set up a “man of straw” and then suppose they have achieved a notable victory because so little difficulty was experienced in demolishing so feeble an object. It must be confessed that only too often those who have posed as the champions of the Truth are largely to blame for this. It needs little argument to demonstrate that one who is in love with sin and drinks in iniquity like water does not have his face Heavenwards, no matter what experience of grace he claims to have had in the past. Yet it must not be concluded that the Arminian has gained the day when he appeals to the Christian’s spiritual instincts and asks: Does it comport with God’s holiness for Him to own as His dear child one who is trampling upon His commandments? The Calvinist would return a negative reply to such an inquiry as promptly and emphatically as would his opponent.

“The righteous also shall hold on his way” (Job 17:9). As Spurgeon pertinently pointed out, “The Scripture does not teach that a man will reach his journey’s end without continuing to travel along the road; it is not true that one act of faith is all, and that nothing is needed of daily faith, prayer and watchfulness. Our doctrine is the very opposite, namely, that the righteous shall hold on his way: or, in other words, shall continue in faith, in repentance, in prayer, and under the influence of the grace of God. We do not believe in salvation by a physical force which treats a man as a dead log, and carries him whether he will it or not towards Heaven. No, “he holds on his way,” he is personally active about the matter, and plods on up hill and down dale till he reaches his journey’s end. We never thought that merely because a man supposes that he once entered on this way he may therefore conclude that he is certain of salvation, even if he leaves the way immediately. No, but we say that he who truly receives the Holy Spirit, so that he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall not go back, but persevere in the way of faith . . . We detest the doctrine that a man who has once believed in Jesus will be saved even if he altogether forsook the path of obedience.”

In order to define our terms we must make it quite clear *who* it is that perseveres and *what* it is in which he perseveres. It is the saints, and none other. This is evident from many passages of Scripture. “He will keep the feet of *His saints*” (1 Sam. 2:9). “For the LORD loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints: *they* are preserved forever” (Psa. 37:28). “He preserveth the souls of His saints: He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked” (Psa. 97:10). “He maketh intercession for the saints” (Rom. 8:27). “He shall come to be glorified in His saints” (2 Thess. 1:10). All such are preserved in God’s love and favour and accordingly they persevere in the Faith, eschewing all damnable errors. They persevere in a life of faith, clinging to Christ like a drowning man to a life-buoy. They persevere in the path of holiness and obedience, walking by the light of God’s Word and being directed by His precepts—not perfectly so, nor without wandering, but in the general tenor of their lives.

Now a “saint” is a sanctified or separated one. First, he is one of those who were chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world and predestinated to be conformed unto the image of His Son. Second, he is one of those who were redeemed by Christ, who gave His life a ransom for them. Third, he is one who has been regenerated by a miracle of grace, brought from death unto life, and thereby set apart from those who are dead in sin. Fourth, he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption. But *how may I know* whether or not I am a saint? By impartially

examining myself in the light of Holy Writ to see if I possess the character and conduct of one. A "saint" is one whose back is toward the world and his face toward God. A saint's affections are drawn unto things above. He yearns for communion with his Beloved; he grieves over that in himself which displeases God. He makes conscience of his sins and confesses them to God; he prayerfully endeavours to walk as becomes a Christian, but who daily mourns over his many offenses.

Only those persevere unto the end who have experienced the *saving grace of God*. Now grace is not only a Divine attribute inherent in His character, it is also a Divine principle which He imparts to His people. It is both objective and subjective. Objectively, it is that free favour with which God eternally and unchangingly regards His people. Subjectively, it is that which He communicates to their souls, which resists their native depravity and enables them to hold on their way. A saint is one who not only has "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8), but who has also received "abundance of grace" (Rom. 5:17)-"unto every one of us is grace given" (Eph. 4:7). The Lord "giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6) and His grace is an operative, influential, and transforming thing. The Lord Jesus is "full of grace and truth" and of His fullness do all His people receive "and grace for grace" (John 1:14, 16). That grace teaches its recipients "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:12). They come to the Throne of Grace and "find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16) and thereby prove the Divine declaration, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9).

From all that has been pointed out above it follows that when we affirm the final perseverance of the saints we do *not* mean, 1. That every *professing* Christian will reach Heaven. The sprinkling of a few drops of water on the head of an infant does not qualify it for the inheritance of the saints for in a few years' time that child is seen to be no different than others who received not this ordinance. Nor does an avowal of faith on the part of an adult demonstrate him to be a new creature in Christ. Many born of Papist parents have been convinced of the folly of bowing before idols, confessing their sins to a priest and other such absurdities, but conversion to Protestantism is not the same as regeneration, as many evidenced in the days of Luther. Many a Jew has been convinced of the Messianic claims of Jesus Christ and has believed on Him as such, yet this is no proof of saving grace, as John 2:23, 24 and John 6:66 plainly show. Thousands more have been emotionally stirred under the hypnotic appeals of evangelists and have "taken their stand for Christ" and "joined the church," but their interests quickly evaporated and they soon returned to their wallowing in the mire.

2. Nor do we mean that *seeming* grace cannot be lost. Satan is a clever imitator so that his tares are indistinguishable by men from the wheat. By reading theological works and sitting under the preaching of the Word an attentive mind can soon acquire an intellectual acquaintance with the Truth and be able to discuss the mysteries of the Gospel more readily and fluently than can an unlettered child of God. Keen mentality may also be accompanied by a naturally religious disposition which expresses itself in fervent devotions, self-sacrificing effort and proselytizing zeal. But if such an one relapses and repudiates the Truth, that does not overthrow our doctrine: it simply shows he was never born of God. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they *would* have continued with us" (1 John 2:19). Such characters had never been received into the fellowship of apostolic assemblies unless they gave credible appearances of possessing real grace, yet their subsequent departure was proof they had it not. "Whosoever hath not (in reality), from him shall be taken way even that which he *seemeth* to have" (Luke 8:18).

3. Nor do we mean that *initial and preparatory* grace is a guarantee of glorification. What percentage of blossoms on the apple and plum trees mature and bear fruit? And that is an adumbration in the natural of what is found in the spiritual realm. Many a promising bud is nipped by the frosts of spring and never develops into a flower. In like manner there is a large number who so

far from despising and rejecting it, "receive the Word with joy, yet hath not root in himself, but dureth from a while" (Matt. 13:20, 21). That was the case when Christ Himself sowed the Seed, and many a faithful servant of His has found the same thing duplicated in his own ministerial labours. How often has he seen the buds of promise appearing in the lives of some of his young people, only to be saddened later by the discovery that their "goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it went away" (Hosea 6:4)? "Ye were willing *for a season* to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35) said Christ of certain ones who sat under the preaching of His forerunner. But observe He declared not that they had "sorrowed unto repentance."

Blazing comets and meteors are soon spent and fall from the heavens like lightning, but the stars keep their orbits and stations-as do the spiritual "stars" held fast in Christ's right hand (Rev. 2:1). There is an initial grace which produces a real but transient effect, and there is a saving grace which secures a permanent result. Hebrews 6:4, 5 supplies a solemn illustration of the former. There we read of those "who were once enlightened," that is, whose minds were illumined from on High, so that they perceived clearly the excellence of Divine things. They "tasted of the heavenly gift," so that for a season they lost their relish for the things of the world. They "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit," being convicted by Him of their sins and brought to say with Balaam, "let me die the death of the righteous" (Num. 23:10). But thorns sprang up and choked the good Seed, so that they "bring (forth) no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14). Such are cast forth "like an untimely birth."

4. Nor do we mean that true grace *if left in our hands* would not be lost. If Adam and Eve, when left to themselves, lost their innocence, how much more would those who are still affected by indwelling sin destroy themselves did not the Lord renew them in the inner man "day by day"? (2 Cor. 4:16). Regeneration does not make the Christian a God-independent and self-sufficient. No, it unites him as a branch to the true Vine, as a member of Christ's mystical body. And just as a bough detached from the tree immediately withers and as an arm or leg cut off from its body is a lifeless thing, so would the saint perish if it were possible to sever him from the Saviour. But the believer is not his own keeper-"your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3)-declares the Apostle. At the new birth our self-righteousness received its death wound so that we were glad to look outside ourselves to the righteousness of Another, and the more we grow in grace the more conscious are we of our weakness and the more are we made "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

5. Nor do we mean that true grace may not be *hindered in its operations* and suffer a relapse. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. 5:17): being contrary the one to the other, there is ever a warfare going on between them, one being uppermost today and the other so tomorrow. Christian perseverance is to be gauged not so much from single actions as by the most regular habits of the soul. As the functions of body may be hindered by a swoon or fit, as the activities of the mind are impaired by delirium, so the stirrings of indwelling grace may be interrupted by the power or our natural corruptions. The more the saint yields to the solicitations of the flesh, the feebler become the workings of the principle of grace. That true grace may suffer a serious, though not fatal relapse appears in the cases of Noah, Abraham, David and Peter, which are recorded for our warning and not for our imitation. The health of soul varies as does that of body and as the latter is frequently the consequence of our own carelessness and folly, such is always the case in connection with the former.

Nor doe we mean that *the comforts* of true grace cannot be eclipsed. We may indeed lose the sense of it though not the substance. Communion with Christ is lost when we experience a fall by the way, yet union with Him is not severed thereby. Mutual comforts may be suspended between man and wife though the conjugal knot is not dissolved. Believer may be separated from Christ's smile yet not so from His heart. If they wander from the Sun of righteousness how can they expect to enjoy His

light and warmth? Sin and wretchedness, holiness and happiness are inseparably joined together. The way of the transgressor is hard, but peace and joy are the portion of the upright. As a parent suffers his child to scorch his fingers at the flame that he may learn to dread the fire, so God permits His people to lose their comforts for a season that they may prove the bitterness of sin. But He draws them back again unto Himself before they are destroyed thereby.

7. Nor do we mean that the presence of indwelling grace renders it unnecessary that its possessor should persevere. Yet this is one of the silly inferences which Arminians are fond of drawing. They say, "If it is absolutely certain that God will preserve His people from total apostasy, then there is no real need why they must persevere-as well might we argue that it is unnecessary for us to breathe become God gives us breath, or that Hezekiah needed no longer to eat and drink become God had promised he should live another fifteen years. Wherever saving grace is bestowed it is accompanied by "the spirit of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7) so that the soul is preserved from trifling with God or reasoning like a madman. Christians are called upon to work out their own salvation "with fear and trembling," not to conduct themselves recklessly and to enable them thereto God works in them "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). Grace does not annul our responsibility but fits us to discharge it-it relieves from no duties-but equips for the performance of them.

3. *Its Nature.*

We turn now to the positive side: having dwelt upon what is *not* signified or implied by the final perseverance of the saints, let us now endeavour to show whereof it consists. And here it should be duly noted that the Holy Spirit has not restricted Himself to a single expression but has used a great variety of words to describe this duty and blessing. In matters of great spiritual importance God has employed many different terms in His Word for the instruction, comfort and support of His people. Out of the scores which set forth the believer's perseverance we may cite these. It is to "continue following the LORD our God" (1 Sam. 12:14). It is to walk "in the paths of righteousness" (Psa. 23:3), to be "steadfast in the Covenant" (Psa. 78:37), to "endure unto the end" (Matt. 24:13). It is to "deny self and take up the cross daily" (Luke 9:23), to "abide" in Christ (John 15:4), to "cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11:23). It is to "press toward the mark" (Phil. 3:14), to "continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Col. 1:23), to "hold faith and a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:19), to "hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). It is to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1), to "stablish our hearts" (James 5:8), to "be faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

In the limited space at our disposal it is advisable to epitomize the main branches of this subject under a few heads. 1. Spiritual perseverance is the *maintaining of a holy profession* or a continuance in the Word and Doctrine of Christ. Wherever saving faith is imparted the soul receives the Scriptures as Divine revelation, as the very Word of God. Faith is the visive faculty of the heart by which the majesty and excellency of the Truth is perceived and by which such conviction and certainty is conveyed that the soul *knows* it is none other than the living God speaking to him. Faith "hath received His testimony" and thereby "hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33). Henceforth he takes his stand on the impregnable rock of Holy Writ and neither man nor Devil can move him therefrom: "the voice of a stranger he will not follow" (John 10:5). While one who is *not* regenerated may intellectually believe and verbally profess his faith in the whole of revealed Truth, yet no regenerate person will repudiate the same.

"Some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). How many have done so within the memory of our older readers! Those who were looked upon as towers of orthodox succumbed to "evolutionism" and the "higher criticism." Those who were regarded as staunch Protestants became ensnared by Romanism. Multitudes of the rank and file who

were once members of evangelical churches and teachers in the Sunday Schools have been poisoned by infidelity and repudiated their former beliefs. But all such cases were merely the chaff being separated from the wheat-thereby causing the true to stand out more plainly from the false. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest" (1 Cor. 11:19). When many of Christ's disciples went back and walked no more with Him the Apostles were *not shaken*, for when He asked, "Will ye also go away?" their spokesman answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:66, 68).

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye *continue* in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). That is one of the marks of those who are disciples of Christ in reality and not only in appearance. They are all "taught of the LORD" (Isa. 54:13) and not merely by men, and "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Eccl. 3:14). False Christs and false prophets may seek to beguile them but it is not possible to deceive the elect (Matt. 24:24). Hymeneus and Philetus may err concerning the Truth, even denying the resurrection, and in consequence "overthrow the faith of some," yet we are at once assured, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seat, the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:17-19)-none with a saving faith can be overthrown. And why? Because they are enabled to continue in God's Word. Uninfluenced by "current opinion" or "modern thought," the child of God, even though the last one left on earth, would "hold fast the profession of faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23).

2. *The maintaining of holy affections and principles.* It should be clearly understood that perseverance is not a distinct and particular grace, separate from all others-rather is it a virtue which crowns all virtues, a grace which sets a glory on every other grace. The first stirrings of the new life are seen in conviction of sin and contrition for the same, yet repentance is not an act to be performed once and for all, but a grace to be exercised constantly. Faith is that which lays hold of Christ and obtains from Him pardon and cleansing-but so far from that being something which needs not to be repeated, it is an experience which requires to be renewed day by day. The same holds good of love, of hope, of zeal. Perseverance is the continued exercise of holy affections and principles so that we do not merely trust for a while, love for a while, obey for a while and then cease; but forgetting those things which are behind we press forward to those before. "These all died in faith" (Heb. 11:13)-they not only lived by faith, but they continued doing so to the very end of their earthly pilgrimage.

"Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. 5:4). Mark well the tense: not they that mourned in the past, but who still do so. Even Pharaoh and Ahab, yea, Judas also, had transient qualms of conscience that were nothing more than the stirrings of nature. But the child of God has within him a deeper principle, a principle of holiness which is contrary to evil, and this makes its possessor grieve over his sinfulness. "Blessed are they which *do* hunger and thirst after righteousness": not only who once hungered after righteousness, but who long ardently for it *now*. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (James 1:12): how much theology is to be found in the grammar of Scripture! "To whom *coming* as unto a living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, precious" (1 Peter 2:4): yes "coming" for fresh supplies of grace, for further counsel and instruction, for heart-reviving communion. "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments" (Rev. 16:15): they upon whom the benediction of God rests are not those who once ran well, but whose graces *continue* in exercise.

Christians are "kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). God does not preserve His people by the mere putting forth of physical power, but by renewing their graces, particularly their faith. It is through their *continued* reliance upon Christ, their trusting in the Divine promises and on God's perfections and His promise to fulfill them, their keeping of His commands and their overcoming the world (1 John 5:4) that the saints are

secured from fatality. And their faith is maintained by Christ's constant intercession-"I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not"-and God's response thereto, who fulfills "all the good pleasure of His goodness in them and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). This does *not* mean that the Christian's faith continues in unabated exercise all his days, for as the most fruitful tree passes through a wintertime of non-bearing so it often is in the experience of the believer-yet as the life is still in the tree though leafless, so faith remains and bursts forth afresh. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief" expresses his general course.

3. *The maintaining of holy conduct or good works.* When a person's understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and his affections Divinely renewed there cannot but follow a radical change of conduct, though this is made more prominent and radical in some cases than in others. The difference is much more apparent in one who was thoroughly irreligious and guilty of gross outward sins before his new birth than another who was regulated by the training of pious parents and preserved from debauchery. Yet even with the latter a "new creation" must express itself in a new life: the Word will be read and meditated upon not so much as a duty but a delight. Prayer will be engaged in not perfunctorily but heartily-the Lord's people will not only be respected but loved for whatever of Christ may be seen in them. Honesty and truthfulness will mark his dealings with his fellows not only because this is right but because he would not grieve the Spirit. Daily work is performed not as an irksome task which must be done but as a service gladly rendered unto Him whose Providence has wisely and graciously ordered his lot.

At regeneration God imparts spiritual life to the soul, and all life is followed by motion and operation. Before the new birth the soul was spiritually dead, and at the new birth it was entirely passive, being wrought upon by God. But after the new birth the soul becomes active. Perseverance, then, is the endeavours of the soul to concur with God's quickening of it. Hence it is that the Christian life is often described under the figure of walking: "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). The motions of the body are transferred to the soul which by faith and love is conducted along the way of God's statutes (Ezek. 36:27). Walking is a *voluntary* action and the renewed soul has pleasure in the path of godliness. Walking is a steady and *continuous* action, and not a spasmodic and irregular one: so the Christian pursues an obedient course not by fits and starts but steadily and steadfastly. Walking is a *progressive* motion, moving onwards to a goal: so the Christian normally goes on "from strength to strength" (Psa. 84:7). Walking as such is *incessant* for it ceases as soon as we sit down by the wayside: so the Christian life is a walking to the very end of his pilgrimage and until Heaven is reached perfect rest is not entered into.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20, 21). It is by such exhortations that the Christian is stirred to use the means that make for constancy. Care has to be taken if there is to be spiritual growth. It is not sufficient to be established in the faith, we must daily increase therein: the foundation is laid that a house may be erected thereon, and that is built steadily, bit by bit. For this prayer is required: this is the channel through which health and strength are obtained. Neglect of prayer is followed by arrested growth, nay, by decay of graces, for if we go not forward we backslide. To pray aright the assistance of the Holy Spirit has to be sought. Further, we must keep ourselves in God's love by avoiding everything which displeases Him and by maintaining close and regular communion with Him. Should we leave our first love, we must repent and do the first work, (Rev. 2:4). Finally, hope must be kept in exercise: the heart fixed upon the glorious prospect and consummation awaiting us.

4. Such maintaining of a holy profession, holy affections and holy action *is necessary in order to*

salvation. The very term “salvation” clearly implies danger, and of none can it be said that they are completely safe until they are completely delivered from danger. Certainly the Christian is not so while sin remains in him and he is left in a wicked world and exposed to the assaults of the Evil One. “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven” (Heb. 12:25). Multitudes of those who came out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, fed on the manna and drank of the water from the smitten rock, afterward perished in the wilderness and we are told, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition . . . wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:10, 11), for a holy God will no more be mocked now than He would be then.

As we have pointed out, 1 Peter 1:5 places salvation in *the future*-as also does Romans 13:11; 1 Timothy 4:16-unto which the saints are kept by the power of God through faith. Heaven can only be reached by continuing along the sole path that leads there, namely, the “Narrow Way.” Those who persevere not in faith and holiness, love and obedience, will assuredly perish. Whatever temporal faith, natural love, goodly attainments, and confident assurance may appear for a while, they are a bed shorter than a man can stretch himself upon and a covering narrower than the soul can wrap itself in (Isa. 28:20). Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive *many* and because iniquity shall abound the love of *many* shall (not merely wane or cool off, but) wax cold. “But *he* that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). All temptations to deny the Faith, to forsake Christ, to go back into the world, to give free rein to the lusts of the flesh must be resisted to our last breath or our *profession* will prove *worthless*.

5. *Enablement for this perseverance is wrought in the saints by God.* Their deliverance from a total and final falling away is not owing to any power or sufficiency in themselves. Though their moral agency is not impaired and though continuance in well-doing is required of them, yet their enduring unto the end is not to be attributed unto their fidelity nor to the strength of the new nature which they received at regeneration. No, Christian perseverance depends wholly and entirely on the will and fidelity, the influence and energy of God working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure, making them perfect in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:21). It is God, who having begun a good work in them, will carry it on “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). “If the Holy Spirit were taken from the believer, and he left to himself to stand or fall, he would immediately cease to be a believer and fall totally from a state of grace” (S. Hopkins).

Freely will any renewed person subscribe to the following lines-

“If ever it should come to pass
That any sheep of Christ should fall away,
My feeble, fickle soul, alas!
Would fall a thousand times a day;
Were not Thy love as firm as free,
Thou soon wd’st take it Lord, from me.”

6. Christian perseverance *is consistent with being sanctified but in part*. It is most important that this is clearly stated, lest the Lord’s people conclude they are outside the pale of the Covenant. At the new birth a holy principle or nature is imparted to them, but the old and sinful nature is not eradicated, nor is it to the slightest degree improved. Indwelling corruptions are as much opposed to God as they were before conversion, and just as active. Pray against them as he may, strive against them as he will, yet the believer is constantly overcome by them: frequently does he have to exclaim with David, “iniquities prevail against me” (Psa. 65:3). The experience described in Romans 7:14-25 is that of

every genuine Christian. God gives no man such a measure of grace in this life as to make him sinless. "In many things we all offend" (James 3:2), and by sudden surprises and under great temptations believers may fall into particular gross outward acts of sin, yet, by God's grace they will not become totally corrupt and sinful as the unregenerate are, nor do they sin with their whole heart. Christian sanctification, then, is the maintaining of holy affections and actions in the midst of native depravity and all its out-flows. Despite great discouragements their faith and grace never wholly fail. Sanctified but in part now, glorified in the future.

7. From all that has been before us it will thus be seen that perseverance can be predicated only of those who "*know the grace of God in truth*" (Col. 1:6), who experience its supernatural operations in their own souls. Not a suppositional grace which may be held in reckless abandonment, but a *spiritual* grace which causes its possessor to walk cautiously. What Scripture teaches is that there never was, never will be, and never *can* be such a thing as the total and final falling away of one who has really repented and trusted on Christ. That in every instance where a Divine miracle of grace has been wrought that soul shall stand when this world and all its works shall be burned up. Rightly has it been said, "The question of the perpetuity of grace is the question of a genuine Gospel. Is grace permanent, then the Gospel is a reality. Is grace temporary, then the Gospel is a will o' the wisp, a phantom benediction-it is nothing more than a dream of blessedness from which one may awake to find himself bereft of all that raptured him" (G. S. Bishop).

4. *Its Marvel.*

This is an aspect of our subject which has received far too little attention from those who have written and preached thereon. Amid all the dust which controversy has raised up, only too often one of the grandest wonders of Divine grace has been hidden from the sight of the theological contestants: alas, how frequently is this the case, that being so occupied with the shell we reach not the kernel. Even those who have sought to defend this truth against the assault of Popish and Arminian antagonists did not sufficiently hold up to view the glorious *miracle* which it embodies. The security of the saint concerns not only the Divine veracity and faithfulness but it also exemplifies the workings of Divine power. The believer's cleaving unto the Lord, despite all hindrances and temptations to the contrary, not only manifests the efficacy of God's so-great salvation but displays the marvels of His workmanship therein. That the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church of Christ, that Satan is unable to destroy a single member of it, that the weakest shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved them should fill us with admiration and adoration!

All the blessings of the Christian's life may be summed up in two eminent ones, for they include all the others of which he is the recipient from the moment of the new birth to his arrival in Heaven, namely, regeneration or instating him into life and the preservation of that life through all the difficulties and dangers of his pilgrimage to safe passage unto Glory. Hence it is we so often find them linked together in Scripture. Just as the work of creation at the first and then the upholding of all things by Divine power and Providence are yoked together as works of like wonder (Heb. 1:2, 3), so we find regeneration and preservation joined together as the sum of the operations of grace. "Hath He not made thee *and* established thee?" (Deut. 32:6). "I have made, and will bear; even I will carry, and deliver you" (Isa. 46:4). In Psalm 66:9 both are comprehended in one word—"who *putteth* (margin) thy soul in life," and "who *holdeth* thy soul in life," first imparting life and then sustaining it. So also in the New Testament: "I give unto them eternal life *and* they shall never perish" (John 10:28); "begotten us again unto a lively hope . . . kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:3, 5); "sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude 1).

This great marvel of Divine preservation is enlarged upon and celebrated in Psalm 66. After

saying, "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice His praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (vv. 8, 9) the Psalmist pointed out first that they had been proved and tried "as silver is tried" (v. 10), which denotes the sorest of trials (Ezek. 22:22). Second, God had brought them "into the net" and had "lain affliction upon their loins" (Psa. 66:11): that is, He had so encompassed them round about with afflictions that there was no way of escaping out of them (cf. Isa. 51:20). Third, God had caused men to "ride over their heads" (Psa. 66:12): that is, they were delivered to the will of cruel enemies, who treated them as slaves. Fourth, they had gone "through fire and water" (v. 12), which denotes the extremity of evils. Nor were these various dangers perils to their outward man only, but tryings and testings of their faith, as "Thou, O God, hast proved us" (v. 10) intimates. Yet through all of them they had been sustained and preserved. God had supported their faith and upheld them under His sorest chastenings.

Having blessed God on behalf of other saints and invited his readers to do the same, the Psalmist added a personal testimony, recounting the Lord's goodness unto himself. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul" (v. 16), which confession continues to the end of the Psalm. That testimony is not to be divorced from its context but regarded as the continuation of what he had affirmed in the preceding verses. It was as though he said, What I ask you to praise the Lord for is not something with which I have had no firsthand acquaintance but rather of that I have experienced in my own checkered history. The Lord put and held *my* soul in life during the many buffetings I have passed through. He did not suffer the waters to completely submerge me but kept my head above them. Give me an audience, fellow pilgrims, while I recount to you the wonderful workings of the God of all grace with me. Let me review the whole of my wilderness journey and tell of God's failing not to show Himself strong on my behalf: I cried unto Him, "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me" (v. 20).

Ah, could not each child of God emulate the Psalmist in that? We are greatly interested and delighted when we read or hear of how different ones were brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. We marvel at and admire the variety of the means and methods employed by Him in convicting of sin and discovering Christ to different ones. We are awed and rejoice when we learn of how some notorious rebel was brought to the foot of the Cross. But equally interesting, equally wonderful, equally blessed is the story of each Christian's life *after* conversion. If the mature believer looks back at the whole of his journey and reviews all God's gracious dealings with him, what a tale he could unfold! Let him describe the strange twists and windings of his path, all ordered by infinite Wisdom, as he now perceives. Let him tell of the tempests and tossing through which his frail craft has come and how often the Lord said to the winds and waves, "be still." Let him narrate the providential help which came when he was in sore straits, the deliverances from temptation when he was almost overcome, the recoveries from backslidings, the revivings after deadness of heart, the comforting in sorrow, the uplifting when borne down by difficulties and discouragements, the answers to prayer when things appeared hopeless, the patience which has borne with dullness, the grace with unbelief, the joy of communion with the Lord when cut off from public means of grace. What a series of miracles the Christian has experienced!

The saint is indeed a marvel of marvels: without strength yet continuing to plod along his uphill course. Think of a tree flourishing in the midst of a sandy desert, where there is neither soil nor water. Imagine a house suspended in mid-air with no visible means of support above or below. Conceive of a man living week after week and year after year in a morgue, yet maintaining his vigour. Suppose a lone lamb secure in the midst of hungry wolves, or a maid keeping her garments white as she plows her way through deep mud and mire-and in such figures you have an image of the Christian life. The new nature is kept alive between the very jaws of death! Health of soul is preserved while breathing a

fetid atmosphere and surrounded by those with the most contagious and fatal diseases. It is like a defenseless dove successfully eluding droves of hawks bent on her destruction. It is like a man subsisting, on a barren wilderness where there is neither food nor drink. It is like a traveler on some icy summit with unfathomable precipices on either side-where a false step means certain destruction. O the wonder of Christian perseverance in the face of such handicaps and obstacles!

1. The marvel, then, of the saints' perseverance is seen in the character of those who are chosen by God. We would naturally conclude that if He determined to have a people in this world through whom He would show forth His praises, He would select the most promising and excellent: those of strong intellectual power, those of noble birth, those of sweet disposition, those of outstanding moral character. But His ways are different from ours. He singles out the most unlikely and unworthy ones to be the vessels of mercy. Thus it was in the Old Testament era. Why were the Hebrews taken to be the most favoured of all nations? Had they a stronger natural claim than others? Assuredly not. The Egyptians were a more intelligent race, as the monuments of their industry attest to this day. The Chaldeans were more ancient, more numerous, more civilized and albeit exerted a much greater influence on the rest of the world. Was it, because the Israelites were more *spiritual*, more likely to prove amenable to the Divine government? No, for ere they set foot upon Canaan it was expressly declared unto them, "Understand therefore that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Deut. 9:6).

It is the same thing in the New Testament dispensation. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Cor. 1:26-28). How remarkable is this: the ones chosen to successfully resist Satan, overcome the world, persevere in the difficult path of faith and obedience and finally win Heaven are the feeble, the weak, the base, the despised, and the mere nobodies! This has ever presented a stumblingblock to the proud Pharisee: "have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (John 7:48). That the priests and scribes be passed by and publicans and harlots called to feast with Christ-that heavenly things should be hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes-evokes the sneer from the learned, "Christianity is only suited to old women and children." And why is this God's way? "That no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). That the crown of honour should be placed on the head of Him who alone is entitled to wear it, that we may learn this is the result of sovereign and miraculous *grace*.

2. It is seen in the fewness of them. There is but "a *remnant* according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5) even among those who bear the name of the Lord, and in comparison with the hundreds of millions in heathendom who worship false gods and the vast multitudes in Christendom who make no profession at all, the real people of God constitute such an insignificant handful as to be almost lost to view. One had naturally thought that if the Lord purposed to have a people on earth who should glorify His name that they would be conspicuous in size, commanding attention and respect. Is it not a maxim of worldly wisdom that "there is strength in numbers" and did not Napoleon give expression thereto in his satirical dictum, "God is always on the side of the biggest battalions"? Ah, but here, too, God's thoughts and ways are the very opposite of the world's, for His strength is "made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9.) and the things which are highly esteemed among men are an "abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). Turn, my reader, to Judges 7:2 and ponder anew the lesson Jehovah taught Gideon when He said, "The people that are with thee are *too many* for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves"!

Not only have the Lord's people always been in the minority but they have never included more than a fractional percentage of earth's population. Only eight were delivered from the Flood. From the days of Noah unto Moses—a period of roughly eight and a half centuries—we may count upon our fingers those recorded in Holy Writ who gave evidence of spiritual life. It requires no courage or resolution to follow the tide of popular opinion for one is likely to encounter less opposition when he is on the side of the majority. What a miracle that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob preserved their piety in Canaan when surrounded by the heathen! The principle which we are now engaged in illustrating was emphasized by Moses when he said unto Israel, "The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were *the fewest* of all people" (Deut 7:7). It is the same in this New Testament dispensation. Near the close of Paul's life Christians were referred to as a sect "every where spoken against" (Act 28:22). The Lord Jesus declared that His flock was a "little" one (Luke 12:32), which increases the wonder of its survival, and though in recent years the membership of the "churches" has swelled to huge proportions, it is now becoming more and more apparent that with rare exceptions they are but nominal professors and that only a "few" tread that Way which leadeth unto Life (Matt. 7:14).

3. It is seen in God's leaving them in this world. We might well suppose that since the Father has set His heart upon them He would take them Home as soon as they are brought from death unto life. Instead they are left down here, most of them for many years, in a hostile country, in the Enemy's territory, for "the whole world lieth in the Wicked one" (1 John 5:19). And why? that they may have opportunity to manifest their love for Him, that despite ceaseless opposition and innumerable temptations to cast off their allegiance, they will, by His grace, remain faithful unto death. We marvel that Noah was preserved in the ark when the devastating flood without swept away the entire human race from the earth and when he was surrounded by all manner of wild beasts within. Why was he not torn to pieces by the lions and tigers? or poisoned by the stench from the dung of all the animals? Though he remained there no less than a year, at the end thereof he and all his household stepped forth alive and well. Not less wonderful is the survival of the Christian in a world where there is nothing to help spiritually but everything to the contrary.

The believer may be compared to an individual who has thrown off allegiance to his king, has disowned his country, and refuses obedience to its laws yet continues to dwell in the land he has renounced and hard by the sovereign he has forsworn. The grace of God has called us out of the world, but the Providence of God has sent us into the world. We may therefore expect nothing but hatred and hostility from it. The world will never forgive the act by which we broke from its thralldom, renounced its sway, relinquished its pleasures and resigned its friendship. Nor can it look with complacency upon the godly, self-denying and unworldly life of the Christian, which is a constant rebuke of its own carnality and folly. First it will veil its opposition and conceal its malignity beneath smiles and flattery, seeking to win back the one it has lost. But when that effort proves unavailing it changes its course and with venomous tongue, tireless zeal and devilish tactics seeks by detraction and falsehood to wound and injure the people of God. We marvel at the three Hebrews not being destroyed in Babylon's fiery furnace, but it is not less a miracle for a believer to persevere in the path of holiness amid the contagious sinfulness, seductive allurements and relentless persecutions of an evil world.

4. It is seen in the old nature being left in the saint. Since God is pleased to leave His people in this howling wilderness for a season, where everything seems to be dead against them, surely He will rid them of that which is most of all calculated to lead to their fatal undoing. If He requires them to be "holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15), will He not purge them of all inward corruptions? If the sons of God are to be "without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," among

whom they are to “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15), will He not remove all darkness from their understanding? And again we are made to realize how worthless is all human reasoning upon spiritual matters. Indwelling sin remains in the believer: the flesh is neither eradicated nor transformed. But how can we expect those with a sink of iniquity still within them to maintain a godly walk? Ah, therein we are brought to see again the *marvel* of the saint’s perseverance. If a lorry has to pass down a street where the buildings on either side are burning fiercely, would it not greatly augment the wonder of its journeying through successfully when we learned that the lorry was laden with barrels of gunpowder and dynamite?

This is precisely the case of the believer: there is that in him which is responsive to the evil without him. The world and his heart are in a confederacy against the good of his soul, so that he can neither eat nor drink, work nor sleep in safety because of enemies without and treacherous lusts within. For a holy angel to dwell here would involve him in no danger, for in freedom from all inward corruptions there would be nothing in him to which the allurements of the world could appeal. But the Christian has a stack of dry tinder ready to ignite as soon as the sparks of temptation alight thereon. O the policy and power, the strength and prevalence, the nearness and treachery of indwelling sin! It is something which cleaves to all the faculties: not only *in* us but part and parcel *of* us. It dwells there (Rom. 7:17) ever seeking our overthrow. Such is our native depravity that it is capable of transmuting blessings into curses, making things lawful into snares and entangling us with everything we meet with. Ah, my reader, if it were a miracle when Elisha caused iron to swim (2 Kings 2), not less so is it when our affections are set upon things above and our minds stayed on Jehovah.

4. *Its Marvel.*

5. The marvel of the saints’ perseverance is seen in grace’s dwelling-place. In what uncongenial and inimical surroundings is the new nature set-in the depraved soul of a fallen creature. Not only is there nothing in man capable of nourishing the principle of holiness but everything which is directly opposed thereto: “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal. 5:17). Birds do not fly beneath the waves nor will fish live on dry ground because they are out of their native element. Then what a wonder it is for grace to be preserved and grow in a heart which by nature is desperately wicked. Would trees grow if their seeds were planted in salt? Why, then, should communicated grace take root and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit when planted in the midst of corruption? That is truly a miracle of Divine horticulture: a miracle which is far too little attended unto and admired. Well may each believer exclaim, “I am as a wonder to many” (Psa. 71:7) not failing to add, “but Thou art my refuge.” The Christian is a mystery to himself, an enigma to the unregenerate who cannot understand his denying himself the things they delight in and finding pleasure in what they loath. But he is a “wonder,” a prodigy of grace, unto his brethren and sisters in Christ.

The miracle of the survival of the principle of grace in a human soul will be the more manifest if we contrast the present case of the believer with that of Adam in the day of his pristine purity. Grace was connatural with our first parents when their Maker pronounced them “very good”: if, then, they so quickly lost their grace when it was placed in a pure soil, what a wonder it is that it should be preserved in a heart which is essentially evil! When the Son of God became incarnate Herod moved the whole country in a determined attempt to slay Him: and when Christ comes into the heart the whole soul rises up in opposition against Him. The carnal mind, the lusts of the flesh, an intractable will, are all antagonistic to every breathing after holiness. Preservation of grace in the saint is more remarkable than for one to succeed in carrying an unprotected but lighted candle across an open moor in a boisterous wind. Yea, as the Puritans were wont to say, it is as though a fire were kept burning year after year in the midst of the ocean. Grace is not only preserved but maintains its purity

amid indwelling sin: as gold cannot be altered in its nature by the dross or transmuted into the rubbish amid which it lies, neither can the new nature be defiled by the mass of corruption wherein it dwells.

6. It is seen in their exposure to Satan's attacks. If there were no Devil at all it would be a miracle that any believer should persevere in the path of obedience while living in such a world as this. Surrounded as he is by the ungodly, ever seeking to allure him into their own sinful ways, carrying within him lusts which are in full accord with the evil around him it is a wonder of wonders that he should remain steadfast. But over and above that he is called upon to resist the arch-enemy of God, the mightiest of all His creatures who is filled with enmity against him and bent upon his destruction. We are plainly warned, "your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8): how then shall feeble lambs hope to successfully resist him! We are told that when the woman brought forth the "Man-child who was to rule all nations" that the red dragon, "stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child" (Rev. 12:4). As the dragon acted thus toward the Head Himself so does he still seek to vent his malice upon the members of His mystical body.

Who is capable of estimating the power of Satan and the hosts of evil spirits he commands? And who can adequately describe the weakness and frailty of those called upon to withstand his attacks? If Adam in Paradise with no lust within to entice and no world under the curse all around him fell under the very first assault of Satan upon him, who are we to engage him in conflict? Fallen man could as well move a mountain with his finger as overcome the Prince of this world. Nevertheless of renewed men it is written, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the high places" (Eph. 6:12). Satan with all his wisdom, his power, his myrmidons are marshaled and exerted in tremendous opposition to the interests of the children of God, as the histories of Job, of David (1 Chron. 21:1), of Joshua, (Zech. 3:1), of Peter (Luke 22:31), and of Paul (1 Thess. 2:15) clearly show. We have often marveled at the deliverance of Daniel while spending a night in the lions' den-no less a miracle is the Christian's preservation from the continuous attacks of Satan and all his demons. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11).

7. It is seen in the renunciations they are required to make. "If any come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, he cannot be My disciple. So likewise whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33). Who can be expected to accept Christian discipleship on such exacting terms as these?! No wonder that men of all shades of theological opinion have invented terms which are easier and more pleasant to the flesh, yet such are only blind leaders of the blind. Christ will receive none who refuse His yoke. God will not own as His people those who refuse to give Him their hearts. Sin must be hated, lusts must be mortified, the world must be renounced. A Christian is one who repudiates his own wisdom, strength and righteousness. A Christian is one who holds himself and all that he has at the disposal of the Lord. As Abram at the call of God turned his back on the old manner of life, so those who are his believing children are made willing to sacrifice all their temporal interests, counting not their lives dear unto themselves. What a marvel is this that grace enables its possessor to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, yea which empowers timid women and children to go to the stake rather than apostatize!

8. It is seen in the Way they are required to walk. It is a "narrow" way, for it is shut in on either side by the Divine Commandments which forbid all that is contrary to the Divine will. It is the way of "holiness," without which no man shall see the Lord. It is the way of obedience-of complete and continuous subjection to the Lord-wherein my own will is set aside. It is a difficult way, hard to find

and harder still to traverse, for the whole of it is uphill. It is a lonely way, for there are but few upon it. It is therefore a way which is entirely contrary to flesh and blood, which presents no attraction to fallen human nature. Yet it is the *only* way which leads unto Life. That narrow way of self-abnegation is the one which Christ trod and sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps so that there is no following of Christ without walking the way He went and that way was one of sacrifice, of bearing reproach, of enduring suffering. "Whosoever will save his life (for himself) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). No cross, no crown. What a marvel it is for any sinful creature to voluntarily choose such a path, to accept the cross as the dominant principle of his life!

9. It is seen in the frailty of the Christian. We would naturally think that since God requires His people to overcome such formidable obstacles, perform such difficult tasks and wrestle with such enemies He would make them strong and powerful. Surely if they are to maintain their piety in a world like this, discharge duties which are contrary to flesh and blood, resist the Devil and all his hosts-the Lord will make each of His saints as mighty spiritually as Samson was physically. If one of them shall chase a thousand and two of them put ten thousand to flight must it not be because of their superior might? How shall they endure opposition, overcome temptations, be fruitful unto every good work unless they be endued with abundant grace? But here again the Lord's thoughts are the very opposite of ours. His people are so frail and helpless in themselves that He declares, "without Me ye can do nothing," and sooner or later each of them is made to realize this for himself. Apart from the Lord the believer is as weak as water. Power for the conflict lies not in himself, but in Another. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of *His* might" (Eph. 6:10). Peter thought he was strong enough in himself to overcome temptation, but he soon discovered that though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak.

But is there not such a thing as growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord? Certainly there is but such progress is of a very different nature from what many imagine. Growth in grace is a deepening realization of *where* our strength, our wisdom, the supply for every need is to be found. Growing in grace is not an increasing self-sufficiency but an increasing dependence upon God. Those who are spiritually the strongest are they who know most of their own weakness. It is the empty vessel which God fills. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might (of their own) He increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29). Surely none of us can hope to attain a higher measure than that of the most favoured of the Apostles. Yet Paul acknowledged, "when I am *weak* then am I strong," (2 Cor. 12:10). Here, then, is truly a miracle: that one who is compassed with infirmity, who is not sufficient himself to think anything as of himself (2 Cor. 3:5)-and therefore still less able to *do* anything good-who has "no might" of his own, who is utterly helpless in himself, should nevertheless fight a good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27).

10. It is seen in the fruits which the Christian bears. We have already called attention to the survival of the principle of grace in spite of the uncongenial soil in which it is placed and the foul atmosphere of this world where it grows. And equally wonderful is that which issues from it. This line of thought might be extended considerably but space requires us to abbreviate. What a marvel that the Christian's *faith* should be preserved amid so many trials and buffetings, betrayals by false brethren and even the hidings of God's face! That notwithstanding, the most painful crosses and losses it affirms, "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Not only have God's saints remained steadfast under persecution, but after being beaten "they *rejoiced* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:40, 41). Others "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (Heb. 10:34). What a marvellous fruit is this, to "glory in tribulation"

(Rom. 5:3), to “sing praise unto God” (Acts 16:25) while lying in a dungeon with backs bleeding. Such fruits are not the products of nature. To hope against hope (Rom. 4:18), to acknowledge “it is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psa. 119:71), to cry, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60), while being stoned to death, are the fruits of Divine *grace*.

11. It is seen in their submission under and triumph of faith over the severest chastisements. It is natural to murmur when everything appears to go wrong and the face of Providence wears a dark frown but it is *supernatural* to meekly submit and say, “the will of the Lord be done.” When “fire from the LORD” went out and devoured Nadab and Abihu because of their presumptuous conduct, so far from their father making an angry outburst at the severity of their punishment, we are told that he “held his peace” (Lev. 10:3). When the awful tidings were broken to the aged Eli that both of his wayward sons were to be smitten by Divine judgment on the same day, he quietly acquiesced saying, “It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (1 Sam. 3:18). When Job’s sons and daughters were suddenly stricken with death and his flocks and herds carried away by thieves, he exclaimed, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). And when his own body was smitten with “sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown,” so far from losing all confidence in God and apostatizing, he declared, “though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (13:15).

12. It is seen in their perseverance in piety when deprived of all public means of grace. When the undershepherds are taken away what shall the poor sheep do? When corporate testimony breaks down what will become of the individual? When Zion is made desolate and the Lord’s people are carried captives into a strange land will they not pine away? True, this is an exceptional state of affairs, yet at various stages of history it has pleased God to deprive numbers of His people of all the external means of grace and preserve them as isolated units. It was thus at a very early stage. Behold Abraham, the father of the faithful, dwelling alone amid the heathen yet maintaining communion with the Lord. Behold Daniel in Babylon, in the face of deadly peril, preserving his piety. Some of us used to sing as children, “Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone, dare to have a purpose true, and dare to make it known.” Is not our own lot cast in a day when not a few of the scattered children of God have to lament, “I am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psa. 102:7)? Even so, as God miraculously sustained Elijah in the solitudes of Cherith so He will preserve each of them.

13. It is seen in their deliverance from apostasy. What numbers have been fatally deceived by Romanism! What multitudes of the outer court worshippers have been stumbled by the multiplication of sects in Protestantism, each claiming to take the Scriptures for their guide yet often differing on the most fundamental truths! What crowds have been attracted by the false prophets and heretical teachers, especially in America, during the past century! But though the real children of God may have been bewildered it drove them to search His Word more closely for themselves, for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10:5). In our own day because iniquity or lawlessness abounds the love of many has waxed cold and tens of thousands who a little time ago appeared to “run well” have gone right back into the world. Yet, by God’s grace, there is still a remnant who cleave unto the Lord and the very fewness of their numbers emphasizes the marvel of their preservation. It is a miracle of grace that any “hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”-never more so than in this dark day.

What an amazing thing it was that Jonah should be cast overboard into the sea without a lifebelt and with no boat to rescue him and yet that he was not drowned! Still more remarkable that he should be swallowed by a whale and remain alive in its belly for three days and nights! Most wonderful of all that the whale disgorged the Prophet not in the ocean but vomited him out on the land. So amazing is

this that it has been made the favourite subject of jest by infidels. But it presents no difficulty to the Christian, who knows that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). We not only believe the authenticity of this miracle but have long been convinced it is a designated *type* not only of the resurrection of the Redeemer but of the preservation of the redeemed. The case of Jonah not only adumbrates a backsliding believer but an extreme case of backsliding at that: showing that when a saint yields to self-will and forsakes the way of obedience, though he will be severely chastened, the arm of the Lord will reach after and restore him to the paths of righteousness.

14. It is seen in God’s manifold workings in and for them. This necessarily follows from all that has been said under the preceding heads. The perseverance of saints must be the consequence of the Divine preservation of them-believers have no spiritual wisdom and no spiritual strength of their own-therefore God must work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. His *preventing* grace: as the martyr observed a murderer on his way to the gallows he exclaimed, “there goes John Bradford but for the grace of God.” From how many temptations and sins on which their hearts were set are Christians delivered, as David from slaying Nabal? *Protecting* grace: “mercy shall compass him about” as a shield (Psa. 39:10). *Quickening* grace, whereby the principle of holiness is enlivened: “the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). *Confirming* grace, whereby we are kept from being tossed to and fro: “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God” (2 Cor. 1:21 and cf. 2 Thess. 2:17). *Fructifying* grace: “From Me is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). *Maturing* grace: “make you perfect in every good work to do His will” (Heb. 13:21). These and other operations of Divine grace are all summed up in that acknowledgement, “Thou also hast wrought *all* our works in us” (Isa. 26:12) to which every saint freely ascribes and which alone explains the marvel of his perseverance.

5. *Its Springs.*

We now turn to contemplate the most important and blessed aspect of our subject, yea the very heart and crux thereof. The believer’s perseverance in faith and holiness is no detached and isolated thing, but an effect of an all-sufficient *cause*. It must not be viewed as a separate phenomenon but as the fruit of Divine operations. The believer’s continuance in the paths of righteousness is a miracle and a miracle necessarily requires the immediate agency of *God*. Our present concern, then, is to trace this stream back to its source and to show the springs from which this marvel issues-to admire the impregnable foundations on which it rests. Only as those springs and foundations are clearly revealed shall we ascribe the glory unto Him to whom alone it is due. Only then shall we be able to apprehend the absolute security of the saints. Only then shall we perceive the vanity and uselessness of all the Enemy’s attacks upon this cardinal Truth. The perseverance of the saints is assured by so many infallible guarantees that it is difficult to know which to bring before the reader and which to omit.

The doctrine for which we are here contending follows as a logical consequence from the Divine perfections: whatever is agreeable to them and they make necessary, must perforce be true-contrariwise whatever is contrary to them and reflects dishonour upon them must be false. Now the doctrine of the saints’ final perseverance is agreeable to the Divine perfections, yea, is made entirely necessary by them, and therefore must be true. And the contrary doctrine of the falling away of real saints so as to perish everlastingly is repugnant to them and reflects great dishonour upon them and therefore must be false. That which we have here briefly affirmed will be illustrated in detail and demonstrated at length in all that follows in this and **next month’s article**. Summarizing what we propose to set before the reader will show that the eternal security of the Christian rests upon the good will of the Father, the mediation of the Son, and the office and operations of the Holy Spirit-and

therein we have a “threefold cord” which cannot possibly be broken.

1. *The unchanging love of God.* This argument, however, is one which can have little weight with those who have imbibed Arminianism and accepted their false interpretation of John 3:16. But they who perceive the Divine love to be a discriminating and particular one and not an indefinite and general one will find here that which is sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb. If it were true that God loves the whole human race, then seeing a large part thereof is already in Hell, I could draw no assurance therefrom that I shall never perish. But when I discover that God’s love is restricted to those whom He chose in Christ and that He loves them with an “everlasting love,” then I unhesitatingly conclude that “many waters” cannot quench that love (Song. 8:7). It would lead too far afield for us to show wherein so many err concerning the meaning of John 3:16 or to evidence at length the discriminating character of God’s love: suffice it here to point out that, “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Heb. 12:6) would be meaningless did He love everybody—the next clause, “and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth,” at once defines the objects of His affection. “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13): therefore Jacob is now in Heaven, but his brother has received the due reward of his iniquities.

“We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God does not love His people because they love Him. No, we read of “His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins” (Eph. 2:4, 5): when we had no desire to be loved by Him, yea, when we were provoking Him to His face and displaying the fierce enmity of our unrenewed hearts. God loved His people before they had an historical existence, for while they were yet sinners Christ died for them (Rom. 5:8). Why, He declares, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). That love then derives not its strength or its streams from anything in *us*, but flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellspring within His own bosom. Since God is love He can no more cease to love than He can cease to be—and since God changes not there can be no variation and fluctuation in His love.

The object of God’s love is *His Church*, which is His special delight. From all eternity He loved His elect and loved them as His elect, as having peculiar propriety in them. He loved them in Christ, chose them in Christ and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He loved them so as to predestinate them unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:5). He loved their persons in Christ with the same love wherewith He loves Christ their Head (John 17:23). He loved them so as to make them “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). It is a love which can never decay, for it is founded on the good pleasure of His will towards them. God’s love to Christ knows no change nor can it to the members of His body: “and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me” (John 17:23), declares the Saviour, and He is speaking there as the Head of His Church. We are loved in Christ and according to the relation we stand in to Him, that is, as members to an Head—loved as freely and immutably.

Though the effects of God’s love vary in their manifestations, yet there is no diminution of His affection and none in its perpetuity. Men often love those who prove otherwise than they expected and come to repent of the affection lavished upon them. But it is not so with God, for He foreknew all that ever we would be and do—our sins, unworthiness, rebellions—yet set His heart upon us notwithstanding so that He can never say we turned out other than He thought we would. Had God’s love been set upon us because of some good or excellency in us, then when that goodness declined, His love would diminish too. “God foresaw all the sins you would ever have: it was all present to His sacred mind, and yet He loved you, and loves you still” (C. H. Spurgeon). The child of God may for a season depart from the paths of righteousness and then will his Father visit his transgression with the rod and his iniquity with stripes, “nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not make void from him nor suffer My faithfulness to fail” (Psa. 89:32, 33), is His own declaration.

Because God’s love is uncreated, it is unchanging. God does not love by fits and starts but

forever. Because it is founded upon nothing in its object, no change in that object can forfeit it. In every state and condition into which the elect can come, God's love unto them is invariable and unalterable, constant and permanent. We may repent of the love which we bestowed on some of our fellows because we were unable to make them good: the more we loved them the more they took advantage of it. Not so with God: whom He loves He makes holy. This is one of the effects of His love: to shed abroad His love in the hearts of its objects, to stamp His own image upon them, to cause them to walk in His fear. His love to the elect is perpetual because it is in Christ: they are joined to Christ by an union which cannot be dissolved. God must cease to love Christ their Head before He can cease to love any member of His Body. Then what madness, what blasphemy, to think of any of them perishing!

Over this blessed attribute of Divine love is written in letters of light "Semper idem," *always the same*. Those who are once the objects of God's love are so always. If God has ever loved you, my reader, He does so today-loves you with the same love as when He gave His Son to die for you-loves you with the same love as when He sent His Holy Spirit into your heart crying, "Abba Father"-loves you with the same love as He will in Heaven throughout the endless ages. And nothing can or shall separate you from that love (see Rom. 8:38, 39). A preacher once called upon a farmer. As he approached his residence he saw over the barn a weather-vane and on the top of it in large letters the text "God is love." When the farmer appeared the preacher pointed to that vane and said in tones of rebuke, "Do you imagine God's love is as variable as the weather?" No, said the farmer, I put that text there to remind me that no matter what the direction of the wind, God is love!

"His love no end or measure knows,
No change can turn its course,
Immutably the same it flows
From one eternal source."

2. *The immutability of God*. The guarantee for the perpetuity of God's love unto His people is found in the immutability of His nature. From everlasting Jehovah is God: underived, independent, self-sufficient-nothing can in anywise affect Him or produce any change in Him. Says the Psalmist, "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same and Thy years shall have no end" (102:25-27). This is one of the excellencies of the Creator which distinguishes Him from all creatures. God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations. All that He is today He ever has been and ever will be. He cannot change for the better for He is already perfect and being perfect He cannot change for the worse. He only can say, I AM THAT I AM" (Exo. 3:14). Unaffected by anything outside Himself, improvement or deterioration is impossible. His glory is an unfading one.

Now in this immutability of God lies the eternal security of His people. "For I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). If any of them were lost, "consumed" by His wrath, then He must change in His attitude toward them, so that those whom He once loved He now hates. But that would also involve an alteration in His purpose concerning them, so that whereas He has appointed them "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9), He must consign them over to destruction. How entirely different would such a variable and fickle character be from the God of Holy Writ! Of Jehovah it is said, "He is of one mind, and who can turn Him?" (Job 23:13). It is because God changes not His people are not consumed: His love wanes not, His will is stable, His word sure. Because He is "The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness

neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17) we have an immovable rock on which to stand while everything around us is being swept away.

The foundation of our preservation unto the end is the immutability of God's being, whereunto His love is conformed, so that His everlasting Deity must undergo alteration before any of His children could perish. This is clearly the force of both Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17. In the latter the Apostle speaks of "every good gift and every perfect gift" which the saints receive from their Father, prefacing the same with, "Do not err my beloved brethren" (v. 16). The gifts bestowed upon the elect at their regeneration are not like Jonah's gourd which flourished only for a brief season. No, they are from Him with whom is "no variableness" either in His love or will. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29) or change of mind and therefore they are never revoked. Let it be noted that those words were added to clinch the certainty of the purpose of God towards the remnant of the Jews according to the election of grace. Thus the immutability of God is the guarantee of the stability of His love and the irrevocableness of His grace unto us.

3. *The irreversible purpose of God.* Having set His heart upon a chosen people, God formed a purpose of grace toward them: "having predestinated them" (Eph. 1:5) and the immutability of His being insures the fulfillment of that purpose. The Most High does not determine to do a thing at one time and decide not to do it at another. "The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psa. 33:11)-because He has counselled everlasting glory unto His people nothing can alter it. "For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isa. 14:27). There are indeed many changes in the external dispensations of His providence toward His elect, but none concerning the thoughts of His heart for them. "I am God, and there is none like unto Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure . . . I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11). What a foundation is there here for faith to rest upon: the Divine will is inflexible, His counsels irreversible.

"God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent" (Num. 23:19). Consider the things which move men to change their minds and alter their purposes and then mark how utterly inapplicable such things are to the Almighty. Men form a plan and then cancel it through fickleness and inconstancy: but God is immutable. Men make a promise and then revoke it because of their depravity and untruthfulness: but God is infinitely holy and cannot lie. Men devise a project and fail to carry it through because of lack of ability or power: but God is omniscient and omnipotent. Men determine a certain thing for want of foresight and because the unexpected intervenes they are thwarted: but God knows the end from the beginning. Men change their schemes because the influence or threats of superiors deter them: but God has no superior or equal and fears none. No unforeseen occasion can arise which would render it expedient for God to change His mind.

In Romans 8:28 we read of a company who are "the called according to His purpose" and what that signifies, the verses which immediately follow tell us. It was a purpose they could neither originate nor frustrate. "For whom He did foreknow" with a knowledge of approbation (contrast "I never knew you"-Matt. 7:23), "He also did predestinate," appoint and forearrange. That Divine predestination results in their being effectually called out of darkness into God's marvellous light and their being justified or accounted righteous before God because Christ's perfect obedience is reckoned to their account. And then, so infallibly certain is the accomplishment of God's purpose, the Apostle added, "and whom He justified them He also (not "will glorify," but)

Glorified." "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel (the immovable fixedness of His design), confirmed it by an oath" (Heb. 6:17). What more can we desire: the Holy One must foreswear Himself before one of His own can perish!

4. *The Everlasting Covenant of God.* Having set His heart upon a special people, God formed a purpose of grace toward them and that purpose is attested and secured by formal contract. By express stipulation the Eternal Three solemnly undertook for every heir of promise to do all for and in them, so that not one of them should perish. "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). How comprehensive are those promises! First, Jehovah assures His people that there shall be no alteration in His good will toward them. To that it might be objected, "True, God will not turn away from them, but they may turn away from Him, yea, utterly apostatize." That is why He here declares that He will put His fear in their hearts, or grant them such supplies of grace, as to preserve them from falling away. "Were they to return to the service of Satan, He could not continue to do them good consistently with the holiness of His character but He will preserve them in such a state that He may hold fellowship with them without any impeachment of His holiness" (J. Dick).

This Covenant of Grace is made with the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world, wherein He became their "Surety" (Heb. 7:22), undertaking to discharge all their liabilities and make full satisfaction for them. Accordingly God has promised the Surety, "I will put My laws into their mind and write them upon their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Heb. 8:10). Those promises are of free grace, and there is no contingency or uncertainty about them, for they are "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Mark how God Himself regards His engagement therein—"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psa. 89:34). "He will ever be mindful of His covenant" (Psa. 111:5). O what grounds for confidence, for joy, for praise is there here! Therefore may each believer affirm with David, "He hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5). "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10).

To summarize what has yet been before us—if any saint were eventually lost, it could only be because the being and character of God Himself had undergone a change for the worse. His affections must alter so that one whom He loved must become the object of His hatred. His purpose concerning him must change so that whereas He appointed him to salvation He must consign him to destruction. He must reverse the promises made and the blessings bestowed upon him. His faithfulness must fail so that His Word can no longer be relied upon. Thus it is obvious that the alternative to what has been set forth above is unthinkable and impossible. The wisdom of God requires that appointing the end (the glorification of His people) He has also ordained the means thereto are sufficient and His power insures that those means shall prove effectual. Every perfection of God guarantees that all His people shall get safely to Heaven.

5. *Its Springs.*

5. *The Irrepealable promises of God.* The "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) which God has made to His people have been likened unto streams along which His covenant engagements run, for they all go back to and have their source in that Eternal Compact which He made with the elect in Christ. Their Surety undertook to do certain things for them and in return thereof God agreed that certain things should be bestowed upon them on whose behalf He transacted. What those things were that God stipulated to impart unto those Christ represented are revealed in the various promises which He has made unto them. Those promises are God's free and gracious dispensations or discoveries of His good will unto the elect in Christ in a Covenant of Grace.

Therein, upon His veracity and faithfulness, He engages Himself to be their God, to give His Son unto them and for them, and His Spirit to abide with and in them, guaranteeing to supply everything that they need in order to make them acceptable before Him and to bring them all unto the everlasting enjoyment of Himself.

Those promises are free and gracious as to the rise or origin of them, being given to us merely by the good pleasure of God and not in return for anything demanded of us: that which is of promise is opposed to that which is in any way demanded or procured by us (Rom. 4:13, 14; Gal. 3:18). These promises are made unto us as *sinner*s, and under no other qualification whatever, it being by sovereign mercy alone that any are delivered out of their fallen and depraved state. The promises are given unto them as shut up “under sin” (Gal. 3:22). These discoveries of God’s goodwill are made known in Christ as the sole Medium of their accomplishment and as the alone procuring Cause of the good things contained in them. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea and *in Him* amen” (2 Cor. 1:20)-in and by Christ’s mediation they have all their confirmation and certainty to us. The foundation of our assurance of their accomplishment is the character of their Maker: they are the engagements of Him “who cannot lie” (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:17, 18)-Heaven and earth shall pass away but His word shall endure forever.

The grand fountain-head promise from which all the others flow is that God will be “the God of His people” (Jer. 24:7; 31:33; Ezek. 11:20). In order that He may be “our God” two chief things are required. First, that all breaches and differences between Him and us shall be removed, perfect peace and agreement made and we rendered well-pleasing in His sight-sin must be put away and everlasting righteousness brought in. In order to this Christ acted as our Surety, our Priest, our Redeemer, and has become “our Peace” (Eph. 2:14), being of God “made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). He “gave Himself for the Church, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church” (Eph. 5:25, 27). Second, that we might be kept meet for communion with Him as our God and for our eternal enjoyment of Him as our Portion. From this flows the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 2:33) that He would exercise unto us all the acts of His love and work in us that obedience which He required from and accepts of us in Jesus Christ, so preserving us unto Himself. This promise of the Spirit in the covenant is witnessed in Isaiah 59:21; Ezekiel 36:27, etc.

From the fountain-head promise that God will be our God in covenant relationship flow the two broad streams that He would give Christ *for* us and the Holy Spirit *to* us, and out from these two main streams issue a thousand rivulets for our refreshment! From those two streams come forth all the blessings Christ has purchased for us and all the graces that the Holy Spirit produces in the elect, by the first of which they are made acceptable unto God and by the latter of which they have an enjoyment of Him. All the promises of mercy and forgiveness, faith and holiness, obedience and perseverance, joy and consolation, affliction and deliverance issue from them. Thus it follows that whoever has an interest in one promise has an interest in them all and in the fountain-head from which they flow. Have we a hold on any promise? that is by the Holy Spirit and from Him to Christ and then unto the bosom of the Father. Here also the most conditional of the promises are ultimately to be resolved into the absolute and unconditional love of God: He who promises to us life upon believing, works faith in us: “according as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness”: 2 Peter 1:3. (Most of the above is condensed from John Owen, the Puritan).

Let us cite a few of the particular promises wherein the Lord has engaged Himself to grant such supplies of His Spirit that we shall be supported against all opposition and preserved from such sins as would separate any of His saints from Him. “For the LORD loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints: they are preserved forever” (Psa. 37:28). “They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion,

which cannot be moved, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever" (Psa. 125:1, 2). "Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you" (Isa. 46:4). "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10). He "shall also confirm you unto the end" (1 Cor. 1:8). "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

The same Divine protection unto everlasting bliss is confirmed by many assertion passages as well as promissory ones. "Surely goodness and mercy *shall* follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"(Psa. 23:6). "I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me with Thy right hand: thou shall guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa. 73:23, 24). "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us" (1 John 2:19). God must forsake His integrity before He_would abandon one of His people. But that cannot be: "faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. 3:3). They who affirm that any of God's children will perish are guilty of the fearful sin of *charging Him with perjury*.

6. *The gracious acts of God toward His People*. These are of such a nature as insure their everlasting salvation. In addition to His acts of electing them, making a sure covenant with His Son on their behalf and the putting of them into His hands with all grace and glory for them, we may mention the *adoption* of them into His family. This is an inestimable blessing, little understood today. It is a sonship-*in-law*, God bestowing upon His elect the legal status of sons. This is "by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5): since Christ is Son of God essentially and the elect are united to Him, they are the sons-in-law of God. Christ as God-man was set up as the Prototype and we are modeled after Him. As a woman becomes a man's daughter-in-law by his son's betrothing himself to her, so we are sons-in-law unto God by an inalienable *legal* title-as the term "adoption" plainly signifies-by marriage union. It is by their relation to the Son of God that the elect are the sons of God. It is not by faith they become sons, rather does faith manifest them to be such.

"Because ye are sons (not to make us such) God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). From there flows all our dignities and honours: "if sons (Greek) then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Is Christ King and Priest? So also are we "kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Rev. 1:6). Is Christ Jehovah's "Fellow" (Zech. 13:7)? So are we Christ's "fellows" (Psa. 45:7). Is Christ God's "Firstborn" (Psa. 89:27)? So we read of "The Church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23). Even now are we the sons of God, but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," it is not yet made manifest before the universe, "but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2). And why are we so assured? Because "Whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:30). Because God predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5)-by sovereign grace and not because of anything of ours-nothing can possibly sever or annul this wondrous relationship!

The *justification* of God's people. This is also a legal act. It takes place in the supreme court of Heaven where God sits as the Judge of all the earth. The believing sinner is measured by the holy Law and pronounced righteous. Of old the question was asked, "But how shall man be just with

God?" (Job 9:2), for the Law requires nothing less than perfect and perpetual obedience, and pronounces him accursed who continues not in all that it enjoins (Gal. 3:10). Had that question been left for solution to finite intelligence it had remained unsolved forever. How could God show mercy yet not abate one iota of what His justice requires? How could He treat with the guilty as though they were innocent? How could He righteously bestow the reward on those who merited it not? How could He pronounce righteous those who were unrighteous? Such a thing seems utterly impossible, nevertheless Divine omniscience has solved these problems-solved them without tarnishing His honour-yea unto His everlasting glory and to our everlasting admiration. It is the setting forth of this grand display of the Divine wisdom which constitutes the supreme blessedness of the Gospel.

According to the terms of the Everlasting Covenant Christ became the Sponsor of His people. "When the fullness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law" (Gal. 4:4). To the Law the incarnate Son rendered a complete and flawless obedience thereby magnifying and making it honourable (Isa. 42:21). The Divine dignity of His Person bestowed more honour on the Law by His obedience thereto than it had been dishonoured by all our manifold disobedience. Having perfectly fulfilled the Law, Christ then suffered its curse in His peoples' stead, thereby blotting out their sins. That perfect obedience of Christ is reckoned to our account the moment we believe on Him, so that believers may say, "THE LORD *OUR* RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:6). On the ground of Christ's righteousness legally becoming ours, God pronounces us justified (Rom. 3-24; 5-19, 2 Cor. 5:21). And therefore, because "God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8:33, 34), those justified by God can never be *unjustified*. The righteousness by which they are justified is an "everlasting" one (Dan. 9:24), the sentence of exoneration passed upon them in the high court of Heaven can never be revoked by man or devil. They have a title to everlasting glory and cannot come into condemnation!

7. *The death of Christ.* When Adam, the federal head as well as the father of the human race, apostatized, the elect equally with the non-elect fell in him and thus they are "by nature the children of wrath even as others" (Eph. 2:3). From that dreadful and direful state they are recovered by the mediation of Christ and the operation of the Spirit, the latter being a fruit of the former. **We have briefly touched upon the mediation of Christ in the two preceding paragraphs**, but as this is of such vital concern to our present theme, it requires to be considered in more detail. A large field is here opened before us, but we can now take only a brief glance at it. Once again we would point out that what we are about to advance can have little weight with Arminians who erroneously suppose that the mediatory work of Christ was general or universal in its character and design. But to those who have learned from Holy Writ that the redemption of Christ is definite and particular, a specific ransom for a specific people, there will be found here a sufficient answer to every accusation of Satan and an assurance which none of the tribulations of life can shake.

"Who is he that condemneth?" the Apostle asks. "It is Christ that died" is his triumphant reply (Rom. 8:34). The force of that reply turns upon the fact that Christ's death is a substitutionary and atoning one. "For the transgression of My people was He stricken," says God the Father (Isa. 53:8). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). Jehovah laid upon Christ the iniquities of His people (Isa. 53:6) and then cried, "Awake O sword against My Shepherd and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts, smite the Shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). On the cross Christ rendered to God a full satisfaction for the sins of all those whom the Father gave to Him. Being a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God "to make propitiation (Greek) for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). Because Christ was made a curse for sin (Gal. 3:13)

nothing but blessing is now our portion.

All for whom Christ died shall most certainly be saved, because He paid the full price of their redemption. As a surety stands in the place of the person he represents, the latter reaps the benefit of what the surety has done in his name, so that if his debt has been paid by the surety, the creditor can no more demand payment from him. Since Christ made full reparation to God's Law, making complete atonement for the sins of His people, then it would be a flagrant violation of Divine justice if ever one of them should be punished for the same. Christ has purchased His people by His Precious blood, then can we suppose that God will suffer His most avowed enemy to rob His Son of any of them? Were that to happen, the Redeemer's name would be rendered meaningless, for God Himself said, "thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He *shall save* His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Were that to happen, it could not be true that the Redeemer "shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).

Since all the believer's sins were laid upon Christ and atoned for, what is there that can possibly condemn him? And if there is nothing, how can he be cast into Hell? True, none can reach Heaven without persevering in holiness but since the atonement of Christ possesses Divine virtue and is of everlasting efficacy, all for whom it was made must and shall persevere in holiness. God's wrath against His people was exhausted upon their Substitute: the black cloud of His vengeance was emptied at Calvary. "When I think of my sin it seems impossible that any atonement should ever be adequate. But when I think of Christ's death it seems impossible that any sin should ever need such an atonement as that. There is in the death of Christ enough and more than enough. There is not only a sea in which to drown our sins, but the very tops of the mountains of our guilt are covered" (C. H. Spurgeon). Therefore is God able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto Him by Christ (Heb. 7:25), yea, even though they have sinned as did Manasseh or Saul of Tarsus.

Christ has removed everything which could cause separation between God and His people. First, he has taken away the guilt of their sins, that it shall never prevail with the Lord to turn from them. Christ has "obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12), for them: not a transient and unstable redemption, but an abiding and efficacious one. In consequence thereof God declares, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). How could He do so, seeing that the Redeemer was to "make an end of sins" (Dan. 9:24)-as to the controversy of them between God and those for whom He dies. Christ has so satisfied God's justice and fulfilled His Law that no sentence of condemnation can be pronounced against them and therefore they must be infallibly saved. Second, as Christ removed that which along might turn God from believers, so He has annulled that which might cause them to depart from God: neither indwelling sin, Satan or the world can so prevail as to make them totally fall away. Christ has destroyed Satan's right to rule over them (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14), and He has abolished Satan's power by "binding" him (Matt. 12:29). Therefore are we assured "sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14)-how could it since the Holy Spirit Himself indwells us?!

"Since Christ bore our sins, and was condemned in our place; since by His expiatory death the claims of Divine justice are answered, and the holiness of the Divine Law is maintained, who can condemn those for whom He died? O, what security is this for the believer in Jesus! Standing beneath the shadow of the Cross, the weakest saint can confront his deadliest foe; and every accusation alleged and every sentence of condemnation uttered he can meet by pointing to Him who died. In that one fact he sees the great debt cancelled, the entire curse removed, the grand indictment quashed and 'No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus' written as in letters of living light upon the Cross" (O. Winslow).

5. *Its Springs.*

8. *The resurrection of Christ.* It seems strange that so many receive more comfort at the Cross than they do at the empty grave of Christ, for Scripture itself hesitates not to say, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). A dead Saviour could not save: one who was himself vanquished by death would be powerless to deliver sin's slaves. Here is one of the chief defects of Romanism-its deluded subjects are occupied with a lifeless Christ, worshippers of a crucifix. Nor are Protestant preachers above criticism in this matter, for only too often many of them omit the grandest part of the Evangel by going no further than Calvary. The glorious Gospel is not fully preached until we proclaim a risen and victorious Redeemer (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Christ was "delivered (up to death) for our offenses and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25) and as the Apostle goes on to declare, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

What avail would it have been that Christ died for His people if death had conquered and overwhelmed Him? Had the grave held Him fast, He had been a prisoner still. But in rising from the tomb Christ made demonstration of His victory over sin and death: thereby He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9). Christ's sacrificial work was finished at the Cross, but proof was needed of its Divine acceptance. That proof lay with Him who was pleased to "bruise Him and put Him to grief" and by raising the Redeemer God furnished incontestable evidence that all His claims had been met. The death of Christ was the payment of my awful debt: His resurrection God's receipt for the same-it was the public acknowledgement that the bond had been cancelled. Christ's resurrection sealed our justification: it was necessary to give reality to the atonement and to provide a sure foundation for our faith and hope. Since God is satisfied, the trembling sinner may confide and securely repose upon the work of a triumphant Saviour.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea rather* that is risen again" (Rom: 8:34). Here the resurrection of Christ is presented as the believer's security against condemnation. But *how* does the former guarantee the latter? There is a causal connection between the two things. First, because Christ rose again not simply as a private person but as the Surety, the Head and Representative of all His people. It has not been sufficiently recognized and emphasized that the Lord Jesus lived, died and rose again as "the Firstborn among many brethren." As all whom the first Adam represented fell when he fell, died when he died, so all whom the last Adam represented died when He died and rose again when He arose. God "quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together" (Eph. 2:5, 6). "Risen with Christ" (Col. 3:1) is judicially true of every believer. The Law can no more condemn him: he has been fully and finally delivered from the wrath to come. Infallibly certain and absolutely secure is he by virtue of his legal union with the risen Saviour. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9), nor over me, for His deliverance was *mine*, the second death cannot touch me.

Second, because there is a vital union between Christ and His people. Said the Lord Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). Nothing could possibly be more plain or more decisive than that. Spiritual resurrection makes the believer one with Him who is "alive for evermore" so that he is forever beyond the reach of death. Well then may we exclaim with the Apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Regeneration or being begotten by God is the communication to the soul of the life of the risen Christ. A faint yet striking illustration of this is seen in our awakening each morning out of

slumber. While our head sleeps every member of the body sleeps with it. But the head awakes and awakes first, and with that awakening each member awakens also-after the head, yet in union with it. Thus it is with the mystical Body of Christ-the Head was first quickened and then in God's good time His life is imparted to each of His members and before any member could perish the Head must die.

Third, because as Christ was our Surety here, so He is our Representative on high and as He endured our penalty so justice requires that we should enjoy His fullness. Accordingly we read, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever, Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21). Note well the coherence of this passage. It is in His character as "the God of peace" He thus acts. Having been pacified or propitiated God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus-not as a private person but in His official character, as the "Shepherd"-and that in fulfillment of covenant stipulation and promise. In consequence thereof, God makes perfect (or complete) in every good work the "sheep," preserving and sanctifying them by working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight, and this "through Jesus Christ," or in other words, by communicating to His members the grace, the life, the fullness, which is in their Head.

9. *The Exaltation of Christ.* There is a little clause, but one of vast purport, which the Apostle added to his, "yea rather that is risen again," namely, "who is *even* at the right hand of God" (Rom. 8:34). That brief sentence is frequently overlooked, yet is it one which also guarantees the safety and perpetuity of the Church. The ascension of Christ is as vital and cardinal a part of the Truth as is His death and resurrection and provides the same rich food for faith to feed upon. As it was not possible for death to hold Him, so it was not fitting for the earth to retain Christ. He who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death has been "highly exalted and given a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). The head which once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now, a royal diadem adorns the mighty Victor's brow. Christ is now in Heaven as an ever-living Mediator, as a glorified High Priest over the House of God, as the sceptred King ruling with sovereign sway all things in Heaven and earth, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22). And Christ is entered Heaven in our nature, in our name, on our behalf.

The One who descended into the deepest depth has been elevated to the grandest glory. The crowning act of Christ's triumph was not when He issued forth a Victor from the tomb, but when He entered the courts of celestial bliss, when the everlasting doors lifted up their heads and the King of Glory went in (Psa. 24:9). The raising of Christ was in order to His glorification. And it was in our nature He is exalted above all: the very hands which were nailed to the Cross now wield the sceptre of universal dominion. How well fitted then is such an One to succour and "save unto the uttermost!" As faith follows the descent of the Father's Beloved to Bethlehem's manger to Golgotha, to the sepulchre, so let it follow Him to the loftiest heights of dignity and bliss. This "same Jesus" who was rejected and degraded by Jew and Gentiles alike has been "crowned with honour and glory" (Heb. 2:9). The exaltation of Christ was a necessary part of His Mediatorship, for it is from on high He administers His kingdom and makes effectual application of redemption. The ascension of Christ is also an essential part of the Gospel.

"Who is *even* at the right hand of God." First, this is the place of *honour and dignity*. When Bathsheba appeared before Solomon we are told that the king rose up to meet her and bowed himself unto his mother and sitting down on his throne he caused a seat to be set for her "on his right hand" (1 Kings 2:19) as a mark of special favour and honour. After the royal proclamation concerning Christ, "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows; all Thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and

cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made Thee glad," it is added, "Kings' daughters were among Thy honourable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen in gold of Ophir" (Psa. 45:7-9), indicating the place of privilege and honour which is reserved for the Lamb's wife. "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob (God of covenant relationship), the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus" (Acts 3:13)-this was His mediatorial glory in answer to His prayer in John 17:5. Christ has "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3).

Second, the "right hand of God" is the place of *supreme authority and power*. As we read in Exodus 15:6, "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power." "And set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:20-23). Our Surety, then, was not only delivered from prison but exalted to universal dominion, "all power in Heaven and in earth" being conferred upon Him. Then how well suited is He to fight our battles, subdue our iniquities and supply our every need! Christ has been elevated high above all ranks of creatures, however exalted in the scale of being or whatever their titles and dignities-and all have been placed in absolute subjection to Him, as "under His feet" signifies. Thus the entire universe is under His control ("upholding all things by the word of His power": Heb. 1:3) for the well-being of His people, so that no weapon formed against them can prosper. No wonder it is required "that all should honour the Son" even as "they honour the Father" (John 5:23).

Third, it is the place of all *blessedness*. Our bounties and benevolences are distributed by our "right hand" (Matt. 6:3). "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa. 16:11)-one of the great Messianic Psalms. "It is spoken assuredly of such pleasures as Jesus Christ by way of prerogative enjoys *beyond* all the saints and angels, He being at God's right hand so as none of them are. It was the peculiar encouragement that Jesus Christ had, not to be in Heaven only as a common saint, but to be in Heaven at God's *right hand*; and to have pleasures *answerable*, far above all the pleasures of men and angels . . . God doth communicate and impart to Him to the utmost all His felicity, so far forth as that human nature is capable of" (Thomas Goodwin). Thus in the "joy" that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2) Christ has the "pre-eminence" as in all things else. In accord with this third meaning of the expression, Christ will "set the sheep on His right hand" saying to them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Fourth, this setting of Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high denotes the endowing of His humanity with capacity and ability, accordant with the exalted dignity conferred upon Him. It was not like an earthly king advancing his favourite to high honour, or even elevating his son to share his throne, but that God bestowed upon Christ superlative endowments (anointing Him with the oil of gladness "above His fellows," i.e., giving to Him the Spirit "without measure"), fitting Him to discharge such an office. This is clear from the immediate context of Ephesians 1:21, where prayer is made that we may understand God's "mighty power which He *wrought in Christ* when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places" (vv: 19, 20). This fitting of Christ for His exalted position appears in Revelation 5. There a mysterious book is held forth but none either in Heaven or earth was found worthy to open it till the Lamb appeared. And wherein lay His fitness? The Lamb as it had been slain, possessed "seven horns and seven eyes" (v. 6) perfect power and perfect intelligence.

"Who is even at the right hand of God." Here, then, is a further guarantee of the safety and perpetuity of the Church, and O what consolation and encouragement should it afford the tried and

trembling believer! He went up “with a shout” (Psa. 47:5)-of conquest, leading captivity captive. His being seated in Heaven is proof that His work is finished and His sacrifice accepted (Heb. 10:11, 12). It was as the Head and Representative of His people Christ entered Heaven to take possession for them: “whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:20). It is in our nature and name He has gone there, to “prepare a place” for us (John 14:2). Thus we have a Friend at Court, for “if anyone sin we have an Advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). His great authority, power, dominion and glory is being exercised on our behalf. The government of the universe is on His shoulder, for the well-being, security and triumph of His Church. Hallelujah! what a Saviour! God hath laid our help “upon One that is mighty” (Psa. 89:19).

10. *Christ's Intercession.* “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34). Here is the grand climax. First, Christ made a complete atonement for the sins of His people. Next He rose from the dead in proof that His sacrifice was accepted by God. Then He was advanced to the place of supreme honour and power in reward of His undertaking. And now He sues out or asks for His people the benefits He purchased for them. The inexpressible blessedness of this appears in the above order. How many who have been suddenly elevated from poverty to wealth, from ignominy to honour, from weakness to power-promptly forget their former associates and friends? Not so the Lord Jesus. Though exalted to inconceivable dignity and dominion, though crowned with unrivalled honour and glory, yet this made no difference in the affections of Christ toward His people left here in this world. His love for them is unabated, His care of and concern for His Church undiminished. The good will of the Saviour unto His own remains unchanged.

The ascended Christ is not wrapped up in His own enthronement but is still occupied with the well-being of His people, maintaining their interests, seeking their good: “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). He knows they are weak and helpless in themselves and are surrounded by those desiring and seeking their destruction-therefore does He pray, “I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me” (John 17:11); and He bases that request on the finished work by which He glorified God (v. 4). The plea which our great High Priest urges cannot rest upon *our* merit, for we have none. It is not in recognition of *our* worthiness, for we are destitute of such. Nor does our wretchedness furnish the reason which the Intercessor urges on our behalf, for that very wretchedness has been brought upon us by our sins. There are no considerations personal to ourselves which Christ can plead on our behalf. No, His all-sufficient sacrifice is the *only* plea, and that must prevail. Christ intercedes in Heaven because He died for us on earth (Heb. 9:24-6).

If left entirely to themselves believers would perish. Temptations and tribulations from without and corruptions from within would prove too strong for them and therefore does Christ make intercession on their behalf, that God would grant them such supplies of grace and pardoning mercy that they will be preserved from total apostasy. It is not that He prays they may be kept from sin absolutely but from a fatal and final departure from God. This is evident from the case of the eleven on the night of His betrayal: not one only but *all* of them “forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26:56). It was the prevalence of His intercession which brought them back again. That was made more especially evident in the case of Peter. The Lord Jesus foresaw and announced that he would deny Him thrice (and lower than *that* it would seem a Christian cannot fall), yet He prayed that his faith should fail not: nor did it-it wrought by love and produced repentance.

That for which our great High Priest particularly asks is the continuance of our believing. Arminians seek to evade this by saying: Christ prays not for the perseverance of the saints in their faith, or that they who once believed should never cease from believing however wicked they may

become but only for saints while they continue saints; that is, as long as they continue in faith and love God will not reject them. But the very thing Christ does pray for is, "that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32): for the continuance of a living faith, for where *that* is, there will be good works. And that for which Christ asks must be performed: not only because He is the Son of God (and therefore could ask for nothing contrary to the Father's will), but because His intercession is based upon His sacrifice: He pleads His own merits and sues only for those things which He has purchased for His people-the things to which they are entitled.

That for which Christ intercedes is clearly revealed in John 17: it is for the preservation, unification, sanctification and glorification of His people. The substance of His petitions is found in verse 11, where (in effect) He says: "Holy Father, Thou art concerned for each of these persons and hast been viewing them with unspeakable satisfaction from everlasting: Thou gavest them Me as a special expression of Thy love: My heart is set upon them and My soul delighteth in them because they are Mine by Thy free donation. As I am going to leave them behind Me and they are weak and defenseless in themselves, exposed to many enemies and temptations, I pray Thee keep them. Let them have the Person of the Holy Spirit to indwell them: let Him renew their spiritual life and graces day by day: let Him preserve them in Thy sacred Truth." That prayer will be fully answered when Christ will "present the Church to Himself a glorious Church" (Eph. 5:27).

5. *Its Springs.*

11. *The love of Christ.* Ah, what pen is capable of expatiating upon such a theme when even the chief of the Apostles was obliged to own that it "passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). Such was His wondrous love that in order to save His people, the Son of God left Heaven for earth, laid aside the robes of His glory and took upon Him the form of a Servant. Such was His wondrous love that He voluntarily became the homeless Stranger here, having not where to lay His head. Such was His wondrous love that He shrank not from being despised and rejected of men, suffering Himself to be spat upon, buffeted and His hair plucked out. Yea, such was His wondrous love for His Church that He endured the Cross, where He was made a curse for her, where the wrath of a sin-hating God was poured upon Him, so that for a season He was actually abandoned by Him. Truly His love is "strong as death . . . many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it" (Song. 8:6, 7).

Mark how that love was tried and proved by the unkind response it met with from the most favoured of His disciples. So little did they lay to heart His solemn announcement that as He was about to be delivered into the hands of men and be slain by them, they "disputed among themselves who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:31, 34). When the awful cup of woe was presented to Him in Gethsemane and His agony was so intense that He sweat great drops of blood the Apostles were unable to watch with Him for a single hour. When His enemies, accompanied by a great rabble armed with swords and staves, came to arrest Him, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matt. 26:56)-and had writer and reader been in their place we had done the same. Did such base ingratitude freeze the Saviour's affection for them and cause Him to abandon their cause? No indeed: "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end*" (John 13:1)-to the end of their unworthiness and unappreciativeness.

Ah my reader, His people are the objects of Christ's *everlasting* love. Before ever the earth was, His delights were with them (Prov. 8:31) and have continued ever since. As the Father has loved Christ Himself, so Christ loves His people (John 15:9)-with a love that is infinite, immutable, eternal. Nothing can separate us from it (Rom. 8:35). Those whom He loves are the special portion and inheritance given to Him by the Father and will He lose His portion when it is in His power to keep it? No, He will not: "they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels"

(Mal. 3:17). When they were given to Him by the Father it was with the express charge, "that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39), and therefore do we find Him saying to the Father, "those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but (not "except") the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12), and he was a devil from the beginning.

Consider well the various *relations* which believers sustain to Christ. They are the mystical Body of which He is the Head: "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). They are "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23) and thus He would be incomplete, mutilated, if one of them perished. They are laid upon Him as a "foundation" that is "sure" (Isa. 28:16), built upon Him as a "rock" against which "the gates of Hell shall not prevail" (Matt. 16:18). They are His "redeemed," bought with a price, purchased at the cost of His life's blood-then how must He regard them! Consider well the terms of endearment used of them. Christians are "of the travail of His soul" (Isa. 53:11). They are His "brethren" (Rom. 8:29), His "fellows" (Psa. 45:7), His "wife" (Rev. 19:7). They are set as a seal upon His heart (Song. 8:6), engraved in the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:16). They are His "crown of glory" and "royal diadem" (Isa. 62:3). Since they are so precious in His sight He will not suffer one to perish.

12. *The gift of the Holy Spirit.* In contemplating the Person and work of the Spirit in the economy of redemption we must view Him in connection with the Everlasting Covenant and the mediation of Christ. The descent of the Spirit is inseparably related to what has been before us **in the previous sections**. When the Saviour ascended on high He "received gifts for men, ye, for the rebellious also" (Psa. 68:18), and as His exaltation was in reward for His triumphant undertaking, so also were those "gifts," the chief of which was the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). As Christ is the unspeakable gift of the Father unto us, so the Holy Spirit is the supreme gift of Christ to His people. Since Christ is Man as well as God, it is required of Him that He make request for whatever He receives at the hands of the Father: "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen (the Gentiles) for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2:8). "I will *pray* the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

The redemptive work of Christ merited the Spirit for His people. The Spirit was given to Christ in consequence of His having so superlatively glorified God on the earth and in answer to His intercession. It is due to His praying that the Holy Spirit not only renews the regenerate day by day but that He first brought them from death unto life. This is intimated in the "for the rebellious also" of Psalm 68:18-even while they were in a state of alienation from God. The dispensing of the Spirit is in the hands of the exalted Christ, therefore is He spoken of as, "He that *hath* the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 3:1)-the Holy Spirit in the fullness or plenitude of His gifts. To His immediate care is now committed the elect of God. As Christ preserved them during the day of His earthly sojourn (John 17:12), so the Spirit safeguards them while He is on high. This is clearly intimated in John 14:3 where the Lord Jesus declares, "I will come again and receive (not "take") you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also"-they will be handed *back to Him* by the blessed Spirit.

13. *The indwelling of the Spirit.* The Holy Spirit was purchased for His people by the oblation of Christ and is bestowed upon them through His intercession, to abide with them forever. The manner in which He abides with those on whom He is bestowed is by a gracious indwelling. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (that is, that we might have conferred upon us the legal status of sonship). And because ye are sons (by virtue of legal oneness with the Son), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts" (Gal. 4:4-6). What a marvellous yet mysterious thing this is: that the third Person of the Trinity should take up His abode within fallen creatures! It is not merely that the

influences or graces of the Spirit are communicated to us, but that He Himself dwells within us: not in our minds (though they are illumined by Him) but in our hearts-the center of our beings, from which are “the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

This was the grand promise of God in the Covenant: “I will put My Spirit within you.” (Ezek. 36:27 and cf. 37:14), the fulfillment of which our Surety obtained for us-“being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this” (Acts 2:33), for the dispensing of Him is now in the hands of Christ as we have pointed out. Thus it is that the inhabitation of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of the regenerate: “But ye are not in the flesh (as to your legal standing before God) but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). It is the indwelling of the Spirit of God which identifies the Christian, and thus He is called “the Spirit of Christ” because He occupies the believer with Christ and conforms him to His image. The apprehension of this wondrous fact exerts a sobering influence upon the believer, causing him to “possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.” “What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

Now the Spirit takes up His residence in the saints not for a season only but never to leave them. “This is My covenant with them, saith the LORD (unto the Redeemer, see v. 19), My Spirit that is upon Thee and My word which I have put in Thy mouth shall not depart out of Thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed, nor out of the mouth of Thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever” (Isa. 59:21). That was a solemn promise of the Father unto the Mediator that the Spirit should continue forever with the Redeemer and the redeemed. The blessed Spirit comes not as a transient Visitor but as a permanent Guest of the soul: “And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). Since, then, the Spirit takes up His abode in the renewed soul forever, how certain it is that he will be preserved from apostasy. This will be the more evident **from our next division**, when it will appear that the Spirit is a powerful, active and sanctifying Agent within the Christian.

14. *The operations of the Spirit.* These are summed up in, “He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it” (Phil. 1:6). The reference is to our regeneration, completed in our sanctification, preservation and glorification. First He imparts spiritual life to one who is dead in trespasses and sins and then He sustains and maintains that life by nourishing it and calling it forth into exercise and act so that it becomes fruitful and abounds in good works. Every growth of spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit: as the green blade was His so is the ripening corn. The increase of life, as much as the beginning thereof, must still come by the gracious power of the Spirit of God. We never have more life, or even know we need more or groan after it, except as He works in us to desire and agonize after it. Were the Spirit totally withdrawn from the Christian he would soon lapse back into spiritual death. But thank God there is no possibility of any such dire calamity: every born-again soul has the infallible guarantee, “the LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psa. 138:8).

Let us now consider more particularly some eminent acts of the Spirit in the believer and effects of His grace exercised in them. He empowers and moves them unto obedience: “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and ye shall keep My judgments and do them” (Ezek. 36:27). The two things are inseparable: an indwelling Spirit and holy conduct from those indwelt. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). The Spirit guides into the paths of righteousness by a blessed combination of invincible power and gentle suasion: not forcing us against our wills but sweetly constraining us. He directs the activities of the Christian by enlightening his understanding, warming his affections, stimulating his holy inclinations and moving his will to do that which is pleasing unto God. In this way is that Divine promise fulfilled, “I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go”

(Isa. 48:17), and thus is his prayer answered "Order my steps in Thy Word" (Psa. 119:133).

By His gracious indwelling the Spirit affords the saints *support*: "likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (Rom. 8:26). If the believer were left to himself he would never see (by faith) the all-wise hand of God in his afflictions, still less would his heart ever honestly say concerning them, "Thy will be done." If left to himself the believer would never seek grace to patiently endure chastisement, still less cherish the hope that afterward it would "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). No, rather would he chafe and kick like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jer. 31:18) and yield to the vile temptation to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). If the believer were left to himself he would never have the assurance that his worse sufferings were among the all things which work together for his ultimate good, still less would he "glory in his infirmity that the power of Christ might rest upon him" (2 Cor. 12:9). No, such holy exercises of heart are not the products of fallen human nature: instead they are the immediate, gracious, lovely fruits of the Spirit, brought forth in such uncongenial soil.

By His gracious indwelling the Spirit *energizes* the believer: "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). This is manifested in many directions. How often He exerts upon the believer a restraining influence, subduing the lusts of the flesh and holding him back from a course of folly by causing a solemn awe to fall upon him: "the fear of the Lord is to depart from evil," and the Spirit is the Author of that holy fear. "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep *by* the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14)-He is the one who oils the wheels of the saint's obedience. "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5), otherwise the deferring of our hope would cause the soul to utterly pine away. Hence we find the Spouse praying to the Spirit for invigoration and fructification, "Awake O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon My garden that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song. 4:16).

The graces which the indwelling Spirit produces are durable and lasting, particularly the three cardinal ones: "now *abideth* faith, hope, love" (1 Cor. 13:13). *Faith* is that grace which is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Peter 1:7)-it is its imperishability which constitutes its superior excellence. It is "of the operation of God" (Col. 2:12) and we know that whatsoever is of Him "it shall be forever" (Eccl. 3:14), Christ praying that it "fail not," and therefore no matter how severely it shall be tested its possessor can declare, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The *hope* of the Christian is "as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast," for it is cast on Christ the foundation, from whence it can never be removed (Heb. 6:18, 19). As to the believer's *love*, though its initial ardour may be cooled yet it cannot be quenched, though first love may be "little" it cannot be lost. Under the darkest times Christ is still the object of his love, as the cases of the Church in Song of Solomon 3:1-3 and of Peter (John 21:17) evidence.

15. *The relations which the Holy Spirit sustains to the Christian.* In Ephesians 1:14 He is designated "the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22). Now an "earnest" is part-payment assuring the full reward in due season: it is more than a pledge, being an actual portion and token of that which is promised. If the inheritance were precarious, suspended on conditions of uncertain performance, the Spirit could not in truth or propriety be termed the earnest thereof. If an "earnest" is a guaranty among men, much more so between God and His people. He is also "the firstfruits" of glorification unto the believer (Rom. 8:23), an antepast of Heaven, the initial beams of the rising sun of eternal bliss in the Christian's soul. He is also the "*anointing*" which we have received from Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21) and this "abideth" in us (1 John 2:17). Again, He is the believer's seal: "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30), that is, until their bodies are delivered from the grave. Among other purposes a "seal" is to secure: can then the treasure which the Spirit guards be lost? No: as Christ was "sealed" (John 6:27) and in consequence "upheld" by the Spirit so that He failed not

(Isa. 42:1, 4), so is the believer. It is *impossible* for any saint to perish.

6. *Its Blessedness.*

In an earlier article we dwelt upon the deep importance of this doctrine. Here we wish to show something of its great preciousness. Let us begin by pointing out the opposite. Suppose that the Gospel proclaimed only a forgiveness of all sins up to the moment of conversion and announced that believers must henceforth keep themselves from everything unworthy of this signal mercy. What if it declared that means are provided, motives supplied, and warnings given of the fatal consequences which would surely befall those who failed to make a good use of those means and diligently respond to those motives. And that whether or not he should ultimately reach Heaven is thus left entirely in the believer's own hands. Then what? We may well ask what would be the consequences of such a dismal outlook: what would be the thoughts begotten and the spirit engendered by such a Gospel? what effect would it produce upon those who really believe it? Answers to these questions should prepare us to more deeply appreciate the converse.

It hardly requires a profound theologian to reply to the above queries. They have only to be carefully pondered and the simplest Christian should be able to perceive for himself what would be the inevitable result. If the Christian's entrance into Heaven turns entirely upon his own fidelity and his treading the path of righteousness unto the end of his course, then he is far worse off than was Adam in Eden, for when God placed him under the Covenant of Works he was not heavily handicapped from the beginning by indwelling sin. But each of his fallen descendants is born into this world with a carnal nature which remains unchanged up to the moment of death. Thus the believer would enter into the fight not only without any assurance of victory but face almost certain defeat. If such a Gospel were true then those who really believed it would be total strangers to peace and joy, for they must inevitably spend their days in a perpetual dread of Hell. Or the first time they were overcome by temptation and worsted by the Enemy, they would at once abandon the fight and give way to hopeless despair.

"I will not turn away from them, to do them good" (Jer. 32:40). "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). "Nothing whatever can or shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). "He will keep the feet of His saints" (1 Sam. 2:9). How immeasurable the difference between the vain imaginations of men and the sure declarations of God! It is the contrast of the darkness of a moonless and starless midnight from the radiance of the midday sun. "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18:9) affirmed the Redeemer. Is not that inexpressibly blessed! Everyone of the redeemed shall be brought safely to Heaven. The final apostasy of a believer is an utter impossibility, not in the nature of things but by the Divine constitution. No one who has once been received into the Divine favour can ever be cast out thereof. God has bestowed on each of His children a life that cannot die, He has brought him into a relationship which nothing can change or effect, He has wrought a work in him which lasts "forever" (Eccl. 3:14).

It is sadly true that multitudes of empty professors have "wrested" this truth to their destruction, just as many of our fellows have put to an ill use some of the most valuable of God's temporal gifts. But because foolish gluttons destroy their health through intemperance is no reason why sane people should refuse to be nourished by wholesome food; and because the carnal pervert the doctrine of Divine Preservation is no valid argument for Christians being afraid to draw comfort from the same. Most certainly it is the design of God that His people should be strengthened and established by this grand article of the faith. Note how in John 17 Christ mentions again and again the words "keep" and "kept" (vv. 6, 11, 12, 15). And His reason for so doing is clearly stated: "these things I speak in the

world that they may have My joy fulfilled in them” (v. 13). He would not have them spend their days in the wretchedness of doubts about their ultimate bliss, uncertain as to the issue of their fight. It is His revealed will that they should go forward with a song in their hearts, praising Him for the certainty of ultimate victory.

But the joy which issues from a knowledge of our security is not obtained by a casual acquaintance with this Truth. Christ’s very repetition, “I kept them . . . those that Thou gavest Me I have kept” (John 17:12) intimates to us that we must meditate frequently upon this Divine preservation unto eternal life. It is to be laid hold of in no transient manner but should daily engage the Christian’s heart till he is warmed and influenced by it. A few sprinklings of water do not go to the roots of a tree but frequent and plentiful showers are needed. So it is not an occasional thought about Christ’s power to keep His people safe for Heaven which will deeply affect them but only a constant spiritual and believing pondering thereon. As Jacob said to the Angel, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me” (Gen. 32:26), so the believer should say to this truth, I will not turn from it until it has blessed me.

When our great High Priest prayed, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me” (John 17:11) it was not (as the Arminians say) that He asked merely that they might be provided with adequate means by the use of which they must preserve themselves. No, my reader, it was for something more valuable and essential. The Saviour made request that faith should be continually wrought in them by the exceeding greatness of God’s power (Eph. 1:19) and where that is, there will be works of sincere (though imperfect) obedience and it will operate by responding to the holiness of the Law so that sins are mortified. The Father answers that prayer of the Redeemer’s by working in the redeemed “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), fulfilling in them “all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power” (2 Thess. 1:11) preserving them “through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). He leaves them not to their feeble and fickle wills but renews them in the inner man “day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

That Christ would have His redeemed draw comfort from their security is clear again from His words, “Rejoice because your names are written in Heaven” (Luke 10:20). To what purpose did the Lord Jesus thus address His disciples but to denote that infallible certainty of their final salvation by a contrast from those who perish: that is, whose names were written only “in the earth” (Jer. 17:13) or on the sands which may be defaced. Surely He had never spoken thus if there were the slightest possibility of their names being blotted out. “Rejoice because your names are written in Heaven”-is not the implication both necessary and clear as a sunbeam?-such rejoicing would be premature if there were any likelihood of final apostasy. This call to rejoice is not given at the moment of the believer’s death as he sees the angels about to convoy him to the realm of ineffable bliss but while he is still here on the battlefield. Those name are written by none other than the finger of God, indelibly inscribed in the Book of Life, and not one of them will ever be erased.

Take again His words in the parable of the lost sheep: “I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7). “Such exalted hosannas would not resound on these occasions among the inhabitants of the skies if the doctrine of final perseverance was untrue. Tell me, ye seraphs of light; tell me, ye spirits of elect men made perfect in glory why this exuberance of holy rapture on the real recovery of a sinner to God? Because ye know assuredly that every true conversion is (1) a certain proof that the person converted is one of the elect number and (2) that he shall be infallibly preserved and brought to that very region of blessedness into which ye yourselves are come. The contrary belief would silence your harps and chill your praises. If it be uncertain whether the person who is regenerated today may ultimately reign with you in Heaven or take up his

eternal abode among apostate spirits in Hell, your rejoicings are too sanguine and your praises too presumptuous. You should suspend your songs until he actually arrives among you and not give thanks for his conversion until he has persevered unto glorification" (A. Toplady).

1. What encouragement is there here for *the babe in Christ!* Conscious of his weakness he is fearful that the flesh and the world and the Devil may prove too powerful for him. Aware of his ignorance, bewildered by the confusion of tongues in the religious realm, he dreads lest he be led astray by false prophets. Beholding many of his companions who made a similar profession of faith so quickly losing their fervour and going back again into the world, he trembles lest he make shipwreck of the faith. Stumbled by the inconsistencies of those called "the pillars of the church," chilled by older Christians who tell him he must not be too extreme, he is alarmed and wonders how it can be expected that he shall hold on his way almost alone. But if these fears empty him of self-confidence and make him cling closer to Christ, they are blessings in disguise for he will then prove for himself that "underneath are the everlasting arms," and those arms are all-mighty and all-sufficient.

The babe in Christ is as much a member of God's family as is the mature "father" (1 John 2:13) and the former is as truly the object of Divine love and faithfulness as is the latter. Yea, the younger ones in His flock are more the subjects of the Shepherd's care than are the full-grown sheep: "He shall gather *the lambs* with His arm and carry them in His bosom" (Isa. 40:11). The Lord does not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax (Matt. 12:20). He gave proof of this in the days of His flesh. He found some "smoking flax" in the nobleman who came to Him on behalf of his sick son: his faith was so weak that he supposed the Saviour must come down to his house and heal him ere he died-as though the Lord Jesus could not recover him while at a distance or after he had expired (John 4:49): nevertheless He cured him. So, too, after His ascension He took note of a "little strength" (Rev. 3:8) and opened a door which none can shut. The highest oak was once an acorn and God was the maintainer of its life.

When we affirm the final perseverance of every born-again soul we do not mean that saints are not *in themselves* prone to fall away, nor that at regeneration such a work is wrought in them once and for all that they now have sufficient strength of their own to overcome sin and Satan. Nor do we declare there is no likelihood of their spiritual life decaying. So far from it, we hesitate not to declare that the very principle of grace (or "new nature") in the believer considered abstractedly in itself-apart from the renewing and sustaining power of God-would assuredly perish under the corruptions of the flesh and the assaults of the Devil. No, the preservation of the Christian's faith and his continuance in the paths of obedience lies in something entirely *external to himself* or his state. Wherein lay the impossibility of any bone of Christ being broken? Not because they were in themselves incapable of being broken, for they were as liable to be broken as His flesh to be pierced but solely because of the *unbreakable decree of God*. So it is with the mystical Body of Christ: no member of His can perish because of the purpose, power and promise of God Himself.

How important it is, then, that the babe in Christ should be instructed in *the foundation of Christian perseverance*, that the ground on which his eternal security rests is nothing whatever in himself but wholly outside. The preservation of the believer depends not upon his continuing to love God, believe in Christ, tread the highway of holiness, or make diligent use of the means of grace, but on the Covenant-engagements entered into between the Father and the Son. That is the basic and grand Cause which produces as a necessary and infallible effect our continuing to love God, believe in Christ and perform sincere obedience. O what a sure foundation is that! What firm ground for the soul to rest upon! What unspeakable peace and joy issues from faith's apprehension of the same! Though fickle in ourselves, the Covenant is immutable. Though weak and unstable as water we are, yet *that*

is "ordered in all things and sure." Though full of sin and unworthiness, yet the sacrifice of Christ is of infinite merit. Though often the spirit of prayer is quenched in us, yet our great High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us. Here, then, is the "anchor of the soul" and it is "both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19).

Ere concluding this subdivision it is necessary to point out in such days as these that it must not be inferred from the above that because the grace, the power and the faithfulness of God insures the preservation of the feeblest babe in Christ that henceforth he is relieved of all responsibility in the matter. Not so-such a blessed truth has not been revealed for the purpose of encouraging slothfulness but rather to provide an impetus to use the means of preservation which God has appointed. Though we must not anticipate too much what we purpose to bring before the reader under a later division of our subject when (D.V.) we shall consider at more length the safeguards which Divine wisdom has placed around this truth, yet a few words of warning, or rather explanation, should be given here to prevent a wrong conclusion being drawn from the preceding paragraphs.

The babe in Christ is weak in himself, he is left in a hostile world, he is confronted with powerful temptations both from within and from without to apostatize. But strength is available unto faith, armour is provided against all enemies, deliverance from temptations is given in answer to prevailing prayer. But he must *seek* that strength, *put* on that armour, and *resist* those temptations. He must fight for his very life, and refuse to acknowledge defeat. Nor shall he fight in vain, for Another shall gird his arm and enable him to overcome. The blessedness of this doctrine is that he shall not be left to himself nor suffered to perish. The Holy Spirit shall renew him day by day, quicken his graces, move him to perseverance and make him "more than conqueror through Him that loved him."

6. *Its Blessedness.*

2. What comfort is there here *for fearing saints!* All Christians have a reverential and filial fear of God and an evangelical horror of sin. Some are beset with legal fears and most of them with anxieties which are the product of a mingling of legal and evangelical principles. These latter are occasioned more immediately by anxious doubts, painful misgivings, evil surmisings of unbelief. More remotely, they are the result of the permissive appointment of God, who has decreed that perfect happiness must be waited till His people get home to Heaven. Were our graces complete, our bliss would be complete, too. In the meantime it is needful for the Christian traveler to be exercised with a thorn in the flesh and that "thorn" assumes a variety of forms with different believers. Whatever its form, it is effectual in convincing them that this earth is not their rest or a mount whereon to pitch tabernacles of continuance. In many instances that "thorn" consists of anxious misgivings, as the frequent "fear not" of Scripture intimates: the fear of being completely overcome by temptation, of making shipwreck of the faith, of failing to endure unto the end.

Once again we would quote those words of Christ, "Of them whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18:9). Is not that inexpressibly blessed! That every one of the dear children whom the Father has entrusted to the care and custody of the Mediator shall be brought safely to Glory! The feeblest as much as the strongest, those with the least degree of grace as those with the most, the babes as truly as the full grown. Where true grace is imparted, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, it shall be quickened and nourished so that it shall not perish. This should be of great consolation to those timid and doubting ones who are apt to think it will be well with Christians of great faith and eminent gifts but that such frail creatures as they know themselves to be, will never hold out, who dread that Satan's next attack will utterly vanquish them. Let them know that the self-same Divine protection is given to all the redeemed. It is not because one is more godly than another but because both are held fast in the hand of God. The tiny mouse was as safe in the ark as

the ponderous elephant.

What encouragement is there here for the godly, who, when they view the numerous Amaleks in the way and hear of the giants and walled cities before them, are prone to dread their meeting with them. How many a one has trembled as he has pondered that word of Christ, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:23, 24) and said the Apostles, "Who then can be saved?" (v. 25). If it be such a difficult matter to get to Heaven, if the gate be so strait and the way so narrow-and so many of those professing to tread it turn out to be hypocrites and apostates, what will become of me? When thus exercised, remember Christ's answer to the astonished disciples, "with God all things are possible" (v. 26). He who kept Israel on the march for forty years without their shoes wearing out, can quite easily preserve you, O you of little faith.

"Thou has a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand" (Psa 89:13). Grandly is that fact displayed in creation. Who has stretched out the heavens with a span? Who upholds the pillars of the earth? Who has set limits to the raging ocean, so that it cannot overflow its bounds? Whose finger kindled the sun, the moon and the stars, and kept those mysterious lamps of the sky alight all these thousands of years? Whose hand has filled the sea with fish, the fields with herds and made the earth fertile and fruitful? So, too, the mightiness of the Lord's arm is manifest in *Divine Providence*. Who directs the destinies of nations and shapes the affairs of kingdoms? Who sets the monarch upon his throne and casts him from it when it so pleases Him? Who supplies the daily needs of a countless myriad of creatures so that even the sparrow is provided for when the earth is blanketed with snow? Who makes all things work together for good-even in a world which lies in the Wicked one-to them that love Him, who are the called according to His purpose?

When a soul is truly reconciled to God and brought to delight in Him, it rejoices in all His attributes. At first it is apt to dwell much upon His love and mercy but as it grows in grace and experience it delights in His holiness and power. It is a mark of spiritual understanding when we have learned to distinguish the manifold perfections of God, to take pleasure in each of them. It is a proof of more intimate communion with the Lord when we perceive how adorable is the Divine character, so that we meditate upon its excellences separately and in detail and praise and bless Him for each of them. The more we are given to behold all the varied rays of His pure light, the more we are occupied with the many glories of His crown, the more shall we bow in wonderment before Him. Not only shall we perceive how infinitely He is above us, but how there is everything in Him suited to our need-grace to meet our unworthiness, mercy to pardon our sins, wisdom to supply our ignorance, strength to minister to our weakness. "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods! who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!" (Exo. 15:11).

How this glorious attribute of God's power ensures the final perseverance of the saints! Some of our readers have passed through sore trials and severe tribulations, yet they prevailed not against them: they shook them to their foundations but they did not overthrow their faith. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psa. 34:19). Fierce were the foes which many a time gathered against you and had not the Lord been on your side you would have quickly been devoured. But in Him we find a sure refuge. The Divine strength has been manifested in our weakness. Is it not so, my brother, my sister: that such a frail worm as yourself has never been crushed by the weight of opposition that has come upon you?-ah, "underneath were the everlasting arms." Though you trembled at your feebleness, yet "out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. 11:34) has been your case, too. Kept alive with death all around you, preserved when Satan and his hosts encompassed you. Must you not say "strong is Thy right hand"!

3. What comfort is there here for souls who are *tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God!* The awful corruptions of the flesh which still remain in the believer are ever ready to complain at the difficulties of the way and murmur against the dispensations of Divine Providence. The questionings of unbelief constantly ask, Has God ceased to be gracious? How can He love me if He deals with me thus? These questions are sufficient in themselves to destroy the soul's peace and quench its joy. But when to these are added the infidelities of Arminianism which declare that God takes no more care of His children than to suffer the Devil to enter in among and devour them, that the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, affords no more security to His flock than to allow wolves and lions to come among and devour them at their pleasure-how shall the poor Christian maintain his confidence in the love and faithfulness of the Lord? Such blasphemies are like buckets of cold water poured upon the flames of his affection for God and are calculated only to destroy that delight which he has taken in the riches of Divine grace.

The uninstructed and unestablished believer is apt to think within himself, I may for the present be in a good state and condition but what assurance is there that I shall *continue* thus? Were not the apostate angels once in a far better state and more excellent condition than mine? They dwelt in Heaven itself but now they are cast down into Hell, being "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6)! Adam in Paradise had no lusts within to tempt and seduce him, no world without to oppose and entangle, yet being in honour he continued not but apostatised and perished. If it was not in *their* power to persevere much less so in mine, who is "sold under sin" and encompassed with a world of temptations, what hope is there left to me? Let a man be exercised with such thoughts as these, let him be cast back solely upon himself and what is there that can give him any relief or bring his soul to any degree of composure? Nothing whatever, for the so-called "power of free will" availed not either the angels which fell or our first parents.

And what is it which will deliver the distressed soul from these breathings of despair? Nothing but a believing and laying hold of this grand comfort: that the child of God has an infallible promise from his Father that he shall be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom, that he shall be kept from apostasy, that the intercession of his great High Priest prevents the total failing of his faith. So far from God's being indifferent to the welfare of His children and failing in His care for them, He has sworn, "I will not turn away from them to do them good" (Jer. 32:40). So far from the good Shepherd proving unfaithful to His trust, He has given express assurance that not one of His sheep shall perish. Rest on those assurances, my reader, and your hard thoughts about God will be effectually silenced. As to the stability and excellency of the Divine love, is it not written, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17)? What can more endear God to His people than that?! How it should fix their souls in their love to Him.

Well might Stephen Charnock say of Arminians, "Can these men fancy Infinite Tenderness so unconcerned as to let the apple of His eye be plucked out, as to be a careless Spectator of the pillage of His jewels by the powers of Hell, to have the delight of His soul (if I may so speak) tossed like a tennis ball between himself and the Devil?" He that does the greater thing for His people shall He not also do the less: to regenerate them is more wonderful than to preserve them, as the bestowal of life exceeds the maintaining of it. The reconciliation of enemies is far harder than dealing with the failings of friends: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Much more then*, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:8-10). If there were such efficacy in the death of Christ, who can estimate the virtue of His resurrection! "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25).

4. What comfort is there here for *aged pilgrims*! Some perhaps may be surprised at this heading, supposing that those who have been longest in the way and have experienced most of God's faithfulness have the least need of consolation from this truth. But such a view is sadly superficial to say the least. No matter how matured in the faith one may be, or how well acquainted with the Divine goodness, so long as he is left down here he has no might of his own and is completely dependent upon Divine grace to preserve him. Methuselah stood in as much need of God's supporting hand during the closing days of his pilgrimage as does the veriest babe in Christ. Look at it from the human side of things: the aged believer, filled with infirmities, the spiritual companions of his youth all gone, perhaps bereft of the partner of his bosom, cut off from the public means of grace-looks forward to the final conflict with trepidation.

"And even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you" (Isa. 46:4). Why has such a tender and appropriate promise been given by God if His aged saints have no need of the same? They, any more than the young, are not immune from Satan's attacks. He is not slow to tell the tottering believer that as many a ship has foundered when in sight of port, so the closing storm of life will prove too much for him: that though God has borne long with his unbelief and waywardness, even His patience is now exhausted. How then is he to meet such assaults of the Fiend? In the same way as he has done all through his course-by taking the shield of faith, wherewith he shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked one (Eph. 6:16)-by having recourse to the sure promise of Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" (Matt. 28:20).

Ah, my aged friend, how often have you proved in your experience the truth of those words, "thine enemies shall be found *liars* unto thee" (Deut. 33:29). What a shameless liar the Devil is! Did he not tell you in some severe trial, "The hand of the Lord is gone out against you: He has forsaken you and will no more be gracious to you. He has deserted you as He did Saul the king and now you are wholly given up unto the powers of evil: the Lord will no more answer you from His holy oracle; He has utterly cast you off"? Yet you found that God had not deserted you after all and this very day you are able to join the writer in thanking Him for His lovingkindness and to testify of His unfailing faithfulness. How often has your own unbelief whispered to you, "I shall one day perish at the hand of this foe who seeks my life: my strength is gone, the Spirit withholds His assistance, I am left alone and must perish"? Yet year after year has passed and though faint you are still pursuing, though feeble you will hold on your way, by His grace!

Has not Satan often told you in the past, "Your profession is a sham, iniquities prevail over you, the root of the matter is not in you. You were a fool to make a profession and cast in your lot with God's people: there is no stability in you. You are certain to apostatise and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ"? And did not your own doubts second his motion, telling you that your experience was but a flash in the pan, some evanescent emotion which like a firebrand would die out into black ashes? Unbelief has whispered a thousand falsehoods into your ear, saying this duty is too difficult, this toil will prove too great, this adversity will drown you. What madness it was to lend an ear to such lies! Can God ever cast away one on whom He has fixed His everlasting love? Can He renounce one who was purchased by the blood of Christ? Thus will it prove of your last fears: "Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee."

5. What comfort is there here for *preachers*! Many a rural minister views with uneasiness the departure into cities of some of his young converts. And may well he be exercised at the prospect of them leaving their sheltered homes to be brought into close contact with temptations to which they were formerly strangers. It is both his duty and privilege to give them godly counsel and warning, to follow them with his prayers, to write them: but if they be soundly converted he need not fear about their ultimate well-being. Servants of God called to move into other parts are fearful about the babes

in Christ which they will leave behind, yet if they really be such they may find consolation in the blessed fact that the great Shepherd of the sheep will never leave nor forsake them.

7. *Its Perversion.*

Nowhere is the depravity of man and the enmity of their minds against God more terribly displayed than in the treatment which His Holy Word receives at their hands. By many it is criminally neglected, by others it is wickedly wrested and made to teach the most horrible heresies. To slight such a revelation, to despise such an inestimable treasure, is an insult which the Most High will certainly avenge. To corrupt the sacred Scriptures, to force from them a meaning the opposite of what they bear, to handle them deceitfully by picking and choosing from their contents is a crime of fearful magnitude. Yet this, in varying measure, is what all the false cults of Christendom are guilty of. Unitarians, Universalists and those who teach the unconsciousness of the soul between death and resurrection and the annihilation of the wicked, single out certain snippets of Scripture but ignore or explain away anything which makes against them. A very high percentage of the errors propagated by the pulpit are nothing more or less than Truth itself, but the Truth distorted and perverted.

Broadly speaking the doctrine which we have been expounding in this series has been perverted by two main classes. First, by open Arminians, who expressly repudiate most of what has been advanced in the preceding articles. With them we are not here directly concerned. Second, by what we can only designate "mongrel Calvinists." This class deny the sovereign and unconditional election of God and also the limited or particular redemption of Christ. They are one with Arminians in believing that election is based on God' foreknowledge of those who would believe the Gospel, and they affirm Christ atoned for the sins of all of Adam's race, and yet they term themselves "Calvinists" because they hold the eternal security of the saints, or "once in grace, always in grace." In their crude and ill-balanced presentation of this doctrine they woefully pervert the Truth and do incalculable damage unto those who give ear to them. As they do not all proceed along exactly the same line to distort the Truth at the same particular point, we will divide this branch of our subject so as to cover as many errors as possible.

1. It is perverted by those who affirm mere professors with what pertains only to the regenerate. Here is a young man who attends a service at church where a "special evangelistic campaign" is being held. He is not seriously inclined, in fact rarely enters a place of worship, but is visiting only now to please a friend. The evangelist makes a fervent emotional appeal and many are induced to "go forward" and be prayed for-our young man among them-again to please his friend. He is persuaded to "become a Christian" by signing a "decision card." And then he is congratulated on the "manly step" he has taken. He is duly "received into the church," and at once given a class of boys in the "Sunday School." He is conscious there has been no change within and though somewhat puzzled supposes the preacher and church-members know more about the matter than he does. *They* regard him as a Christian and assure him he is now safe for eternity.

Here is another young man who is passing a "Gospel Hall" on a Lord's Day evening; attracted by the hearty singing, he enters. The speaker expatiates at length on John 3:16 and similar passages. He declares with much vigour that God loves everybody and points out in proof thereof that He gave His Son to die for the sins of all mankind. The unsaved are urged to believe this and are told that the only thing which can now send them to Hell is their unbelief. As soon as the service is over the speaker makes for our young man and asks him if he is saved. Upon receiving a negative reply, he asks, "Would you like to be, here and now?" Acts 16:31 is read to him and he is asked, "Will you believe?" If he says yes, John 5:24 is quoted to him and he is told that he is now eternally secure. He is welcomed into the homes of these new friends, frequents their meetings and is addressed as

“Brother.”

The above are far more than imaginary cases: we have come into personal contact with many from both classes. And what was the sequel? In the great majority of instances the tide of emotion and enthusiasm soon subsided, the novelty quickly wore off, attending “Bible readings” soon palled, and the dog returned to its vomit and the sow to her wallowing in the mire. They were then regarded as “backsliders” and perhaps told, “The Lord will bring you back again into the fold.” And some of these man-made converts are foolish enough to believe their deceivers and assured that “once saved, saved forever.” They go on their worldly way with no trepidation as to the ultimate outcome. They have been fatally deceived. And what of their deceivers? They are guilty of perverting the Truth, they have cast pearls before swine, they have taken the children’s bread and thrown it to the dogs. They gave to empty professors what pertained only to the regenerate.

2. It is perverted by those who fail to insist upon *credible evidences of regeneration*, as is the case with the above examples. The burden of proof always rests upon the one who affirms. When a person claims that he is a Christian, that claim does not make him one, and if he is mistaken, it certainly is not kindness on my part to confirm him in a delusion. A church is weakened spiritually in proportion to the number of its unregenerate members. Regeneration is a *supernatural work of grace* and therefore it is a great insult to the Holy Spirit to imagine that there is not a radical difference between one who has been miraculously quickened by Him and one who is dead in trespasses and sins-between one who is indwelt by Him and one in whom Satan is working (Eph. 2:2). Not until we see clear evidence that a supernatural work of grace has been wrought in a soul are we justified in regarding him as a brother in Christ. The tree is known by the fruit it bears: good fruit must be manifested on its branches ere we can identify it as a good tree.

We will not enter into a laboured attempt to describe at length the principal birth-marks of a Christian. Instead we will mention some things which, if they are absent, indicate that “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) is not in the person. One who regards sin lightly, who thinks nothing of breaking a promise, who is careless in the performance of temporal duties, who gives no sign of a tender conscience which is exercised over what are commonly called “trifles,” lacks the one thing needful. A person who is vain and self-important, who pushes to the fore seeking the notice of others, who parades his fancied knowledge and attainments, has not learned of Him who is “meek and lowly in heart.” One who is hyper-sensitive, who is deeply hurt if someone slights them, who resents a word of reproof no matter how kindly spoken, betrays the lack of a humble and teachable spirit. One who frets over disappointments, murmurs each time his will is crossed and rebels against the dispensations of Providence exhibits a will which has not been Divinely subdued.

That a person belongs to some “evangelical church” or “assembly” and is regular in his attendance there, is no proof that he is a member of the Church which is Christ’s (mystical) body. That a person goes about with a Bible in his hand is no guaranty that the Divine Law is within his heart. Though he may talk freely and fluently about spiritual things, of what worth is it if they do not regulate his daily walk? One who is dishonest in business, undutiful in the home, thoughtless of others, censorious and unmerciful, has no title to be regarded as a new creature in Christ Jesus, no matter how saintly his pose be on the Sabbath Day. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ’s forerunner to be baptized of him, he said, “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8): I must first see some signs of godly sorrow for sin, some manifestations of a change of heart, some tokens of a transformed life. So we must demand the evidences of regeneration before we are justified in crediting a Christian profession, otherwise we endorse what is false and bolster up one in his self-deceit.

3. It is perverted by those who sever the cause from its *necessary effect*. The cause of the

believer's perseverance is one and indivisible, for it is Divine and nothing whatever of the creature is mingled with it; yet to our apprehension, at least, it appears as a compound one and we may view its component parts separately. The unchanging love, the immutable purpose, the Everlasting Covenant and the invincible power of God are conjoint elements in making the saint infallibly secure. But each of those elements is active and brings forth fruit after its own kind. God's love is not confined to the Divine bosom but is "shed abroad" in the hearts of His people by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), from whence it flows forth again unto its Giver: "we love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our love is indeed feeble and fluctuating, yet it *exists*, and cannot be quenched, so that we can say with Peter, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." "I know My sheep and (though imperfectly) am known of Mine" (John 10:14) shows the response made.

The preacher who has much to say upon the love of God and little or nothing about the believer's love to Him is partial and fails in his duty. How can I ascertain that I am an object of God's love but by discovering the manifest effects of His love being shed abroad in my heart? "If any man *love God* the same is known of God" (1 Cor. 8:3). "All things work together for good to *them that love God*, to them who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). It is by their love for Him they give proof they are the subject of His effectual call. And how is genuine love for God to be identified? First, *by its eminency*: God is loved above all others so as He has no rival in the soul: "whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. 73:25). All things give way to His love: "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee" (Psa 63:3). The real Christian is content to do and suffer anything rather than lose God's favour, for that is his all.

Second, true love for God may be recognized *by its component parts*. Repentance is a mourning love, because of the wrongs done its Beloved and the loss accruing to ourselves. Faith is a receptive love, thankfully accepting Christ and all His benefits. Obedience is a pleasing love, seeking to honour and glorify the One who has set His heart upon me. Filial fear is a restraining love which prevents me offending Him whom I esteem above all others. Hope is love expecting, anticipating the time when there shall be nothing to come between my soul and Him. Communion is love finding satisfaction in its Object. All true piety is the expression and outflow of love to God and those who bear His image. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is love desiring more of God and His holiness. Joy is the exuberance of love, delighting itself in its all-sufficient portion. Patience is love waiting for God to make good His promise, moving us to endure the trials of the way until He comes to our relief. Love "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

Third, real love for God expresses itself in *obedience*. Where there is genuine love for God it will be our chief concern to please Him and fulfill His will. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me" (John 14:21). "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). Inasmuch as it is the love of an inferior to a superior it must show itself in a respectful subjection, in the performance of duty. God returns love with love: "I love them that love Me" (Prov. 8:17 and cf. John 14:21). "A Christian is rewarded as a lover rather than as a servant: not as doing work, but as doing work out of love" (Manton). If we love God we shall do His bidding, promote His interests, seek His glory. And this not sporadically but uniformly and constantly; not in being devout at certain set times and the observance of the Lord's Supper, but respecting His authority in all the details of our daily lives. Only thus does love perform its function and fulfill its design: "whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected (attains its proper goal): hereby know we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:5).

From what has been pointed out in the last three paragraphs it is clear that those who dwell upon the love of God for His people to the virtual exclusion of their love for Him do pervert the truth of the security of the saints, as the individual who persuades himself that he is the object of God's love

without producing the fruit of his love for Him is treading on very dangerous ground. This divorcing of the necessary effect from its cause might be demonstrated just as conclusively of the other elements or parts, but because we entered into so much detail with the first we will barely state the other three. The immutability of God's purpose to conduct His elect to Heaven must not be considered as a thing apart; the means have been predestinated as much as the end, and they who despise the means perish. The very term "covenant" signifies a compact entered into by two or more persons, wherein terms are prescribed and rewards promised: nowhere has God promised covenant blessings to those who comply not with covenant stipulations. Nor have I any warrant to believe the saving power of God is working in me unless I am expressly proving the sufficiency of His grace.

4. It is perverted by those who *lose the balance of Truth* between Divine preservation and Christian perseverance. We may think it vastly more honouring unto God to write or say ten times as much about His sovereignty as we do upon man's responsibility, but that is only a vain attempt to be wise above what is written, and therefore is to display our own presumption and folly. We may attempt to excuse our failure by declaring it is a difficult matter to present the Divine supremacy and human accountability in their due proportions, but with the Word of God in our hands it will avail us nothing. The business of God's servant is not only to contend earnestly for the Faith but to set forth the Truth in its Scriptural proportions. Far more error consists in misrepresenting and distorting the Truth than in expressly repudiating it. Professing Christians are not deceived by an avowed infidel or atheist, but are taken in by men who quote and re-quote certain portions of Holy Writ, and are silent upon all the passages which clash with their lop-sided views.

Just as we may dwell so much upon the Deity of Christ as to lose sight of the reality of His humanity so we may become so occupied with God's keeping of His people as to overlook those verses where the Christian is bidden to keep himself. The incarnation in nowise changed or modified the fact that Christ was none other than Immanuel tabernacling among men, that "God was manifest in flesh," nevertheless we read, "Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17), and again, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). The theanthropic person or the Mediator is grossly caricatured if either His Godhead or manhood be omitted from consideration. Whatever difficulty it may involve to our finite minds, whatever mystery which transcends our grasp, we must hold fast to the fact that the Child born, the Son given, was "the mighty God" (Isa. 9:6); nor must we suffer the truth of God's garrisoning of His people to crowd out the necessity of their discharging their responsibility.

It is perfectly true there is a danger in the other side and that we need to be on our guard against erring in the opposite direction. Some have done so. There are those who consider the humanity of Christ could not be true humanity in the real sense of that word, arguing that His temptation was nothing more than a meaningless show unless He was capable of yielding to Satan's attacks. One error leads to another. If the last Adam met the Devil on the same plane as did the first Adam, simply as a sinless man and if His victory (as well as all His wondrous works) is to be attributed solely to the power of the Holy Spirit, then it follows that the exercise of His divine prerogatives and attributes were entirely suspended during the years of His humiliation. Hence we find that those who hold this fantastic view endorse the "kenosis" theory interpreting the "made Himself of no reputation" of Philippians 2:7 as the temporary setting aside of His omniscience and omnipotence.

Contending for Christian perseverance no more warrants the repudiation of Divine preservation than insisting on the true manhood of Christ justifies the impugning of His Godhood. Both must be held fast: on the one hand reasoning must be bridled by refusing to go one step further than Scripture goes. On the other hand faith must be freely exercised, receiving all that God has revealed thereon. That which is central in Philippians 2:5-7 is the position Christ entered and the character in which He

appeared. He who was “in the form of God” and deemed it not robbery “to be equal with God” took upon Him “the form of a servant” and was “made in the likeness of men.” He laid aside the robes of His incomprehensible glory, divested Himself of His incommunicable honours, and assumed the mediatorial office instead of continuing to act as the universal Sovereign. He descended into the sphere of servitude, yet without the slightest injury to His Godhead. There was voluntary abnegation of the exercise of full dominion and sovereignty, though He still remained “The Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). He “became obedient unto death” but He did not become either feeble or fallible. He was and is both perfect man and “the mighty God.”

As the Person of the God-man Mediator is falsified if either His Godhead or manhood be denied, or perverted if either be practically ignored, so it is with the security of the saints when either their Divine preservation or their own perseverance is repudiated, or perverted if either be emphasized to the virtual exclusion of the other. Both must be maintained in their due proportions. Scripture designates our Saviour “the true God” (1 John 5:20), yet it also speaks of Him as “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Again and again He is denominated “the Son of Man,” yet Thomas owned Him as “my Lord and my God.” So, too, the Psalmist affirmed, “He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee, will not slumber...The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore” (121:3, 7, 8); nevertheless, He also declared, “By the Word of Thy lips I *have* kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (17:4), and again, “I have kept the ways of the Lord...I have kept *myself* from mine iniquity (18:21, 23). Jude exhorts believers, “keep yourselves in the love of God,” and then speaks of Him, “that is able to keep you from falling” (21:24). The one complements, and not contradicts, the other.

7. *Its Perversion.*

5. It is perverted by those who divorce the purpose of God *from the means* through which it is accomplished. God has purposed the eternal felicity of His people and that purpose is certain of full fruition-nevertheless it is not effected without the use of means on their part, any more than a harvest is obtained and secured apart from human industry and persevering diligence. God has made promise to His saints that “bread shall be given” them and their “water shall be sure” (Isa. 33:16), but that does not exempt them from the discharge of their duty or provide them with an indulgence to take their ease. The Lord gave a plentiful supply of manna from Heaven, but the Israelites had to get up early and gather it each morning, for it melted when the sun shone on it. So His people are now required to *labour for* “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27). Promises of Divine preservation are not made to sluggards and idlers but those called unto the use of means for the establishing of their souls in the practice of obedience. Those promises are not given to promote idleness but are so many encouragements to the diligent, assurances that sincere endeavours shall have a successful issue.

God has purposed to preserve believers *in holiness* and not in wickedness. His promises are made to those who strive against sin and mourn over it, made to those who take their full thereof and delight therein. If I presume upon God’s goodness and count upon His shielding me when I deliberately run into the place of temptation, then I shall be justly left to reap as I have sown. It is Satan who tempts souls to recklessness and to the perverting of the Divine promises. This is clear from the attack which he made upon the Saviour. When he bade Him cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and to rely upon the angels to preserve Him from harm, it was an urging Him to presume upon the end by disdainful means. Our Lord stopped his mouth by pointing out that, notwithstanding His assurance from God and of His faithfulness concerning the end, yet Scripture requires that the

means tending to that end be employed, the neglect of which is a sinful tempting of God. If I deliberately drink deadly poison I have no ground for concluding that prayer will deliver me from its fatal effects.

The Divine preservation of the saints no more renders their own activities, constant care and exertions superfluous than does God's gift of breath make it unnecessary for us to breathe. It is their own preservation in faith and holiness which is the very thing made certain. They themselves, therefore, must live by faith and in the practice of holiness, for they cannot persevere in any other way than by watching and praying. They must carefully avoid the snares of Satan and the seductions of the world, resisting and mortifying the lusts of the flesh, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. To neglect those duties, to follow a contrary course, is to "draw back unto perdition" and *not* to "believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). He who argues that since his perseverance in faith and holiness is assured he needs exercise no concern about it or trouble to do anything toward it, is not only guilty of a palpable contradiction but gives proof that he is a stranger to regeneration and has neither part nor lot in the matter. "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight" (Psa. 119:35) is the cry of the renewed.

6. It is perverted by those who deny the truth of *Christian responsibility*. In this section we shall turn away from the "mongrel Calvinists" to consider a serious defect on the part of "hyper-Calvinists," or as some prefer to call them, "fatalists." These people not only repudiate the general offer of the Gospel, arguing that it is a virtual denial of man's spiritual impotency to call upon the unregenerate to savingly repent and believe, but they are also woefully rent in exhorting believers unto the performance of Christian duties. Their favorite text is, "without Me ye can do nothing," but they are silent upon, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). They delight to quote the promises wherein God declares, "I will" and "I shall," but they ignore those verses which contain the qualifying "if ye" (John 8:31) and "if we" (Heb. 3:6). They are sound and strong in the truth of God's preservation of His people, but they are weak and unsound on the correlative tone of the saints' perseverance. They say much about the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, but very little on the method He employs or the means and motives He makes use of.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). He does not compel but inclines: it is not by the use of physical power but by the employment of moral suasion and sweet inducements that He leads, for He deals with the saints not as stocks and stones but as rational entities. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psa. 32:8). The meaning of that is more apparent from the contrast presented in the next verse: "Be ye not as the horse (rushing where it should not) or as the mule (stubbornly refusing to go where it should) which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." God does not drive His children like unintelligent animals, but guides by enlightening their minds, directing their inclination, moving their wills. God led Israel across the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: but they had to respond thereto, to *follow* it. So the Good Shepherd goes before His sheep, and they follow Him.

It is true, blessedly true, that God "draws," yet that drawing is not a mechanical one as though we were machines, but a *moral* one in keeping with our nature and constitution. Beautifully is this expressed in Hosea 11:4, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Every moral virtue, every spiritual grace, is appealed to and called into action. There is perfect love and gracious care on God's part toward us. There is the intelligence of faith and response of love on our part toward Him-and thereby He keeps us in the way. Blessed and wondrous indeed is the inter-working of Divine grace and the believer's responsibility. All the affections of the new creature are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit. He draws out our love by setting before us God's love: "We love Him, because He first

loved us" (1 John 4:19), but we *do* love Him, we are not passive, nor is love inactive. He quickens our desires and revives our assurance, and we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). He brings into view "the prize of the high calling" and we "press toward the mark, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

It is very much like a skilled musician and a harp: as his fingers touch its strings they produce melodious sounds. God works in us and produces the beauty of Holiness. But how? By setting before our minds weighty considerations and powerful motives, and causing us to *respond* thereto. By giving us a tender conscience which is sensitive to His still small voice. By appealing to every motive-power in us: fear, desire, love, hatred, hope, ambition. God preserves His saints not as He does the mountain pine which is enabled to withstand the storm without its own concurrence, but by calling into exercise and act the principle that was imparted to them at the new birth. There is the working of Divine grace first, and then the outflow of Christian energy. God works in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12, 13). And it is the office of God's servants to be used as instruments in the hands of the Spirit. It is their task to enforce the responsibility of the saints, to admonish slothfulness, to warn against apostasy, to call unto the use of means and the performance of duty.

If the hyper-Calvinist preacher compares the method he follows with the policy pursued by the Apostles he should quickly perceive the vast difference there is between them. True, the Apostles gave attention to doctrinal instruction, but they also devoted themselves to exhortation and expostulation. True, they magnified the free and sovereign grace of God and were careful to set the crown of glory upon the One to whom alone it belonged, yet they were far from addressing their hearers as so many paralytics or creatures who must lie impotent till the waters be moved. "No," they said, "Let us not sleep, as do others" (1 Thess. 5:6), but "awake to righteousness and sin not" (1 Cor. 15:34). They bade them "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1) and not sit down and mope and hug their miseries. They called upon them to "resist the Devil" (James 4:7), not take the attitude they were helpless in the matter. They gave direction, "keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21) and did not at once negate it by adding, "but you are unable to do so." When the Apostle said, "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to *stir you up* by putting you in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:13), he was not usurping the prerogative of the Spirit but was enforcing the responsibility of the saints.

7. It is perverted by those who use the doctrine of justification to crowd out the companion doctrine of sanctification. Though they are inseparably connected, yet they may be and should be considered singly and distinctly. Under the Law, the ablutions and oblations, the washings and sacrifices were together, and justification and sanctification are blessings which must not be disjointed. God never bestows the one without the other, yet we have no means of knowing we have received the former apart from the evidences of the latter. Justification refers to the relative or legal change which takes place in the status of God's people. Sanctification to the real and experimental change which takes place in their state, a change which is begun at the new birth, developed during the course of their earthly pilgrimage and is made perfect in Heaven. The one gives the believer a *title* to Heaven, the other a *meetness* for the inheritance of the saints in light. The former clears him from the guilt of sin, the latter cleanses from sin's defilement. In sanctification something is actually *imparted* to the believer, whereas in justification it is only *imputed*. Justification is based entirely on the work which Christ wrought for His people but sanctification is principally a work wrought in them.

By our Fall in Adam we not only lost the favour of God but also the purity of our nature, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and renewed in our inner man, for without personal holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy

in all manner of conversation (behaviour); because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16). God's nature is such that unless we be sanctified there can be no intercourse between Him and us. But can persons be sinful and holy at one and the same time? Genuine Christians discover so much carnality, filth and vileness in themselves that they find it almost impossible to be assured they are holy. Nor is this difficulty solved, as in justification, by recognizing that though completely unholy in ourselves we are holy in Christ, for Scripture teaches that those who are sanctified by God are holy *in themselves* though the evil nature has *not been removed* from them.

None but "the pure in heart" will ever "see God" (Matt. 5:8). There must be that renovation of soul whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. There must be that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God and abstinence from evil which issues from faith and love. There must be that directing of all our actions to the glory of God by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. There must be a spirit of holiness working within the believer's heart so as to sanctify his outward actions if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom "there is no darkness." True, there is perfect holiness in Christ for the believer, but there must also be a holy nature received from Him. There are some who appear to delight in the imputed obedience of Christ who make little or no concern about personal holiness. They have much to say about being arrayed in "the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10), who give no evidence that they are "clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5) or that they have "put on....bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Col. 3:12, 13).

How many there are today who suppose that if they have trusted in Christ all is sure to be well with them at the last, even though they are not personally holy. Under the pretence of honouring faith, Satan, as an angel of light, has deceived and is now deceiving multitudes of souls. When their "faith" is examined and tested, what is it worth? Nothing at all so far as insuring an entrance into Heaven is concerned: it is a powerless, lifeless, fruitless thing. The faith of God's elect is unto "the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness" (Titus 1:1). It is a faith which purifies the heart (Acts 13:9), and it grieves over all impurity. It is a faith which produces an unquestioning obedience (Heb. 11:8). They therefore do but delude themselves who suppose they are daily drawing nearer to Heaven while they are following those courses which lead only to Hell. He who thinks to come to the enjoyment of God without being personally holy, makes God out to be an unholy God, and puts the highest indignity upon Him. The genuineness of saving faith is only proved as it bears the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of true piety.

Sanctification consists of receiving a holy nature from Christ and being indwelt by the Spirit so that the body becomes His temple, setting apart unto God. By the Spirit's giving me vital union with "the Holy One" I am "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). Where there is life there is growth, and even when growth ceases there is a development and maturing of what has grown. There is a living principle, a moral quality communicated at the new birth, and under sanctification it is drawn out into action and exercised in living unto God. In regeneration the Spirit imparts saving grace, in sanctification He strengthens and develops it-the one is a *birth*, the other a *growth*. Therein it differs from justification: justification is a single act of grace-sanctification is a continued work of grace. The one is complete, the other *progressive*. Some do not like the term "progressive sanctification" but the thing itself is clearly taught in Scripture. "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that *it may bring forth more fruit*" (John 15:2). "I pray that your love may abound yet *more and more* in knowledge and all judgment" (Phil. 1:9). That you "may *grow up into Him* in all things" (Eph. 4:15) is an exhortation thereto.

8. The doctrine of the Saints' perseverance is perverted by those who fail to accord the *example*

of Christ its proper place. Few indeed have maintained an even keel on this important matter. If the Socinians have made the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of the incarnation, others have so stressed His atoning death as to reduce His model walk to comparative insignificance. While the pulpit must make it clear that the main and chief reason why the Son of God became flesh was in order that He might honour God in rendering to the Law a perfect satisfaction on behalf of His people, yet it should also make equally plain that a prominent design and important end of Christ's incarnation was to set before His people a pattern of holiness for their emulation. Thus declares the Scriptures: "He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21), and that example imperatively obligates believers unto its imitation. Though some have unduly pressed the example of Christ upon unbelievers, others have woefully failed to press it on believers. Because it has no place in the justification of a sinner, it is a serious mistake to suppose it exerts no influence upon the sanctification of a saint.

The very name "Christian" intimates that there is an intimate relation between Christ and the believer. It signifies "an anointed one," that he has been endued with a measure of that Divine unction with his Master received "without measure" (John 3:34). And as Flavel, the Puritan pointed out, "Believers are called 'fellows' or co-partners (Psa. 45:7) of Christ from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God gives the same spirit unto us which He more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated....Its nature also is *assimilating*, and changes those in whom it is, into the same image with Christ, their heavenly Head (2 Cor. 3:18)." Again-believers are denominated "Christians" because they are disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19 margin, Acts 11:26), that is, learners and followers of His, and therefore it is a misuse of terms to designate a man a "Christian" who is not sincerely endeavouring to mortify and forsake whatever is contrary to His character-to justify his name he must be Christ-like.

Though the perfect life of Christ must not be exalted to the exclusion of His atoning death, neither must it be omitted as the believer's model. It may be true that no attempt to imitate Christ can obtain a sinner's acceptance from God. It is equally true that the emulating of Him is imperatively necessary and absolutely essential in order to the saints' preservation and final salvation. "Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation convincingly appears from the established order of salvation, which is fixed and unaltered. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory. 'For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). The same God who has predestinated men to salvation, has in order thereto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ, and this order of Heaven is never to be reversed. We may as well think to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ" (John Flavel).

In Christ God has set before His people that standard of moral excellence at which He requires them to aim and strive after. In His life we beheld glorious representation in our own nature of the walk of obedience which He demands of us. Christ conformed Himself to us by His abasing incarnation. How reasonable, therefore, is it that we should conform ourselves to Him in the way of obedience and sanctification. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). He came as near to us as was possible for Him to do. How reasonable then is it that we should endeavour to come as near as it is possible for us to do. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me" (Matt. 11:29). "Even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3). How reasonable is it that we should be required to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24), for without so doing we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:27). If we are to be conformed to Christ in glory how necessary that we first be

conformed to Him in holiness: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19)-let him either put on the life of Christ or drop the name of Christ.

8. *Its Safeguards.*

There may be some who will at once take exception to the employment of this term in such a connection, affirming that the Truth of God requires no safe-guarding at the hands of those called by Him to expound it: that their business is to faithfully preach the same and leave results entirely to its Author. We fully agree that God's eternal Truth stands in no need of any carnal assistance from us, either in the way of dressing it up to render it more attractive or in toning it down to make it less offensive. We heartily subscribe to the Apostle's dictum that, "we can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth" (2 Cor. 13:8)-God overrules the opposition of those who hate it and makes the wrath of His enemies to praise Him. Nevertheless in view of such passages as Mark 4:33; John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2, and Hebrews 5:12 it is clear that our presentation of the Truth needs to be regulated by the condition of those to whom it is ministered. Moreover, this raises the question, What is *faithfully* presenting the Truth? Are there not other modifying adverbs which are not to be omitted?

The Truth should not only be preached "faithfully" but wisely, proportionately, seasonably as well. There is a zeal which is not according to knowledge nor tempered by wisdom. There is an unbalanced presentation of the Truth which accomplishes more harm than good. We read of "the present Truth" (2 Peter 1:12) and of "a word in due season" (Prov. 15:23 and cf. Isa. 50:4), which implies there is such a thing as speaking unseasonably, even though it be the Truth itself which is spoken and that "faithfully." What is a "word in season"? Is it not a timely and pertinent one, a message suited to the condition, circumstances and needs of the persons addressed? In His wisdom and goodness God has provided cordials for the faint and comfort for those who mourn, as He has also given exhortations to the slothful, admonitions to the careless, solemn warnings to the reckless, and fearful threats to those who are defiant. Discrimination needs to be used in our appropriation and application of the Scriptures. As it would be cruel to quote terrifying passages to one who is already mourning over his sins, so it would be wrong to press promises of Divine preservation upon a professing Christian who is living a carnal and worldly life.

"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). Those words furnish an illustration of a "word in due season." The disciples (not Peter only) had boasted, "though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." They were so confident and temporarily blind to their own instability. Their Lord therefore bade them guard against self-reliance and seek grace from above, and though they were quite sincere in their avowal, yet were they much too feeble to resist Satan's attacks in their own strength. They thought themselves immune from such a horrible sin as denying their Master, but instead of bolstering them up in their sense of security, He warned them of their danger. Another example of a seasonable word is the Apostle's exhortation to the one who claims that he "standeth by faith," namely, "Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on those that fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if* thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:20-22).

But it is rather those safeguards by which God Himself has hedged about the subject of the everlasting security of His people that we would now particularly consider, those defenses which are designed to shut out unholy trespassers from this garden of delights; or to change the figure, those descriptions of character and conduct which serve to make known the particular persons to whom alone His promises belong. Last month we dwelt at some length on how this blessed doctrine is

misrepresented by Arminians and perverted by Antinomians. To use a term employed by an Apostle, it has been grievously “wrested,” torn from its setting, disproportionately contorted, divorced from its qualifying terms, detached from the necessary means by which it is attained, applied unto those to whom it does not belong. Hence our present object is to direct attention unto some of the principal bulwarks by which this precious truth is protected and which must be duly emphasized and continually pressed by the servants of God if it is to be portrayed in its true perspective and if souls are not to be fatally misled. Only thus shall we “faithfully” present this truth.

1. By insisting that it is the preservation of *saints* and not everyone who deems himself a Christian. It is of deep importance to define clearly and sharply the character of those who are Divinely assured of being preserved unto the heavenly kingdom—that God be not dishonoured, His Truth falsified, and souls deceived. “He preserveth the souls of His *saints*” (Psa. 97:10), but of none others. It is so easy to appropriate (or misappropriate) such a promise as, “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73:24), but before so doing, honesty requires that I ascertain whether the experiences of the one described in the context are those of *mine*. Asaph confesses to being envious at the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 3, 12) until he felt he had cleansed his own heart and hands “in vain” (v. 13). But he checks himself, tender lest by such murmuring he should stumble God’s children (v. 15), recording how his “heart was grieved” and his conscience pricked at giving way to such foolish repinings, until he owned unto God, “I was as a beast before Thee” (v. 22). The recollection of God’s gracious forbearance (v. 23) moved him to say, “it is good for me to draw near to God” (v. 28).

When I can find such marks *in myself* as the Psalmist had, such graces operating in my heart as did in his, then-but not before-am I warranted in comforting myself as he did. If I challenge the utterances of my mouth as to whether or no they are likely to offend God’s little ones, if I make conscience of envying the prosperity of the wicked and mourn over it, if I am deeply humbled thereby, if I realize “my steps had well nigh slipped” (v. 2) and that it was a longsuffering God who had “holden me by my right hand,” alone preserving me from apostasy; if this sense of His sovereign goodness enables me to affirm, “Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee” (v. 25)-if all of this produces in me such a sense of my utter insufficiency as to own, “My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart” (v. 26), then am I justified in saying, “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive *me* to glory.” Yes, God “preserveth the souls of His saints,” but what avails that for me unless I be one of them!?

Again-how many there are who eagerly grasp at those words of Christ concerning His sheep, who have only the vaguest idea of the ones whom He thus designates: “And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:28). The very fact that the verse opens with “and” requires us to ponder what immediately precedes, and because His flock is but a “little” one (Luke 12:32) it behooves each one who values his soul to spare no pains in seeking to ascertain whether *he* belongs to it. In the context the Saviour says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Observe diligently the three things which are here predicated of them. First, they *hear* Christ’s voice. Now to hear His voice means far more than to be acquainted with His words as they are recorded in Scripture-more than believing they *are* His words. When it was said unto Israel, “the LORD will not hear you in that day” (1 Sam. 8:18) it signified that He would not heed their requests or grant their petitions. When God complained, “When I spake, ye did not hear,” it was not that they were physically deaf but their hearts were steeled against Him, as the remainder of the verse indicates: “But did evil before Mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not” (Isa. 65:12).

When God says, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: *hear ye Him*” (Matt. 17:5),

He is requiring something more of us than that we simply listen respectfully and believingly to what He says: He is demanding that we submit ourselves unreservedly to His authority, that we respond promptly to His orders, that we obey Him. In Proverbs 8:33 "hearing" is contrasted from refusing, and in Hebrews 3:15 we read, "If ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts." When Christ declares of His flock, "My sheep hear My voice" it signifies they *heed* it—they are not intractable but responsive, doing what He bids. Second, He declares, "and I know them," that is, with a knowledge or approbation. Third, "and they *follow Me*": not the bent of the flesh, not the solicitations of Satan, not the ways of the world, but the example which Christ has left them (1 Peter 2:21). Of them it is said, "they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4). But in order to follow Christ, self has to be denied and the cross taken up (Matt. 16:24). Only those who thus "hear," are "known" of Christ, and who "follow" Him, shall "never perish."

2. By insisting that no person has any warrant to derive comfort from the doctrine of Divine Security until he is sure that he possesses *the character or conduct* of a saint. This naturally grows out of the first point, though we have somewhat anticipated what should be said here. Not everyone who bears the name of Christ will enter Heaven, but only His sheep. It is therefore folly that only those bearing the marks of such have any claim upon the promise made to that favoured company. And the burden of proof always rests upon the one who affirms. If one answers some advertisement from an employer for labour for a skilled workman, he is required to give evidence of his qualifications by well-accredited testimonials. If a person puts in a claim to an estate he must produce proof that he is a legitimate heir and satisfy the court of his bona fides. If a captain requires an additional hand for his ship he demands that the applicant show his papers or give demonstration that he is a fully qualified seaman. Before I can procure a passport I must produce my birth certificate. And one who avers himself a saint must authenticate his profession and evidence his new birth before he is entitled to be regarded as such.

God's saints are distinguished from all other people, not only by what He has done for them but also by what He has wrought in them. He set His hand upon them from all eternity, having loved them "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3) and therefore were they "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ," chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, predestinated "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself," and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:3-6). It is true that they fell in Adam and became guilty before God, but an all-sufficient Redeemer was provided for them, appointed to assume and discharge all their liabilities and make full reparation to the broken Law on their behalf. It is also true that they are "by nature the children of wrath even as others" being born into this world "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-3); but at the ordained hour a miracle of grace is performed within them so that they become "new creatures in Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. 5:17) and their bodies are made "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). Faith and holiness have been communicated to them, so that though they are still in the world they are not of it (John 17:14).

The saints are endowed with a new life, with a spiritual and supernatural principle or "nature" which affects their whole souls. So radical and transforming is the change wrought in them by this miracle of grace that it is described as a passing from death unto life (John 5:24), from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13), from "having no hope and without God in the world," to being "made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:12, 13), from a state of alienation to one of reconciliation (Col. 1:21), out of darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). Of them God says, "This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise" (Isa. 43:21). Obviously such a tremendous change in their state and standing must effect a real and marked change in their character and conduct. From rebellion against God they are brought unto subjection to Him, so that they throw down their weapons of opposition and yield to His sceptre. From love of sin

they are turned to hate it, and from dread of God they now delight in Him. Formerly they thought only of gratifying self, now their deepest longing is to please Him who has shown them such amazing grace.

The saints are those who enter into a *solemn covenant* with the Lord, unreservedly dedicating themselves unto Him, making His glory their paramount concern. "Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; this they called *sacramentum militare*, a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described by this: 'gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me' (Psa. 50:5). We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name we enlist ourselves in His muster-roll, and by it do promise that we will live and die with Him in opposition to all His enemies . . . He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to His disposal, that there may be no disputing with His commands afterwards, but, as one under His authority, go and come at His word" (W. Gurnall, 1660).

3. By insisting that perseverance is *an imperative necessity*. Adherence to the Truth no matter what opposition is encountered, living a life of faith in and upon God despite all the antagonism of the flesh, steadfastly treading the path of obedience in face of the scoffs of the world, continuing to go forward along the highway of holiness notwithstanding the hindrances of Satan and his emissaries is not optional but obligatory. It is according to the unalterable decree of God: no one can reach Heaven except by going along the only way that reaches there—Christ "endured the Cross" *before* He received the crown. It is according to the irreversible appointment of God: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). It is according to the established order of God, "that ye be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience (the Greek word may be rendered, "perseverance" with equal propriety) inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12): It is according to the design of the Atonement, for Christ lived and died that He might "purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

Assurance of Divine preservation no more renders less imperative the saint's own perseverance than God's informing Hezekiah he should live a further fifteen years abolished the necessity of his eating and drinking, resting and sleeping, as hitherto. "The elect are as much chosen to intermediate sanctification on their way as they are to that ultimate glorification which crowns their journey's end, and there a no coming to the one but through the other. So that neither the value, nor the *necessity*, nor the practical value of good works is superseded by this glorious truth . . . It is impossible that either the Son of God who came down from Heaven to propose and make known His Father's will; or that the Spirit of God, speaking in the Scriptures and acting on the heart, should administer the least encouragement to negligence and unholiness of life. Therefore that opinion that personal holiness is unnecessary to final glorification is in direct opposition to every dictate of reason, to every declaration of Scripture (Augustus Toplady). Alas, the attitude of multitudes of professing Christians is, "Soul, thou hast much good laid up . . . take thine ease" (Luke 12:19), and the doom of the fool will be theirs.

Concerning the imperativeness of perseverance C. H. Spurgeon said in the introductory portion of his sermon on, "The righteous also shall hold on his way" (Job 17:9), "The man who is righteous before God has a way of his own. It is not the way of the flesh, nor the way of the world; it is a way marked out for him by the Divine command, in which he walks by faith. It is the king's highway of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it: only the ransomed of the Lord shall walk there, and these shall find it a path of separation from the world. Once entered upon the way of life, the pilgrim must persevere in it or *perish*, for thus saith the Lord, 'If any man draw back, My soul shall have no

pleasure in him.’ Perseverance in the path of faith and holiness is a *necessity* of the Christian, for only ‘he that endureth to the end shall be saved.’ It is in vain to spring up quickly like the seed that was sown on the rock, and then by-and-by to wither when the sun is up; that would but prove that such a plant has no root in itself, but ‘the trees of the Lord are full of sap’ and they abide and continue and bring forth fruit, even in old age, to show that the Lord is upright.

“There is a great difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity, and this is generally seen in the failure of the one and the continuance of the other. Now, the declaration of the text is that the truly righteous man *shall* hold on his way: he shall not go back, he shall not leap the hedges and wander to the right hand or the left, he shall not lie down in idleness, neither shall he faint and cease to go upon his journey; but he ‘shall hold on his way.’ It will frequently be very difficult for him to do so, but he will have such resolution, such power of inward grace given him, that he will hold on his way with stern determination, as though he held on by his teeth, resolving never to let go. Perhaps he may not always travel with equal speed; it is not said that he shall hold on his *pace*, but he shall hold on his *way*. There are times when we run and are not weary, and anon when we walk and are thankful that we not faint; ay, and there are periods when we are glad to go on all fours and creep upwards with pain; but still we prove that ‘the righteous shall hold on his way.’ Under all difficulties the face of the man whom God has justified is steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, nor will he turn aside till his eyes shall see the King in his beauty.”

8. *Its Safeguards.*

4. By insisting on *continuance* in well-doing. It is not how a person commences but how he ends which is the all-important matter. We certainly do not believe that one who has been born of God can perish, but one of the marks of regeneration is its *permanent* effects, and therefore I must produce those permanent fruits if my profession is to be credited. Both Scripture and observation testify to the fact that there are those who appear to run well for a season and then drop out of the race. Not only are there numbers induced to “come forward” and “join the church” under the high-pressure methods used by the professional evangelists who quickly return to their former manner of life, but there are not a few who enter upon a religious profession more soberly and wear longer. Some seem to be genuinely converted: they separate from ungodly companions, seek fellowship with God’s people, manifest an earnest desire to know more of the Word, become quite intelligent in the Scriptures, and for a number of years give every outward sign of being Christians. But gradually their zeal abates, or they are offended at some wrong done them, and ultimately they go right back again into the world.

We read of a certain class “who for a while believed, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). There were those who followed Christ for a season, yet of them we read, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him” (John 6:66). There have been many such in every age. All is not gold that glitters, and not everyone who makes a promising start in the race reaches the goal. It is therefore incumbent upon us to take note of those passages which press upon us the necessity of continuance for they constitute another of those safeguards which God has placed around the doctrine of the security of His saints. On a certain occasion “many believed on Him” (John 8:30), but so far from Christ assuring them that Heaven was now their settled portion, we are told, “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, IF *ye continue* in MY word then are ye My disciples indeed” (v. 31). Unless we abide in subjection to Christ, unless we walk in obedience to Him unto the end of our earthly course, we are but disciples in name and semblance.

We read of certain men who, “when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.” The power of God accompanied them and richly blessed their efforts, for, “The hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord” (Acts

11:20, 21). Tidings of this reached the church at Jerusalem, and mark well their response: they sent Barnabas to them, “who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would *cleave unto* the Lord” (vv. 22, 23). Barnabas was not one of those fatalistic hyper-Calvinists who argued that since God has begun a good work in them all would be well—that the Holy Spirit will care for, instruct, and guard them, whether or not they be furnished with ministerial nurses and teachers. Instead, he recognized and discharged his own Christian responsibility, dealt with them as accountable agents, addressed to them suitable exhortations, pressed upon them the indispensable duty of their cleaving to the Lord. Alas that there are so few like Barnabas today.

At a later date we find that Barnabas returned to Antioch accompanied by Paul, and while there they were engaged in “confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them *to continue* in the faith” and warning them that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). How far were they from believing in a mechanical salvation, reasoning that if these people had been genuinely converted they would necessarily “continue in the faith”! Writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle reminded them of the Gospel he had preached unto them and which they had received, yet failing not to add, “By which also ye are saved IF ye *hold fast* that which I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:2). In like manner he reminded the Colossians that they were reconciled to God and would be preserved unblameable and unreprouvable “IF ye *continue* in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel” (1:23). There are those who dare to say there is no “if” about it, but such people are taking direct issue with Holy Writ.

Even when writing to a minister of the Gospel, his own “son in the faith,” Paul hesitated not to exhort him, “Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them,” adding, “for in doing *this* thou shalt both save thyself (from apostasy) and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). To the Hebrews he said, “But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm *unto the end*” (3:6). And again, “For we are made partakers of Christ IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (3:14). How dishonestly has the Word of God been handled by many! Such passages as these are never heard from many pulpits from one year’s end to another. It is much to be feared that many pastors of “Calvinistic” churches are afraid to quote such verses lest their people should charge them with Arminianism. Such will yet have to face the Divine indictment “Ye have not kept My ways, but have been *partial* in the Law” or Word (Mal. 2:9).

We find precisely the same thing in the writings of another Apostle. James though addressing those whom he terms, “my beloved brethren,” calls upon his readers, “But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was (that is, nothing but a superficial and fleeting effect is produced upon him). But whoso looketh into the perfect Law of liberty, and *continueth* therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (1:22-25). The word for “beholdeth” is a metaphor taken from those who not only glance at a thing but bend their bodies towards it that they may carefully scrutinize it—used in Luke 24:12, and 1 Peter 1:12; denoting earnestness of desire, and diligent enquiry. To “continue therein” signifies a persevering study of the Truth, and abiding in the belief of and obedience to the same, thereby evidencing our *love* for it. Many have a brief taste for it, but their appetite is quickly quenched again by the things of this world.

It is perfectly true, blessedly true, that there is no “if,” no uncertainty, from the *Divine* side in connection with the Christian’s reaching Heaven: everyone who has been justified by God shall

without fail be glorified. Those who have been Divinely quickened will most assuredly continue in the faith and persevere in holiness unto the end of their earthly course. This is clear from 1 John 2:19, where the Apostle alludes to some in his day who had apostatized, "They went out from us, but they were not of us"-they belonged not to the family of God, though for awhile they had fraternized with some of its members.

"For" adds the Apostle, "if they had been of us (had they really been one in a personal experience of the regenerating power of the Spirit) they would have *continued* with us"-nothing could have induced them to heed the siren voice of their seducers. "But they went out from us that they might be made manifest that they were *not* all of us"-but merely temporary professors, stony-ground hearers, nominal Christians, members of a totally different family. Previously they had every appearance of being the genuine article, but by their defection they were exposed as counterfeits. No, there is no "if" from the Divine side.

Nevertheless, there is an "if" from the *human* side of things, from the standpoint of our responsibility, in connection with my making sure that I am one of those whom God has promised to preserve unto His heavenly kingdom. Continuance in the faith, in the path of obedience, in denying self and following Christ, is not simply desirable but indispensable. No matter how excellent a beginning I have made, if I do not continue to press forward I shall be lost. Yes, lost, and not merely miss some particular crown or millennial honours as the deluded dispensationalists teach. It is persevere or perish: it is final perseverance or perish eternally-there is no other alternative. Romans 11:22 makes that unmistakably clear: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them that fell (the unbelieving Jews) severity: but toward thee (saved Gentiles, v. 11), goodness, IF thou *continue* in His goodness: *otherwise* thou also shalt be cut off." The issue is plainly drawn: continuance in God's goodness or being "cut off." To continue in God's goodness is the opposite of returning to our badness. The evidence that we are the recipients of God's goodness is that we continue in the faith and obedience of the Gospel. The end cannot be reached apart from the appointed means.

But I cannot see the consistency between what has been set forth in the last two paragraphs, some will exclaim. What of it: who are you? who am I? Merely short-sighted creatures of yesterday, upon whom God has written "folly and vanity." Shall human ignorance set itself against Divine wisdom? Does any reader dare call into question the practice of Christ and His Apostles: *they* pressed the "if" and insisted upon the needs-be for this "continuing"; and those ministers who fail to do so-no matter what their standing or reputation-are no servants of God. Can you see the consistency between the Apostle affirming so positively of those who have received the Holy Spirit from Christ "ye *shall* abide ("continue"-the same Greek word as in all the above passages) in Him," and then in the very next breath exhorting them, "And now, little children, *abide* ("continue") in Him" (1 John 2:27, 28)-if you cannot it must be because of theological blinkers. Can you see the consistency of David asserting so confidently, "The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy O LORD, endureth forever," and then immediately after praying, "forsake not the works of Thine own hands" (Psa. 138:8)-if you cannot then this writer places a big question-mark against your religious profession.

5. By insisting that there are *dangers to guard against*. Here again there will be those who object against the use of this term in such a connection. What sort of dangers, they will ask: dangers of the Christian's severing his fellowship with God, losing his peace, spoiling his usefulness, rendering himself unfruitful?-granted, but not of missing Heaven itself. They will point out that safety and danger are opposites and that one who is secure in Christ cannot be in any peril of perishing. However plausible, logical, and apparently Christ-honouring that may sound, we would ask, Is *that* how

Scripture represents the case? Do the Epistles picture the saints as being in no danger of apostasy? Or, to state it less baldly: are there no sins warned against, no evils denounced, no paths of unrighteousness described, which if persisted in do not certainly terminate in destruction? And is there no responsibility resting on me in connection therewith? Apostasy is not reached at a single bound, but is the final culmination of an evil process, and it is against those things which have a tendency unto apostasy against which the saints are repeatedly and most solemnly warned.

One who is now experiencing good health is in no immediate danger of dying from tuberculosis, nevertheless if he recklessly exposes himself to the wet and cold, if he refrains from taking sufficient nourishing food which supplies strength to resist disease, or if he incurs a heavy cough on his chest and makes no effort to break it up, he is most likely to fall a victim to consumption. So while the Christian remains spiritually healthy he is in no danger of apostatizing, but if he starts to keep company with the wicked and recklessly exposes himself to temptation, if he fails to use the means of grace, if he experiences a sad fall, and repents not of it and returns to his first works, he is deliberately heading for disaster. The seed of eternal death is still in the Christian: that seed is sin, and it is only as Divine grace is diligently and constantly sought for the thwarting of its inclinations and suppressing of its activities, that it is hindered from developing to a fatal end. A small leak which is neglected will sink a ship just as effectually as the most boisterous sea. And as Spurgeon said on Psalm 19:13, "Secret sin is a stepping stone to presumptuous sin, and *that* is the vestibule of 'the sin which is unto death' " (Treasury of David).

Did no dangers menace Israel after Jehovah brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and by His mighty arm conducted them safely through the Red Sea? Did all who entered upon the journey to Canaan actually arrive at the promised land? Perhaps some one replies, *They* were under the old covenant and therefore supply no analogy to the case of Christians today. What says the Word? This, they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:2-4). What analogy could be closer than that? Yet the passage goes on to say, "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (v. 5). And what is the use which the Apostle makes of this solemn history? Does he say that it has no application unto us? The very reverse: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted . . . neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents" (vv. 6-9). Here is a most deadly danger for us to guard against.

Nor did the Apostle leave it at that. He was still more definite, saying, "Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come," making this specific application unto Christians, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest *he* fall" (vv. 10-12). Paul was no fatalist but one who ever enforced moral responsibility. He inculcated no mechanical salvation, but one which must be worked out "with fear and trembling." Charles Hodge of Princeton was a very strong Calvinist, yet on 1 Corinthians 10:12 he failed not to say: "There is perpetual danger of falling. No degree of progress we have already made, no amount of privileges which we may have enjoyed, can justify the want of caution. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth,' that is, who thinketh himself secure . . . neither the members of the church nor the elect can be saved unless they persevere in holiness, and they cannot persevere in holiness without continual watchfulness and effort," i.e., against the dangers menacing them.

The above is not the only instance when the Apostle made use of the case of those Israelites who perished on their way to Canaan to warn New Testament saints of *their danger*. After affirming that

God was grieved with that generation, saying, "They do alway err in their heart and they have not known (loved) My ways, so I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest," Paul added, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12, 13). We are not here warned against an imaginary peril but a real one. "Take heed" signifies watch against carelessness and sloth, be on the alert as a soldier who knows the enemy is near, lest you fall an easy prey. Those here exhorted are specifically addressed as "brethren" to intimate there are times when the best of saints need to be cautioned against the worst of evils. An "evil heart of unbelief" is a heart which dislikes the strictness of obedience and universality of holiness which God requires of us.

After referring again to those "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness" to whom God sware, "they shall not enter into My rest, because of their unbelief" or "disobedience" (3:16, 19), the Apostle said, "Let us therefore *fear* lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4:1). "Fear" is as truly a Christian grace as is faith, peace or joy. The Christian is to fear temptations, the dangers which menace him, the sin which indwells him, the warnings pointed by others who have made shipwreck of the faith and the severity of God in His dealings with such. He is to fear the threats of God against sin and those who indulge themselves in it. It was because Noah was "moved with fear" at the warning he had received from God that he took precautions against the impending flood (Heb. 11:7). God has plainly announced the awful doom of all who continue in allowed sin, and fear of that doom will inspire caution and circumspection, and will preserve from carnal security and presumption. And therefore are we counselled, "passing the time of your sojourn here in *fear*" (1 Peter 1:17)-not only in exceptional seasons, but the whole of our time here.

We can barely glance at a few more of the solemn cautions addressed not merely to formal professors but to those who are recognized as genuine saints. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8, 9). Obviously such a warning would be meaningless if the Christian were not threatened with a most deadly danger. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, *beware* lest ye *also*, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17). This warning looks back to the false prophets of (2:1, 2)-and what is said of them in verses 18-22? The "error of the wicked" here cautioned against includes both doctrinal and practical, especially the latter-forsaking of the "narrow way" the highway of holiness which alone leads to Heaven. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11)-cling tenaciously to the Truth you have received, the faith which has been planted in your heart, in the measure of grace given you.

But how do you reconcile the Christian's danger with his safety? There is nothing to reconcile, for there is no antagonism. Enemies and not friends need reconciling, and warnings are the Christian's friend, one of the safeguards which God has placed around the Truth of the security of His people, preventing them from wresting it to their destruction. By revealing the certain consequences of total apostasy Christians are thereby cautioned and kept from the same: a holy fear moves their hearts and so becomes the *means of preventing* the very evil they denounce. A lighthouse is to warn against recklessness as mariners near the coast so that they will steer away from the fatal rocks. A fence before a precipice is not superfluous, but is designed to call to an halt those journeying in that direction. When the driver of a train sees the signals change to red he shuts off steam, thereby preserving the passengers under his care. The danger signals of Scripture to which we have called attention are heeded by the regenerate and therefore are among the very means appointed by God

for the preservation of His people, for it is only by attending to the same they are kept from destroying themselves.

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