

Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 179

ASSURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:38-39

Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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179

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ASSURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)

SOME would fain persuade us that it is impossible for us to receive knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin. Such a denial is very opposite to the usual tenor of God's proceeding with His people in all ages. The best believers, and the strongest, may indeed have their occasional fainting fits of doubt and diffidence¹ as to their own particular interest in Christ; nor should I have any great opinion of that man's faith who was to tell me that he never had any doubts at all. But still there are golden seasons when the soul is on the mount of communion with God; when the Spirit of His Son shines into our hearts, giving us boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him. Moreover, a person who is at all conversant with the spiritual life, knows as certainly whether he indeed enjoys the light of God's countenance, or whether he walks in darkness, as a traveler knows whether he travels in sunshine or in rain. And as a good man observes, "It is no presumption to read what was God's gracious purpose toward us of old, when He, as it were, prints His secret thoughts, and makes them legible in our effectual calling. In this case we do not go up to heaven, and pry into God's secrets, but heaven comes down to us and reveals them."

It may indeed be objected that the Scripture doctrine of assurance when realized into an actual possession of the privilege, "may tend to foster pride, and promote carelessness." It cannot lead to pride; for all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious know by indubitable experience (and one fact speaks louder than a hundred speculations), that believers are then lowest, at God's footstool, when they are highest on the mount of assurance. Much indulgence from earthly parents may indeed be productive of real injury to their children; but not so are the smiles of God, for the sense of His favor sanctifies while it comforts. Nor can the knowledge of interest in His love tend to make us heedless how we behave ourselves in His sight. During those exalted moments, when grace is in lively exercise, when the disciple of Christ experiences "the soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy," corrupt nature (that man of sin within) and every vile affection, are stricken as it were with a temporary apoplexy;² and the believer can no more, for the time being, commit willful sin than an angel of light would dip his wings in mud. No, it is when we come down from the mount, and mix again with the world, that we are in danger of breaking the Law.

"But is it not enthusiasm to talk of holding intercourse with God, and of knowing ourselves to be objects of His special love?" No more enthusiastical

¹ **diffidence** – lack of confidence.

² **apoplexy** – sudden loss of muscular control or lessening of sensation or consciousness.

(so we keep within Scripture-bounds) than it is for a favorite child to converse with his parents, and to know that they have a particular affection for him. Neither, in the strictest reason and nature of things, is it at all absurd to believe and expect that God can and does and will communicate His favor to His people, and manifest Himself to them as He does *not* to the world at large (Joh 14:21).

Yet, though God is thus graciously indulgent to many of His people (I believe to all of them at some time or other between their conversion and death); still, if they trespass against Him, He will not let their offences pass unnoticed nor uncorrected. Though grace itself is not liable to be lost, the comfort of it may be sinned away. Salvation is sure to all the redeemed; but the joy of it may be lost (Psa 51:12). Great peace have they that love Thy Law (Psa 119:165); and they only. Holiness and consolation are wisely and intimately connected. In proportion as we are enabled to live near to God, to walk humbly and closely with Him, and to keep our moral garments clean, we may hope for freedom of intercourse with Him, and to assure our hearts before Him (1Jo 3:19); like the happy believers of old, concerning whom it is said that they walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost (Act 9:31).

Let not, however, what has been observed concerning the blessing of assurance, stumble or discourage the feeble of God's flock, on whom, for reasons wise and good, it may not hitherto have been His pleasure to bestow this unspeakable gift. The Scripture plainly and repeatedly distinguishes between faith, the assurance of faith, and the full assurance of faith (Heb 10:22); and the first may exist where the other two are not. I know some who have, for years together, been distressed with doubts and fears, without a single ray of spiritual comfort all the while. And yet I can no more doubt of their being true believers than I can question my own existence as a man. I am sure they are possessed not only of faith in its lowest degree, but of that which Christ Himself calls great faith (Mat 8:10); for they can at least say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and thy servant shall be healed" (Mat 8:8). Faith is the eye of the soul, and the eye is said to see almost every object but itself; so that you may have real faith without being able to discern it. Nor will God despise the day of small things (Zec 4:10). Little faith goes to heaven no less than great faith, though not so comfortably, yet altogether as surely. If you come merely as a sinner to Jesus, and throw yourself, at all events, for salvation on His blood and righteousness alone, and the grace and promise of God in Him, you are as truly a believer as the most triumphant saint that ever lived. And amidst all your weakness, distresses, and temptations, remember that God will not cast out nor cast off the meanest and unworthiest soul that seeks salvation only in the name of Jesus Christ the righteous. When you cannot follow the rock, the rock shall follow you; nor ever leave you for so much as a single moment, on this side the heavenly Canaan. And if you feel your absolute want of Christ, you may, on all

occasions, and in every exigence,³ betake⁴ yourself to the covenant love and faithfulness of God, for pardon, sanctification, and safety, with the same fullness of right and title as a traveler leans upon his own staff, or as a weary laborer throws himself on his own bed, or as an opulent nobleman draws upon his own banker for whatever sum he needs.

Next I shall warn you against another limb of Arminianism totally contrary to sound doctrine; I mean that tenet which asserts the possibility of falling finally from a state of real grace. God does not give, and then take away. He does indeed frequently take away what He only lent, such as health, riches, friends, and other temporal comforts; but what He gives, He gives forever. In a way of grace, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom 11:29). He will never repent of bestowing them. Every attribute He has forbids Him to revoke them (Luk 10:42). In Hebrews 13:5, He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "True," said an Arminian schismatic,⁵ "Christ's sheep cannot be plucked forcibly out of His hand by others; but they themselves may slip through His hands, and so fall into hell and be eternally lost." They may slip, may they? As if the Mediator in preserving His people, held only a parcel of eels by the tail! Is not this a shameless way of slipping through a plain text of Scripture? I would fain ask the slippery sophister⁶ how we are to understand that part of the passage that expressly declares concerning Christ's people, that they shall never perish, since perish they necessarily must and certainly would, if eventually separated from Christ; whether they were to be plucked out of His hands, or whether they were only to slip thru them. I conclude then that the promise made to the saints, that they shall never perish, secures them equally against the possibility of being either wrested from Christ's hand or of their falling from it, since, could one or the other be the case, perish they must, and Christ's promise would fall to the ground.

In a word, if any of God's people can be finally lost, it must be occasioned either by their departing from God, or by God's departure from them. But they are certainly and effectually secured against these two and these only possible sources of apostasy. For thus runs the Covenant of Grace: "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). Now if God will neither leave them, nor suffer them to leave Him, their final perseverance in grace to glory must be certain and infallible.

³ **exigence** – situation that demands prompt action or remedy; emergency.

⁴ **betake** – bring.

⁵ **schismatic** – person who promotes division or disunion.

⁶ **sophister** – unsound or fallacious reasoner.

I must not however conclude without observing that irreversible justification on God's part, and subjective assurance of perseverance on ours, do by no means invest an offending Christian with immunity from sufferings and chastisement. Thus Nathan said to David, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2Sa 12:13); yet he was severely chastised, though not disinherited for his transgressions. The tenor of God's immutable covenant with the Messiah, and with His people in Him, is this: "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Psa 89:29-34). I have sworn once for all, by My holiness, that I will not lie unto Jesus the anti-typical⁷ David, by suffering any of His redeemed people to perish. Hence, as it is presently added, they shall be established for ever, as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven; nay, they shall stand forth and shine when the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; when the stars shall drop from their orbits, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken (Psa 89:36-37; Mat 13:43; Rev 6:12).

As an excellent person somewhere observes, "Our own unbelief may occasionally tear the copies of the covenant given us by Christ, but unbelief cannot come at the covenant itself, Christ keeps the original deed in heaven with Himself, where it can never be lost."

How blessed are the eyes that see, and how happy are the hearts that feel the propriety and energy of these inestimable truths! How ought such to demonstrate their gratitude by a practical glorification of God, in their bodies and in their spirits, which are His!

Remember Who it is that has made you to differ from others; and that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven (Joh 3:27). Not unto us, therefore O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name alone be the praise of every gift, and of every grace ascribed; for Thy loving mercy, and for Thy truth's sake (Psa 115:1).

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778): Anglican minister and hymn writer; major Calvinist opponent of John Wesley; best remembered as the author of the hymn "Rock of Ages."



⁷ **anti-typical** – person or thing that is foreshadowed or represented by a type or symbol, especially a character or event in the New Testament prefigured in the Old Testament.

FAITH AND ASSURANCE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.—2 Timothy 4:7-8

AN assured hope, such as Paul expresses in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, is a true and Scriptural thing. I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul—shall seldom be troubled with doubts—seldom be distracted with hesitation—seldom be distressed by anxious questionings—and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without dismay.

The vast majority of the worldly oppose the doctrine of assurance. That they cannot receive it is certainly no marvel. But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They think it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm. “Presumption,” says Adams, “is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience. That dares sin because it is sure; this dares not for fear of losing assurance. Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Savior so dear; presumption will sin, because grace does abound. Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither as they that are afraid of going to hell.”

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant.¹ There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God’s election, man’s impotence, salvation by grace, all are alike abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance is a real, sober, and true thing; and, God’s children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.

Reader, you may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down as

¹ **warrant** – authorization; assurance; guarantee.

chief of sinners (1Ti 1:15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption, but then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him. He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom 7:24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then he had a still clearer view of that other fountain which can remove all sin and uncleanness. He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "they shall never perish" (Joh 10:28), could not be broken. Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark,² floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both sure and steadfast—he remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me" (2Ti 4:8); and to conclude so surely, "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2Ti 4:18).

I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I pass on to the second thing, viz., that a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. I think this ought never to be forgotten. I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him—really to be a child of God—really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt and fear.

"A letter," says an old writer, "may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it."

A man may be a babe in Christ's family; think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Reader, do not mistake my meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except

² bark – boat.

such as could say with Paul, "I know and am persuaded...there is a crown laid up for me." I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man *must* have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man *must* feel his sins and lost estate, *must* come to Jesus for pardon and salvation, *must* rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the *quantity* of faith, but the *quality*. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax (Isa 42:3). He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. "Him that cometh to me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out" (Joh 6:37).

Yes, reader, though a man's faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment (Mat 9:20), he shall be saved, saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail: "Whosoever believeth on him"—not, "Whosoever has a strong and mighty faith," but, "Whosoever believeth on him"—"shall not be ashamed" (Rom 10:11).

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety—many a struggle, and many a misgiving—clouds and darkness, storm and tempest to the very end.

I will affirm, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not affirm it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will affirm it shall land him safely in harbor; but I will not affirm that he shall enter that harbor in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view the distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment (Mar 5:27). *Assurance* is Stephen standing

calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Act 7:56).

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, “Lord, remember me” (Luk 23:42). *Assurance* is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15).

Faith is Peter’s drowning cry, as he began to sink: “Lord, save me” (Mat 14:30). *Assurance* is that same Peter declaring before the Council in after times, “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Act 4:11-12).

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). *Assurance* is the confident challenge, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?...Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom 8:33-34). *Faith* is Saul praying in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone (Act 9:11). *Assurance* is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, “I know whom I have believed...there is a crown laid up for me” (2Ti 1:12; 4:8).

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end.

Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigor, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege. It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace. It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is one that belongs only to the school—it is between the first form³ and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be, if I thought all readers of this article had it. Blessed, thrice blessed, are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ’s hand.

But he that has assurance does far better—sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy 11:21, even “as the days of heaven upon the earth.”

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900): Anglican bishop and revered author of *Holiness*, *Knots Untied*, *Old Paths*, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and many others. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.



³ **form** – grade or level.

FULL ASSURANCE

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.—Psalm 35:3

THE Psalmist, when he wrote these words, was surrounded by many and furious enemies. He pleads with God to take hold on shield and buckler, and to come forth for his defense. Yet he feels that there is only one thing which God hath need to do in order to remove his fears, and make him strong in the day of conflict, “Say unto my soul, ‘I am thy salvation,’ and I will defy them all. In the name of God I will set up my banner; and though weak in myself, yet shall I be able to overcome them readily, and tread them as straw is trodden from the dunghill, when the joy of the Lord shall be my strength, because Thou hast said unto me, ‘I am thy salvation.’” Brethren, there is nothing that can make you strong to labor for God, bold to fight against your enemies, and mighty to resist your temptations, like a full assurance that God is your God, and your sure salvation. Your doubts and fears weaken you. While they nourish your despair, and diminish your joy, they do at the same time cut the sinews of your valor, and blunt the edge of your sword. A fully-assured Christian is a very giant in our Israel; for happiness and beauty he standeth like Saul, head and shoulders taller than the rest; while for strength and courage he can match with David, and is like the angel of the Lord.

It is upon the subject of full assurance that I shall address you this morning. Without further preface, I shall first bid you *hear objectors*, who oppose themselves to full assurance; secondly, I shall beg you to *hear the text*; and then I shall request you to *hear the preacher*.

I. First of all, let us hear objectors.

There are some who say, it is better that a man should stand in jeopardy of his soul every hour—better for him to be exercised with doubts and fears, than that he should grow confident, and have the joy of knowing assuredly that he is a saved man, is in the favor of God, and shall never be condemned. We will hear these objectors for a moment, and answer them speedily.

One of them advances, and he says, “First, I object to your preaching this morning, the doctrine of full assurance, because I believe it to be impossible: I cannot conceive that any man can know in this life, whether he shall be saved in the life to come. Perhaps I may grant you that, in the dying hour, some men may get a little confidence; but, with the exception of a few of the eminently holy, and the profoundly spiritual, it cannot be possible that Christians should attain to a full confidence, and an infallible assurance of being saved.” To this, sir, I reply thus. You say it is impossible: I say it is not only possible, but has been certainly enjoyed by the people of God. Doth the Spirit of God teach men to pray impossibilities? Yet David prays for it here: “Say unto my soul, I am

thy salvation.” The thing is possible, then, or else David would not have asked for it, it can be granted by God, it can be received by the Christian, else this prayer had never been put in inspired record. Besides, do you think that the Holy Ghost would exhort us to do an impossibility? And yet, does He not speak by the mouth of Peter and say, “give diligence to make your calling and election **sure**” (2Pe 1:10)? Does He not bid us be assured that we are called by grace, and that we are chosen of God? I say, that which may be a matter of prayer, and which is a subject of precept, cannot be an impossible thing. Besides, it has been enjoyed by tens of thousands of even ordinary every-day Christians. We could read you their biographies, and find expressions like this: “I have no more doubt of my interest in Christ than I have of my existence.” “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him” (2Ti 1:12). And there be many in this house today, who if this were the time for them to give their personal testimony, could say, “I know that I have been born again; I am sure that my sins are all forgiven. I am neither afraid to die, nor do I fear to live; for, living, Christ is with me, and dying, I shall be with Christ; being justified, I ‘have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ’” (Rom 5:1). Brethren, it is not impossible; it is attainable by the man who hath faith, if he know how to use the proper means.

But shall I tell you who the gentlemen are who generally raise objections to the glorious privilege of assurance? There are, first of all, the adherents of the Pope of Rome. Of course, the Papist does not like full assurance. And why? The Pope and his priest would have a lean larder¹ if full assurance were well preached. Only conceive my brethren, if the Roman Catholic could get the full assurance of salvation, surely the Cardinals would hardly find money enough to buy their red hats. For where were purgatory then? Purgatory is an impossibility, if full assurance be possible. If a man knows himself to be saved, then he is not to be troubled with a silly fear about waiting in the intermediate state, to be purified with fire, before he can enter into heaven. Purgatory is only acceptable to those poor trembling souls who know of no sure salvation here, and are glad of this deceptive hope of a salvation to be wrought in the world to come. Purgatory being thus builded upon a lying imposition—on the fears of ignorant consciences, becomes what brave old Hugh Latimer² used to call it, “Purgatory Pick-purse,” to the poor sinner, and “Purgatory Fill-purse” to the vagabond priest. Once let full assurance be given to all Christian men—first make the Romanist a Christian, and then let him be fully assured of his interest in Christ—and away goes purgatory, and there will never be a soul found to tremble at it any more.

The other persons who object to this doctrine, are generally people who have no religion, and who want, therefore, to make themselves a little easy by

¹ **larder** – room or place where food is kept; pantry.

² **Hugh Latimer** (c. 1485/90-1555) – famous Anglican reformer and martyr.

the notion that nobody has any more than they have. Your easy church-goers and chapel-goers; your ladies and gentlemen who think that religion consists in buying a Prayer Book, who imagine that to have a book of Psalms and Hymns, constitutes godliness; your fine folks to whom religion is as much a matter of fashion as some new color, or some new form of dress—these people, having no vitality in their godliness, never having a religion which could either make them cry or sing, never having godliness enough either to make them miserable, or make them blessed—these think there is nothing more in godliness than they get themselves. They say, “*I never knew my sins were forgiven,*” and judging all others by themselves, they think that no one else can know it. And I am sorry to say, grieved at heart to say it, not seldom I have known professed ministers of the gospel, who have even rebuked those who have reached to the high attainment of assurance. I was waited upon, not very long since, by a lady of considerable standing, who had long been seeking rest, and nothing would satisfy her, unless she knew her sins were forgiven. She had called upon a clergyman, of some standing too, and he had assured her that the thing was utterly impossible; and she was ready to go mad with the idea that she must all her life go mourning on, somewhere between hope and fear, in the balances between despair and hope. *When I told her that it was not only the privilege of the Christian, but his duty, to know himself to be saved,* and that no man ought to rest till he was infallibly assured by the Holy Ghost that he was in a gracious state and delivered from fear of hell, the joy that flushed her face was something worth beholding, and she went on her way to seek, and I trust to find, the grace which is in Christ Jesus. I would have each of you put aside those carnal quibbles which are raised by Romanists³ and Romanizers,⁴ against the idea that we *can* know that we are saved, for not only can we know it, but we ought never to be satisfied till we do know it. And this, mark you, is not *my* statement; it is the manifest testimony of the Book of God, and was plainly held by all the fathers of the Church, Augustine, Chrysostom, and the like; it is the testimony of all the Reformers—of all the giant divines of the Puritanic times, it is the testimony of all truly evangelical Christians, that *every Christian has a right to have a full assurance of his salvation, and should never be content until he attains thereunto.*

But another objector rises and faintly says, “But I am afraid, sir; I am afraid of your preaching full assurance, because so many persons have boasted of it, and they have been vile pretenders, and have perished after all.” Friend, it is to be admitted that there have been many who have mistaken presumption for assurance. They have thought that the arrogant impertinence of a proud un-humbled spirit was the same thing as the simple child-like confidence of a renewed, regenerated heart. But mark, assurance is not possible to you, till you are born again; you have no business to dream of it, till you have a new heart

³ **Romanists** – Roman Catholics.

⁴ **Romanizers** – those who are trying to influence others with Roman Catholicism.

and a right spirit. It would indeed be a fearful piece of blasphemy for you to think that God is your Father when your Father He is not, or to dream that your sins are forgiven when your hands are scarlet with them, and your soul is black with your crimes. But because some make the counterfeit, am I to throw away the genuine? Because, forsooth,⁵ there be some tin shillings, will you all cast away the silver? Because some pass upon you the base forged bank-note, will you therefore burn those which really come from the bank? I trow not. And, my dear brethren, if thousands presumed, that would not be an argument why one true Christian should not be fully assured of his interest in Christ.

“Yes, but,” says another, “*I am afraid, if men get fully assured, they will grow careless.*” This is the old objection that was brought against faith in Luther’s time. “If men believe that they will be justified by faith,” said the Romanist, “they will never do any good works”; whereas the fact is, men never do any good works till they *are* justified by faith. Those who cry down good works as the ground of hope, are the very men who work with all their might in the service of Christ, and as assurance is but faith come to perfection, the assured man will always be the most industrious man. Why, when I know that I am saved,

*“Then for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.”*

A well-grounded assurance is the most active worker in the field, the most valiant warrior in the battle, and the most patient sufferer in the furnace. There are none so active as the assured. Let a tree be planted in this soil, and watered with this river, and its boughs will bend with fruit. Confidence of success stimulates exertion, joy in faith removes sorrows, and realizing assurance overcomes all difficulties. Like the sword of Goliath we may say of assurance, “There is none like that; give it me” (1Sa 21:9). Who cares for deaths, or devils, when he can read his title clear? What matters the tempest without when there is calm within? Assurance puts the heart in heaven, and moves the feet to heaven. Its children are all fair, like the holy children in Babylon, and no race can compare for a moment with these “hinds let loose,” these “lion-like men,” these “children of the sun.” There never were men so self-sacrificing, so daring, so zealous, so enthusiastic in the cause of Christ, as the men who know that their names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and therefore out of gratitude serve their God. Why, I put it to the sinner here, who never thought of this matter before. Poor man! if your sins could be all forgiven this morning, and you could know it—if God should say to your soul, “I am thy salvation,” and if you could go out of this house knowing that you were a child of God, do you think it would make you unholy? Do you think it would make

⁵ **forsooth** – in truth; indeed.

you negligent? No, I think I see the tear in your eye, as you reply, “I would do anything for Him; I would live for Him; I would die for Him, to show how I love Him Who loved me.” Ah! poor soul, if thou believest in Christ now, that will be true. If thou wilt cast thyself on Jesus now, thou shalt be forgiven; there shall be no sin left in God’s book against thee; thou shalt be absolved, acquitted, delivered, cleansed and washed; and then thou shalt prove in thy experience that assurance does not make men sin, but that assurance of pardon is the very best means of making men holy, and keeping them in the fear of God.

I have one class of objectors to answer, and I have done. There is a certain breed of Calvinists, whom I do not envy, who are always jeering and sneering as much as ever they can at the full assurance of faith. I have seen their long faces. I have heard their whining periods, and read their dismal sentences, in which they say something to this effect—“*Groan in the Lord always, and again I say, groan! He that mourneth and weepeth, he that doubteth and feareth, he that distrusteth and dishonoureth his God, shall be saved.*” That seems to be the sum and substance of their very un-gospel-like gospel. But why is it that they do this? I speak now honestly and fearlessly. It is because there is a pride within them—a conceit which is fed on rottenness, and sucks marrow and fatness out of putrid carcasses. And what, say you, is the object of their pride? Why, the pride of being able to boast of a deep experience—the pride of being a blacker, grosser and more detestable backslider than other people. “Whose glory is in their shame” (Phi 3:19), may well apply to them. A more dangerous, because a more deceitful, pride than this is not to be found. It has all the elements of self-righteousness in it. I would sooner a man boast in his good works than boast in his good feelings, because you can deal with the man who boasts in his good works, you have plain texts of Scripture, and you convict him of being a legalist; but this other man boasts that he is no legalist; he can speak very sharply against legality; he knows the truth, and yet the truth is not in him, in its spirit, *because still he is looking to his feelings, and not looking to the finished work of Christ.* Of all the Diablonians that ever stole into the city of Mansoul,⁶ Mr. Live-by-feeling was one of the worst of villains, though he had the fairest face. Brethren, you had better live by works than live by feelings, both are damning forms of trust, but the one is more deceptive and more delusive than the other by far. *You are justified by faith, not by feelings; you are saved by what Christ felt for you, not by what you feel;* and the root and basis of salvation is the cross, and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid” (1Co 3:11); even though he place his experience there, he builds “wood, hay, stubble” (1Co 3:12), and not the corner stone, which is Christ Jesus the Lord (Eph 2:20).

I have thus tried to meet my objectors: I shall now turn to the second part of the discourse briefly.

II. Let us hear the text: “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

⁶ **Diablonians...Mansoul** – In *The Holy War: The Battle of Mansoul*, John Bunyan personifies sin as people in the town of Mansoul; these people are known as Diablonians.

The first thing the text seems to say is, *David had his doubts*, then; for why would he pray, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” if he were not sometimes exercised with doubts and fears? Cheer up, Christian brother! If David doubted, thou must not say, “I am no Christian, because I have doubts.” The best of believers *sometimes* are troubled with fears and anxieties. Abraham had the greatest faith, but he had *some* unbelief. I envy the brother who can say that his faith never wavered. He can say more than David did, for David had cause to cry, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”

But, next, the text says that *David was not content while he had doubts and fears*, but he repaired at once to the mercy-seat to pray for assurance, for he valued it as much fine gold. “O Lord!” David seems to say, “I have lost my confidence; my foot slippeth; my feet are almost gone; my doubts and fears prevail; but I cannot bear it, I am wretched, I am unhappy. ‘Say—say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.’”

And then the text tells you yet a third thing, that David *knew where to obtain full assurance*. He goes at once to God in prayer. He knows that knee-work is that by which faith is increased, and there, in his closet, he crieth out to the Most High, “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” (Psa 35:3). O my brethren, we must be much alone with God, if we would have a clear sense of His love! Let your cries cease, and your eyes will grow dim. Much in prayer, much in heaven; slow in prayer, slow in progress.

Now pull the text into pieces, and let us look at the words. And notice, that David would not be satisfied unless his assurance had a divine source. “Say unto my soul.” Great God! If the priest should say it, it is nothing; if my minister should say it, if the deacons, the church officers, and all the members of the church should say it, it is nothing. Lord, do *Thou* say it! Nothing short of a divine testimony in the soul will ever content the true Christian. The Spirit of God must himself, after a supernatural sort, speak to our conscience and to our heart, or else peaceful and quiet our spirit can never be. Gracious God! let me not take my hopes at hap-hazard; let not my confidence be ill-founded and built upon the sand. Speak Thyself, with Thy word of truth and wisdom, and say to me, even to me, “I am thy salvation!”

Note, next, David cannot be content unless his assurance has a *vivid personality* about it. “Say unto *my* soul, I am *thy* salvation.” If Thou shouldst say this to all the saints, it were nothing, unless Thou shouldst say it to me. Lord, I have sinned; I deserve it not; I am sinful; I scarcely dare to ask it; but, oh, say it to *my* soul, even to *my* soul, “I am *thy* salvation.” Let me have a pointed, personal, infallible, indisputable sense that I am Thine, and that Thou art mine.

See, next, David must have it come deep into his inner being. “Say unto my soul.” Speak it not merely to my ears; say it to my soul. “Great God! let me not fancy that I heard it in the air; let me not dream that I listened to it in my sleep; but speak it right into the ears of my spirit, and let the inner man hear the echoes of Thy peace-speaking voice—‘Say unto my *soul*, I am thy salvation.’” Brethren, it is no skimming the surface which will do for us; we must

have quiet in the deeps. That blessing “of the depth which lieth under” we need and must have. It will not content us to have a fair skin, scarce concealing with its deceitful gauze the foul and deadly leprosy. Our soul must be sound and healthy to the very core. Lord, say to my soul, in my bowels’ inner depths, “I am thy salvation.” Put it beyond doubt; put it beyond all chance, dispute, or hazard, “I am thy salvation.”

Note again, David wants *present* assurance. He does not say, “Say unto my soul, I *will* be thy salvation,” but, “I *am*.” And yet that “am,” as you will see if you look at the text, is not in the original; it is in italics; it has been supplied by our translators. That word “am” is man’s word, not God’s; therefore I will say but little of it. It may be, “I *will* be thy salvation,” or “I *have been* thy salvation,” or “I *am*”; and very rightly there is no word there at all. You can learn as much from God’s silence as you can from His speech, and I think this silence means just this. There is no word put there at all, because full assurance enables the Christian to say of God, “He *was* my salvation before the worlds began, He *is* my salvation now, He *will* be when the world shall pass away.” So that you may put up the prayer in any tense you prefer. “Say unto my soul, I—thy salvation,” The two terms shall be alike. “God—thy salvation”—“I, the great, personal, self-existent Deity, thy salvation.” The two shall stand and fall together; they shall both of them be sure, both eternal in the ancient ages, both everlasting in the ages to come. “Say unto my soul, I, thy salvation.”

I think we have thus heard what the text has to say to us. You will remark, when you look it all the way through, that the only question which we need put is this: How *can* God say to us, “I am thy salvation?” You do not expect to hear it as you walk along the streets; you do not imagine that you will see it written on the skies? No, God speaketh to His people thus: by His Word, by His ministers, and by His Holy Spirit silently and mysteriously imprinting upon the heart the fact that that heart is washed in the Redeemer’s blood. Dr. Caesar Malan, of Geneva, has put in a very plain light the way in which God in His Word says to us, “I am thy salvation.” You are to suppose the minister is talking to a friend; this friend is anxious and doubting, and wants to know how the Bible can say to any man, that that man is saved. The conversation runs thus:

Pastor: He who believes in Jesus Christ, has eternal life (Joh 3:36): do you know this declaration of the word of God? Very well, but you appear to think it obscure or equivocal.

John: Never, I am sure it is true. Yet all those who *say*—I believe in Jesus Christ, are not the elected of God, bought of the Lord, or saved by grace. All these are not chosen, for there are many hypocrites who dare say that they believe in the Son of God.

Pastor: You observe, that the word does not say, that those who *say* they believe, or *pretend* to believe, in Jesus Christ, or who imagine falsely that they believe, have eternal life; but this infallible word says, that those who believe in effect and really, have this life; so, then, the multitude in Christian nations

who profess to believe in Jesus Christ, is not proof that they believe in effect; but if this multitude believe in effect on the Savior, certainly they will have eternal life.

John: Thus, then, sir, whoever is able to assure himself that he believes on the Savior, then he will be certain that he has actually the life eternal, and that he is also elected.

The minister took a little bit of paper and wrote upon it these words: ‘Whoever receives from my hand this paper, and this declaration, I hold him for my friend. He then put his name to these words, and presenting it to John, he said to him,

Pastor: Receive this from my hand, and believe my testimony, for I am a creditable person.

John took the paper and read what the minister had written.

Pastor: How am I to regard you, John, after this testimony that I have given you?

John: I have the minister for a friend.

Pastor: Is it from you to me that this friendship flows, or is it from me to you?

John: It is from you to me.

Pastor: Do you hesitate to say that I am your friend, and that you have become mine?

John: If I said I did not believe you, I should make you a liar.

Pastor: Do you, then, look with affection towards me, or is it I with affection towards you? for you are assured that I am your friend, and that I regard you as mine.

John: You, dear sir, love *me*, and care for me.

Pastor: And how are you assured that this good-will is addressed to you?

John: Because you have been pleased to say it, and I do not doubt your veracity.

Pastor: I am sure that I have not written your name, as my friend; why then do you know that I have mentioned you in particular?

John: You have written with your own hand, that whoever receiveth this paper, you shall have him for a friend; and because I have received this paper, and because I know that you are of good authority, I have no doubt at all upon the subject.

Pastor: That is, then, because you have been certain on the one hand of having received this paper from my hand, and on the other hand, that I am of good authority, that you are certain of possessing, at the present, my affection,

John: I do not think that I am able to speak with doubt upon this point, without insulting your veracity.

The substance of which is just this, that when you can take the Word, and find that you *are* the character there spoken of, it is as good as if out of heaven an angel should fly down to you, sitting in your pew now, and should say in your ear, in the presence of this congregation, “God is thy salvation.” Now,

brethren, I know this day I have no other trust but in the cross of Christ; therefore I *am* saved; and you can say the same, each one of you, if you are resting in Christ alone. There is not an “if” or a “but” about it; you are saved. Oh! do enjoy that thought, and go home and live upon it; it shall be marrow and fatness to your spirit.

But, then, God often speaks by His minister, as well as by His Word. But that is very much in the same way. While the minister is preaching concerning those who *are* saved, you listen, and you say, “Ah, he speaks to me!” He describes your character, and though you are standing far away in the gallery, you say, “Ah, that is *my* character!” He speaks of the weary and heavy laden sinner and he bids him come, and you say, “Ah, I am weary and heavy laden, and I will come,” and when you have come, Christ has given you rest (Mat 11:28-29). You need have no doubt about it; if you can fairly take hold on the promise which is offered to certain characters and states, why, then you can go your way saying, “God hath said to me by His servant, ‘I *am* thy salvation.’”

Besides this, God has a way of speaking, without the Word and without the ministers, to our hearts. His Spirit can drop like the rain, and distill like the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb (Deu 32:2). We know not how it is, but sometimes there is a deep, sweet calm. Our conscience says, “I have been washed in the blood of Christ” (Rev 1:5), and the Spirit of God saith, “Ay, ’tis true, ’tis true.” In such times we are so happy—so happy that we want to tell our joys—so blessed, that if we could but borrow angels’ wings and fly away, we would scarce know the change when we passed through the pearly gates, for we have had heaven below, and there has been but little difference between that and heaven above. Oh, I wish my whole congregation, without exception, consisted of men and women who had heard the Spirit say, “I am *thy* salvation.” What happy hymns! What happy prayers! You might go home to some poor single room; you might go to a scantily furnished house, and to a table that has barely bread upon it; but happy men! happy men! Better would be your dinner of herbs, than a stalled ox without confidence in Christ (Pro 15:17); better your rich poverty, than the poverty of the rich who have no faith in Jesus (Jam 1:9-10); better all the griefs you have to endure, when sanctified by assurance, than all the joys the worldling has, when unblessed by faith, and unhallowed by love to God. *I* can say now—

*“Grant me the visits of thy face,
And I desire no more.”*

I shall now pass to my third and last point—a little while only, but earnestly, I trust.

III. Will you patiently hear the preacher, in what he has to say?

I know that in this large assembly, I am addressing very many who never knew that they were saved. I must put you all into one class, though, indeed, you are not in the same state; for there are some who never *knew* that they were saved, who are saved. They do believe in Jesus; but their faith is so little,

that they never know that they are forgiven. I have to put *you* in the class, because you do belong to it for the time being. But there are many of you who never knew that you were saved, because you never cared to know. It has been a matter of concern with you to find out your pedigree; but you never asked, "Is God my Father?" You have made quite sure of the title deeds of your estate; but you never took the trouble to ask whether heaven was yours or not. And possibly, some of you have imbibed a notion that it is a very easy thing to be saved—that there is no need to trouble your heads about it much—that so long as you do your duty, attend your church, or frequent your chapel, it is well and good, and there is no use making this fuss about being born again, and having a new heart, and a right spirit. I may never have your ear again, but mark this at the Day of Judgment, I will be quit of your blood if you perish in your delusion. This is *the* delusion of England. We have not half so much to dread Popery as we have that nominal Christianity, fostered by a national church—that nominal Christianity which has no root nor soul within it. Oh! there are millions of Englishmen who think they are Christians, because they were sprinkled in infancy with holy drops, and because they have come to the Lord's Table, whereas, little do they know that every time they have come there, they did eat and drink damnation to themselves, because they did not discern the Lord's body. This is the curse and plague of England, that we have *so much profession and so little possession*—such multitudes of you who are content to sit under a sleepy ministry where ministers will not tell you the truth for fear of hurting your feelings; where they will preach the truth generally, as if a man should wave a sword, but do not come home personally, as if a man should drive it through your very heart. What we want is more home dealing, more plain speaking, more thrusting of the hand inside your soul, to make you tremble, and ask yourselves the question whether you be right before God or no.

I speak then, to the whole of you who never knew that you were saved; and first I say to you *how foolish you are!* O sirs! you are to die soon, and you are to go to heaven or to hell—to splendours and glories, or to glooms and horrors—and yet you do not know which is to be your portion. O fools! miserable fools! If some of you should say, "I do not know whether I have a cancer or no," I should say, seek the physician, and enquire if there be a fear; but to say, "I do not know whether I am in the bonds of iniquity and the gall of bitterness or no," is awful indeed. Why, you make your estates as tight as law can tie them; all the skill of legal language is employed to make the deed secure; and yet you are content to have heaven as a thing of *if*, and *but*, and *perhaps*. Oh! fools indeed! How can ye be so mad? Sure to die, and yet not sure whether you are saved! Sure to appear before the bar of God, and yet not know whether you shall be acquitted or condemned? Oh! if there be wisdom left within you, if

your brain be not turned to perfect madness, I conjure⁷ you by the living God to make sure work of it, and never be content till you *know* that you are saved.

But again, I must not only call you foolish, but miserable. Miserable, I say. Do you look at me and say, “We are comfortable, we are easy, we are content?” Ay, sirs, so madmen talk. If I saw a man lying down upon the brink of the crater of a volcano, and I knew that very soon the lava would come streaming up, and then rolling down, I could not call him happy, though he were toying with nature’s fairest flowers, or sucking her most delicious sweets. And you—you are in such a state as this! Upon a puff of wind (Jam 4:14), a bubble, hangs your eternal state. If life depended on a hair, it were indeed precarious; but here is your soul depending on your life, which depends on something frailer than a dream. O sirs! you may drop dead in this house. Such things are not extraordinary. Men have come into the house of God bodies, and they have gone out corpses. And while I think that any one of you may die, and you are uncertain whether you shall be lost or saved, I could sooner call you kings than call you happy, and the rightest title I can give to you is, O miserable men! miserable men! uncertain as to your future state.

Once more, and let this last thought ring in your ears. Ah! you may go away, perhaps to your gay parties, to your rounds of merriment, to your midnight balls, to your varnished harlotries, mayhap, but let this ring in your ears. Oh! the danger—the danger of not knowing whether you shall be saved or lost! You will die. I suppose you will not dispute with me about that. You do not claim to be immortal; you expect to die. You die; and what, sirs—what, madam—what if your fears should be true? Your companions are gay no longer; they are the damned spirits of hell; your occupations are frivolous no more; they are solemn and serious now—as solemn as death, and as serious as eternity. Where now the music which once regaled⁸ your dainty ears? Your only symphonies are sighs, dirges, and howlings. Where now the soft couch on which you took your rest and pleasure? You have made your bed in hell; and what a change for some of you—from the scarlet of Dives⁹ to the flames of hell—from the feasts so sumptuous to the fiends so terrible! Where are ye now, ye church-goers, ye chapel-goers? You have no profession of religion here, no hymn books here; no minister of mercy; no voice of holy song; no ring of Sabbath bells; no tearful eye; no tender heart; no lip which trembles while it speaks to you, and only speaks of terror because it loves you, and would save you if it could. O my hearers, if you are not sure of being saved, what if you are sure of being damned! And you are either—mark this, not to your own apprehension perhaps, but in fact—you are sure of one or the other. Which is it? Which must it be? I know, when I preach these terrible things, men will not listen to me. But God is my witness, I would not speak about them if I *dare* be

⁷ **conjure** – call upon, or entreat solemnly.

⁸ **regaled** – provided great enjoyment to; entertained.

⁹ **Dives** – a man of great wealth; often refers to the unnamed rich man in the parable of Luke 16:19-31.

silent about them. But if you perish, sirs, it shall not be for want of pleading with, or praying for, or weeping over. Sinner! I beseech thee turn! By him that died, and lives, and hath sent me to plead with thee, I beseech thee, seek, if thou hast never sought, and if thou hast sought, seek again; and if thou hast found, find yet more fully, till thou canst say, “He is mine, and I am His” (see Song 2:16). Put your downy pillow under your head tonight, ye sluggards: but sleep not, for ye may never wake in this world. Sit to your luxurious meal tomorrow: let the dainties be sweet, leave them untasted, for you may one day be denied a drop of water. O sirs! be not happy till you have made your happiness sure. Oh! have no peace, till your peace is everlasting, substantial peace. Talk not of being blessed, till God has blessed you. Think not that you can be blessed, while “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11), and hath said, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them” (Deu 27:26).

But do you wish to be saved? Does the Spirit of God whisper to you, “Escape! escape!” There is forgiveness still; there is forgiveness now; there is forgiveness for *thee*. Trust Christ, sinner, and you shall be saved—saved this moment. Believe in Him now with all your guilt and sin about you. May the Holy Ghost now lead you to trust my Lord and Master; and you may go home assured that *He* hath for ever put away your sin, and you are accepted and blessed in Him. May God bless you, each one of you, now and ever. Amen.

*“Surrounded by a host of foes,
 Storm’d by a host of foes within,
 Nor swift to flee, nor strong to oppose,
 Single against hell, earth, and sin;
 Single, yet undismay’d, I am;
 I dare believe in Jesus’ name.
 What though a thousand hosts engage,
 A thousand worlds my soul to shake,
 I have a shield shall quell their rage,
 And drive the alien armies back;
 Portray’d it bears a bleeding Lamb;
 I dare believe in Jesus’ name.”*

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Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential Baptist minister in England. History’s most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.



THE CERTAINTY OF PERSEVERANCE

William Gurnall (1616-1679)

FROM Paul's words in Ephesians 6:13, "having done all, to stand," follow these distinct points:

1. He that will be Christ's soldier must persevere.
2. There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart.
3. Where true grace is, that soul shall persevere, for thus: true grace can never be vanquished.

The Christian is born a conqueror, the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. He that is born of God, overcometh the world (1Jo 5:4). Mark from whence the victory is dated, even from his birth: there is victory sown in his new nature, even that seed of God which will keep him from being swallowed up by sin or Satan. As Christ rose, never to die more, so does He raise souls from the grave of sin, never to come under the power of spiritual death more (1Co 15:54-57). These holy ones of God cannot see corruption (1Co 15:52-53). Hence, he that believes is said in the present tense to have eternal life (Joh 3:15, 1Jo 5:13). As the Law, that came four hundred years after, could not make void the promise to Abraham (Gal 3:17), so nothing that intervenes can hinder the accomplishment of that promise of eternal life (Rom 8:38-39), which was given and passed to Christ in their behalf before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). If a saint could any way miscarry, and fall short of this eternal life, it must be from one of these three causes: 1. Because God may forsake the Christian, and withdraw His grace or help from him; or 2. Because the believer may forsake God; or, lastly, because Satan may pluck him out of the hands of God. A fourth I know not. *Now none of these can be.*

1. *God can never forsake a Christian.* Some unadvised speeches have dropped from tempted souls, discovering some fears of God's casting them off; but they have eaten their words with shame, as we see in Job and David. Oh what admirable security has the great God given to His children in this particular!

a. *In promises.* "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). He assures us there never did or can so much as arise a repenting thought in His heart concerning the purposes of His love and special grace toward His children; "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," (Rom 11:29). *Whom He loves, He loves to the end.*

b. God, to give further weight and credit to our unbelieving and misgiving hearts, *seals His promise with an oath*; "with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee" (Isa 54:8-9). He goes on and tells them, "The mountains shall depart," (meaning at the end of the world, when the whole frame of the heavens and earth shall be dis-

solved), “but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed” (v. 10). Now, lest any should think this was some charter belonging to the Jews alone, we find it settled on every servant of God as his portion: “This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD” (v. 17). And surely, God that is so careful to make His children’s inheritance sure to them, will give them little thanks who busy their wits to invalidate and weaken His conveyances,¹ yea, disprove His will; if they had taken a bribe, they could not plead Satan’s cause better.

c. *In the actual fulfilling of these promises* (which He has made to believers) to Christ their advocate.

As God, before the world began, gave a promise of eternal life to Christ for them, so now has He given actual possession of that glorious place to Christ (as their advocate) where that eternal life shall be enjoyed by them; for as He came upon our errand from heaven, so thither He returned again to take and hold possession of that inheritance which God had of old promised. And now, *what ground of fear can there be in the believer’s heart concerning God’s love standing firm to him, when he sees the whole covenant performed already to Christ for him,* whom God has not only called to, sanctified for, and upheld in the great work He was to finish for us, but also justified in His resurrection and jail delivery, and received Him into heaven, there to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high, by which He has not only possession for us, but full power to give to all believers.

2. A second occasion of fear to the believer that he shall not persevere may be taken from himself. *He has many sad fears and tremblings of heart, that he shall at last forsake God:* the journey is long, and his grace weak. Oh, says he, is it not possible that this little grace should fail, and I fall short at last of glory? Now there is such provision made in the covenant as scatters this cloud also.

a. *The Spirit of God is given on purpose to prevent this.* Christ left His mother with John (Joh 19:26-27), but His saints with His Spirit, to instruct and keep them, that they should not lose themselves in their journey to heaven. Oh how sweet is that place, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:27). He does not say they shall have His Spirit if they will walk in His statutes; no, His Spirit shall cause them to do it. But maybe you are afraid you may grieve Him, and so He in anger leave you, and you perish for want of His help. The Spirit of God is indeed sensible of unkindness, and upon a saint’s sin, may withdraw in regard of present assistance, but never in regard of His care. The Spirit withdrew from Samson, and he fell into the Philistines’ hands; this makes him cry to God, and the Spirit puts forth His strength in him again (Jdg 16:19-20; 28-30). So here, the office of the Spirit is to abide for ever with the saints; “he

¹ **conveyances** – *Law*: transfers of property from one person to another; also, the documents effecting such transfers.

shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Joh 14:16).

b. *It is one main business of the intercession of Christ to obtain of God perseverance for weak grace.* “I have prayed,” says Christ to Peter, “that thy faith fail not” (Luk 22:32). But was not that a particular privilege granted to him, which may be denied to another? O sirs, do we think that Christ’s love looks asquint?² Does He pray for one child more than another? Such fears and jealousies foolish children are ready to make up; and therefore Christ prevents them, by bidding Peter, in the very next words, “when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (v. 32); that is, when you feel the efficacy of My prayer for your faith, carry the good news to them, that their hearts may be strengthened also: and what strengthening had it been to them, if Christ prayed not for them as well as for Peter? Does Christ pray for us? Yea, does He not live to pray for us? Oh, how can children of so many prayers, nay, of such prayers, perish? Say not, your weak faith shall perish, till you hear that Christ has left praying, or meets with a repulse.

3. *Let us see whether Satan be able to pluck the Christian away.* Abundant provision is made against his assaults. The saint is wrapped up in the everlasting arms of Almighty Power; and what can a cursed devil do against God, Who laid those chains on him which he cannot shake off? When he is able to pluck that dart of divine fury out of his own conscience which God has fastened there, then let him think of such an enterprise as this. *How can he overcome you, that cannot tempt you but in God’s appointed time?* And if God set Satan his time to assault the Christian whom He loves so dearly, surely it shall be when he shall be repulsed with greatest shame.

Away then with that doctrine which says, One may be a saint today, and none tomorrow; now a Peter, anon a Judas. O how unsavory is this! It is a principle that at once crosses the main design of God in the gospel covenant, reflects sadly on the honor of Christ, and wounds the saint’s comfort to the heart.

This truth calls for a word or two of caution. Though there is no fear of a saint’s falling from grace, yet there is great danger of others falling from the top of this comfortable doctrine into a careless security, and presumptuous boldness: that which is a restorative to the saint’s grace, proves an incentive to the lust of a wicked man. What Paul said of the Law, we may truly of the gospel: sin, taking occasion from the grace of the gospel, and the sweet promises thereof, deceives the carnal heart, and works in him all manner of wickedness. Indeed sin seldom grows so rank anywhere, as in those who water its roots with the gospel. Two ways this doctrine may be abused:

1. *Beware of falling into a neglect of duty upon the score:* “If a Christian, you cannot fall away from grace.” To neglect duty upon such a persuasion, is contrary to Christ’s practice, and counsel or command.

² **asquint** – with an oblique glance or squint; slyly; dubiously.

a. *His practice*—Though Christ never doubted of His Father’s love, nor questioned the happy issue of all His temptations, agonies, and sufferings; yet He prays, and prays again “more earnestly” (Luk 22:44).

b. *His counsel or command*—He told Peter that Satan had begged leave to have him to sift him. But withal He comforts him (who was to be put hardest to it) with this, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (v. 32). Surely our Savior, by this provision made for him and the rest, means to save them a labor that they need not watch and pray? No such thing; after this, He calls them up to duty, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” (v. 40). Christ’s praying for them was to strengthen their faith, when they should themselves pray for the same mercy; it was not to nourish their sloth, that they needed not to pray. *Christ’s prayers in heaven for His saints are all heard already*, but the return of them is reserved to be enclosed in the answer God sends to their own prayers. A Christian cannot in faith expect to receive the mercies Christ prays for in heaven, so long as he lives in the neglect of his duty on earth.

2. *Take heed of abusing this doctrine into a liberty to sin.* Shall we sin because grace abounds? Grow loose because we have God fast bound in His promise? God forbid! None but a devil would teach us this logic. It was a great height of sin those wretched Jews came to, who could carouse³ and quaff⁴ while death looked in upon them at the windows. “Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die” (Isa 22:13). They discovered their atheism therein. But what a prodigious stature in sin must that man be grown to, that can, under the protection of a promise, draw this encouragement to sin from the everlasting love of God! Let us eat and drink, for we are sure to be saved.

Grace cannot dwell in that heart which draws so cursed a conclusion from the promises of God’s grace: the saints have not so learned Christ. The inference Paul makes from the sweet privileges we enjoy in the Covenant of Grace, is not to wallow in sin; but having these promises, to cleanse ourselves from all the filthiness of flesh and spirit (2Co 7:1). It is the nature of faith to purify the heart. Now the more certain report faith brings of God’s love from the promise, the more it purifies the heart, because love, by which faith works, is thereby more inflamed to God; and if once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot for sin to stay there.

Taken from *The Christian in Complete Armour*.

William Gurnall (1616-1679): Puritan minister of the Church of England, best known for *The Christian in Complete Armour*. He graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, with a BA and MA.



³ **carouse** – engage in boisterous, drunken merrymaking.

⁴ **quaff** – drink heartily.

THE NECESSITY OF PERSEVERANCE

William Gurnall (1616-1679)

THE glorious victory which hovers over the head of believers while in the fight against Satan, and that shall surely crown them in the end, is held forth by the apostle in Ephesians 6:13 in these words, “and having done all, to stand.”

Heaven is not won with good words and a fair profession—“having done all.” The doing Christian is the man that shall stand, when the empty boaster of his faith shall fall. *The great talkers of religion are often the least doers.* His religion is in vain whose profession brings not letters testimonial of a holy life. It is not crying out upon the devil and declaiming against sin in prayer or discourse, but *fighting and mortifying* it that God looks chiefly upon.

He that will be Christ’s soldier must persevere to the end of his life in this war against Satan. Not he that *takes the field*, but he that *keeps the field*; not that *sets out*, but he that *holds out* in this holy war, deserves the name of a saint. We must stand to our arms, till called off by death.

We are under a covenant and oath to do this. Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colors, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; this they called 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 in Psalm 50:5, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” When we take upon us the profession of Christ’s name, we list ourselves in His master-roll, and by it promise we will live and die with Him in opposition to all His enemies. Therefore Christ tells us upon what terms He will enroll us among His disciples: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to His disposal, that there may be no disputing with His commands afterward, but, as one under His authority, go and come at His word.

Perseverance is necessary, because our enemy perseveres to oppose us. There is no truce in the devil’s heart, no cessation of arms in our enemy’s camp. If an enemy continue to assault a city, and they within cease to resist, it is easy to tell what will follow. The prophet that was sent to Bethel did his errand well, withstood Jeroboam’s temptation, but in his way home was drawn aside by the old prophet, and at last slain by a lion (1Ki 13:1-32).

Perseverance is necessary, because the promise of life and glory is settled upon the persevering soul; the crown stands at the goal, he has it that comes to the end of the race. “To him that overcometh will I give” (Rev 2:7, 17), not in a particular skirmish but in the war. “Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the [whole] will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb 10:36). There is a remarkable accent on that “henceforth” which Paul mentions in 2

Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight...Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Why, was it not laid up before? Yes, but having persevered and come near the goal, being within sight of home, ready to die, he takes now surer hold of the promise. Indeed in this sense it is, that a gracious soul is nearer its salvation after every victory than it was before, because he approaches nearer to the end of his race, which is the time promised for the receiving of the promised salvation (Rom 13:11).

Here we may take up a sad lamentation in respect of the many apostate professors of our days. Never was this spiritual falling-sickness more prevalent: O! how many are sick of it, and not a few fallen asleep by it. These times of war and confusion have not made so many broken merchants as broken professors; is there a congregation that cannot show some who have outlived their profession? Oh, what a sad change! "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2Pe 2:21). Better never to have walked a step toward heaven, than to put such a reproach upon the ways of God. These are they which God loathes. He that hates putting away (Mal 2:16), disdains much more to be Himself thus put away. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb 10:38). The apostate is said to tread upon the Son of God (Heb 10:29), as if He were no better than the dirt under his feet. Well, he shall have treading for treading; God Himself will set His foot upon him: "Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes" (Psa 119:118). And who, think you, will be weary soonest? He that is under foot bears the weight of the whole man upon him. To be under the foot of God is to lie under the whole weight of God's wrath. Oh, pity and pray for such forlorn souls; they are objects of the one, and subjects of the other; though they are fallen low, yet not into hell. Now and then we see a Eutychus (Act 20:9) raised, that had fallen from such a height.

A soul void of divine armor cannot persevere. What this divine armor is the apostle has shown in the several pieces of it. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armor. One that has not these wrought in him will never hold out to fight all the battles that are to be fought before victory is to be had. Common gifts of the Spirit, such as illumination, conviction, sudden pangs and flushing heats of affection, may carry out the creature for a while with a goodly appearance of zeal for God, and forwardness in profession; but the strength these afford is soon spent. John's hearers mentioned in John 5:35 got some light and heat by sitting under his burning ministry; but how long did it last? "Ye were willing for a season to rejoice." They were very beautiful colors that were drawn on them, but not laid in oil, and therefore soon washed off again. The foolish virgins made as great a blaze with their lamps, and did expect as good a day when Christ should come as the wise virgins; but alas, their lamps are out before He appeared. The stony ground is more forward than the best soil; the seed comes up immediately, as if a crop should soon have been reaped; but a few nipping frosts turn its hue, and the day of harvest proves a

day of desperate sorrow. All these instances, and many more in Scripture, evince that *nothing short of grace, and a principle of divine life in the soul, will persevere*. How forward soever formalists and flighty professors are to promise themselves hopes of reaching heaven, they will find it too long a step for their short-breathed souls to attain. The reasons are:

1. *Such want a principle of divine life to draw strength from Christ to persevere in their course*. That by which the gracious soul itself perseveres, is the continual supply it receives from Christ; as the arm and foot is kept alive in the body by those vital spirits which they receive from the heart. "I live," says Paul, "yet not I, but Christ in me"; that is, I live, but at Christ's cost. As He holds my soul, so He holds my grace in life. Now the carnal person wanting this union, must needs waste and consume; he has no root to stand on. When Cain sinned, see how he falls farther and farther like a stone down a hill. He never stays till he comes to the bottom of despair: from envying his brother to malice, from malice to murder, from murder to impudent lying, and brazen-faced boldness to God Himself, and from that to despair. So true is that 2 Timothy 3:13, "evil men...shall wax worse and worse." But now, when a saint falls, he rises, because when he falls he has a principle of life to cry out to Christ, and such an interest in Christ as stirs Him up to help. "Lord, save me," said Peter when he began to sink, and presently Christ's hand is put forth. He chides him for his unbelief, but helps him.

2. *An unregenerate soul has no assurance of the continuance of those common gifts of the Spirit he has*; they come on the same terms to such that temporal enjoyments do. A carnal person, when he has his table most sumptuously spread, cannot show any word of promise under God's hand that he shall be provided for the next meal. God gives these things to the wicked, as we a crust or night's lodging to a beggar in our barn. It is our bounty; such a one could not sue us for denying the same: so the common gifts of the Spirit, God was not bound to give them, nor to continue them. You have some knowledge of the things of God: you may for all this die without knowledge at last. You are a sinner in chains, but you may be let loose to your lusts as freely as ever. And how can he persevere, that in one day may from praying fall to cursing, from a whining, complaining conscience, come to have a seared conscience?

3. Every unregenerate man, when most busy with profession, has those engagements lie upon him, that will necessarily take him off one time or other. One is engaged to the world, and when he come to a good market for that, he goes away and makes it appear which he loves best: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2Ti 4:10). Another is a slave to his lust: and when this calls him he must go in spite of his profession, conscience, God, and all. Herod feared John, and did many things; but love is stronger than fear; his love to Herodias overcomes his fear of John, and makes him cut off at once the head of John, and the hopeful buddings which appeared in the tenderness of his conscience, and begun reformation.

This shows us what is the root of all final apostasy: viz., **the want of a change of heart**. The apostate does not lose the grace he had, but discovers he never had any; and it is no wonder to hear that he proves a bankrupt, that was worse than nought when he first set up. *Many take up their saintsship upon trust, trading in the duties of religion with the credit they have gained from others' opinion of them.* They believe themselves to be Christians, because others hope them to be such; and so their great business is, by a zeal in those exercises of religion that lie outmost, to keep up the credit they have abroad, but do not look for grace within, which should maintain them in their profession; and this proves their undoing at last.

Let it therefore make us, in the fear of God, to consider upon what score we take up our profession. Is there that within which bears proportion to our outward zeal? *Have we a good foundation?* Is not the superstructure topheavy, jetting beyond the weak foundation? They say trees shoot as much in the root under ground as in the branches above, and so does true grace. Oh remember what was the perishing of the seed in stony ground: it lacked root. Why so? Because it was stony. Be willing the plow should go deep enough to humble you for sin, and rend your heart from sin. The soul effectually brought out of the love of sin as sin will never be thorough friends with it again. In a word, be serious to find out the great spring that sets all your wheels on motion in your religious trade.

The empty professor disappoints others, who, seeing his leaves, expect fruit, but find none; and at last he disappoints himself; he thinks to reach heaven, but shall miss!

Taken from *The Christian in Complete Armour*.

William Gurnall (1616-1679): Puritan minister of the Church of England, best known for *The Christian in Complete Armour*. He graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, with a BA and MA.



KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

William Romaine (1714-1795)

*The believer, kept by the power of God,
perseveres in his holy walk and victorious warfare.*

EVEN after the believer has made a great progress in his walk, and has been very successful in his warfare, yet he is not out of the reach of any temptation. He is still liable to be stopped in the way of his duty. His enemies may cheat him by some stratagem, or gain some advantage over him by open force. While he is attending to these things, as they come before him in his daily experience, a thought will often arise:

I am afraid my profession will at last come to nothing, and I shall be cast away. I feel so much corruption working in my duties, and my heart is so ready to revolt and to turn from the Lord in every battle, that I cannot help being uneasy about my final state. How can I? It is not in me to hold out and persevere against so much opposition from within and without. What signifies my resolution to walk forward, or to fight for an uncertain crown? I think I gain no ground. My own carnal will plagues me, and I love ease and quiet as much as ever. My corruptions seem as many, and mine enemies as strong, as they were. One day, I fear, I shall perish by their hands. My heart faints at the thought. My courage fails me. O wretched man that I am! Where, to whom, shall I look for strength to enable me to hold out unto the end?

No believer is absolutely free from such an attack; and there are seasons very favourable to it. If his mind be in heaviness through manifold temptations, and by reasoning legally upon them: if he be under the hidings of the Lord's countenance, or in a time of desertion; if he be fallen into any great sin, perhaps his old besetting sin; if the guilt of it be upon his conscience, and the indignation of God be heavy upon him; then such thoughts find easy admittance; and if they be indulged, they greatly distress the believer; for they directly assault his faith, and strike at the very being of his hope. As these graces are weakened, he moves slowly; and if unbelief prevail, there is a stop put to his progress in the heavenly road.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, Who has made ample provision for victory over this temptation. The principles before insisted on are now to be brought into practice. Here is a fresh occasion to try their power and influence, and to make it appear that in these distressing circumstances the Father has given His children good ground to rely upon His unchangeable love. He has revealed to them the immutability of His counsel and of His oath, that when they have fled to Jesus for refuge, they may comfort their hearts and say, I have been afraid of falling away, but it is without reason; for I have still immutable things to trust in—although to my sense and feeling everything seems

to make against me, yet God has promised not to leave me nor forsake me. O that I may honour His promise, and without doubting rely upon His faithful arm to make it good!

Consider then, O my soul, the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Review them carefully. Thou seest what influence they have upon every step of thy walk, and how mighty they are, through God, to carry thee through all thy difficulties. O study then the perfect freeness and the absolute sufficiency of the salvation of Jesus. Read and mark the bonds and securities which a faithful God has given thee to trust in, and not to be afraid. *The time to honour them most is to believe them when thou hast the least sensible evidence, for that is the strongest faith.* If thou canst believe upon His bare word, and it is a very good warrant, thy feet shall stand firm upon the rock, and thy goings shall be well ordered: and that thou mayest believe this in the hardest trials, God informs thee that thy continuance in grace does not depend on thyself. “Thou standest by faith:” and faith should direct thee to what God has undertaken and has promised to do for thee. He would have thee to place the confidence of thy heart upon His tried word, which is a never-failing foundation, and if thou wast to build all thy hopes of persevering upon it, it would quiet thy fears and comfort thy heart. Thou wouldst then see that God has not left thee to thyself to stand or fall, but has engaged never to leave thee nor forsake thee. He has declared He will not turn away from thee to do thee good, and He will put His fear into thy heart, and thou shalt not turn away from Him. View thy case in this comfortable light, and while thou art considering the safety of thy persevering, as revealed in Scripture for the ground of thy faith, may every promise lead thee to trust more in God, and to trust less to thyself, and then the snare which was laid for thee will be broken, and thou wilt be delivered.

But take heed of carrying thine opinions to Scripture, and of forcing it to speak for them. Beware of that common mistake, and beware of human systems. Pay no regard to men or names. Simply attend to the promises of God concerning thy persevering. Thy present trial has convinced thee that thou canst not depend on thy own faithfulness; this therefore is the time to learn practically the faithfulness of God, and to improve thy faith in it from such Scripture arguments as these.

First, the nature of the divine covenant, which is not only the unchangeable will of the eternal Three, but is also Their agreement, confirmed by oath, concerning the heirs of promise.

The Father loved them as His children, freely, with an everlasting love. He chose them, and gave them to His Son. He engaged to keep them by His power, through faith unto salvation.

The Son accepted them, and wrote all their names in His book (not one of them therefore can be lost); He undertook to be made man, and to live and die for them; to rise from the dead, to ascend, and to intercede for them; and He sitteth as King-Mediator upon the throne, till every one of them be brought to glory.

The Holy Spirit covenanted to carry into execution the purposes of the Father's love, and to apply the blessings of the Son's salvation. He undertook to quicken the heirs of promise, to call them effectually, to guide, to strengthen, to sanctify, and to comfort them; yea, He is not to leave them, till the number of the elect be perfected. Therefore He abides with them for ever. In this covenant the eternal Three have undertaken for every heir of promise—to do all for him, and all in him, for the means and for the end, so that not one of them can perish; for faithfulness to the covenant is one of the highest honours of the Godhead: "I am Jehovah, your Elohim, which keepeth covenant; I will ever be mindful of My covenant. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips" (Deu 7:9; Psa 111:5; 89:34). What strong consolation is there in these words! Study them, O my soul, that by them thy faith may be established, and they may do thee good, like a medicine.

Thou art afraid of falling away; but the blessed Trinity have undertaken to hold thee up, and Their covenant engagements are to be the ground of thy believing that They will fulfil what They have promised. Observe and adore the goodness of God. See how He meets thy doubts and answers thy objections: "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge" (Heb 6:16-18) to Jesus. Thy faith should run parallel with this promise, and should safely trust as far as it warrants thee; now it gives thee sufficient reason to conclude that thy state before God is immutable, and that He has determined thou shalt not fall away and perish. For observe,

Secondly, His design in the covenant. He knew thy frame, thy infirmities, and thy temptation, and therefore He provided the covenant, and promised the blessings of it upon oath for thy sake, to end all strife in thy conscience, and to give thee strong consolation. This was His mind and will. He revealed it for thee, to settle thy heart in believing, and to administer to thee great comfort. Weigh attentively each of these particulars, and then say what more could have been done to satisfy thee of thine immutable persevering.

But thou thinkest such trials as thine are uncommon, and perhaps not provided for in the covenant, and therefore it can be no disparagement to the divine faithfulness if thou shouldst fall away. How can this be, since the everlasting covenant is ordered in all things, and on the part of God is absolutely sure? Nothing that concerns thee is left out of it—not a single hair of thy head; thy trials are all appointed and ordered, and the end also which they are to answer.

Perhaps, from the clear evidence of the divine Record, thou art convinced of the covenant of God to save the heir of promise, and of His engaging to keep them that they shall never perish; but thou art afraid thou art not in the covenant, nor an heir of promise. From whence arise thy fears? From Scripture? No, all Scripture is on thy side. Hast thou not fled as a poor sinner to Jesus for

refuge? Hast thou not acknowledged His divine nature, and His all-sufficient work? And though thou art now tempted to doubt, yet some faith is still fighting against unbelief. These are covenant blessings. O look up, then, to Jesus—why not thy Jesus? But, however, look to Him, keep looking on, and He will give thee reason to be ashamed of thy doubts and fears.

“But the Lord hides Himself from me, and therefore I fear I am not in His favour.” This objection is answered in the charter of grace: “I will not turn away from doing thee good.” He has hidden His face, and thou art troubled; this trouble is for good. It should put thee upon inquiring into the reason for God’s hiding Himself. It should humble thee, and should exercise thy faith upon such a scripture as this: “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners” (Isa 57:17-18). Although He hid Himself, yet He had love to His people; although He smote them, yet it was with a Fatherly correction.

But, thou fearest God not only hides His face, but has also quite forsaken thee. He may, as to thy sense and feeling, but not as to His own purpose, which changeth not. Hear how He speaks to thee, and silences thy doubts: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer” (Isa 54:7-8). How gracious is thy God! What infinite mercy is it, that He should give thee such promises, so suited to the trials of thy faith, to preserve thee under them, and to bring thee out of them! Read carefully over and over again these promises, and may every reading of them disperse the cloud of unbelief, until thy soul be enlivened with the light of the Lord’s loving countenance.

But perhaps thou art in a worse case as to thine own apprehension. Thou thinkest: “God is incensed against me, and justly; He has cast me off, and I can expect no more favour at His hand. Once, indeed, I thought He loved me, but I have fallen into a great sin—an old besetting sin. My conscience accuses me of committing it against light and conviction. It is a foul, black spot, such as is not to be found upon the children of God.”

Thou art fallen, and wilt thou lie there, and not be raised up again? Thou art under guilt, and wilt thou nurse it, and add sin to sin? Aggravate the sinfulness of thy fall as much as thou wilt, yet thou canst not be truly humbled for it but by returning to God, and by trusting in the plenteous redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Then thy heart will be softened and melted into love, for grace will have its due honour, and thou wilt see what the Scripture says of thy case, in its divine truth and majesty. Thou wilt feel thyself exactly what the Word of God says of thee—a fallen sinful creature. In thee (that is, in thy flesh) dwelleth no good thing; so that there is not any sin but thou art capable of falling into it, through the strength of temptation. So long as thou art in the body, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; in this

conflict thou mayest fall, but the covenant secures thee from perishing. Abraham, the father of the faithful, fell—the friend of God fell into the same sin again and again. Moses fell; so did David. Peter, forewarned, fell; so did all the apostles. Yet they were believers, and they recovered themselves out of the snare of the devil. For whatever sin thou art fallen into may be pardoned, as theirs was. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). There is in it an infinite virtue to wash away every spot and stain; it is a public fountain—it stands open for daily use, that believers may wash and be clean; it is always, at every given moment, effectual; it cleanseth, in the present tense, now, today, while it is called today, for there is nothing new to be suffered on the part of Christ, in order to take away sin. He put it away by the sacrifice of Himself, the Father accepted it, and thus proclaims the free forgiveness of all the trespasses for which the atonement was made: “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). Why dost thou reject the comfort of this promise? It is suited to thy present distress, and is the remedy for it. Thou art fallen into unrighteousness; God says, I will be merciful to it. Thou art fallen into sins and iniquities; He says, I will remember them no more. Thou mayest remember thy fall, but let it be in order to rise from it by faith. It should teach thee thy need of the blood of the Lamb. It should bring thee to sprinkle it afresh upon thy conscience, and to live safe and happy under the protection of it. Thus apply it to thy fall, and thou wilt repent aright; thou wilt be truly humbled and made more watchful. Thou wilt live more by faith in thy covenant God, wilt glorify more the infinitely perfect salvation of Jesus, and wilt be more dependent upon the grace and keeping of the eternal Spirit.

Consider then, O my soul, the rich, abounding, super-abounding grace of thy God, in making such a provision for raising thee up when fallen into sin. He intended the promises in the covenant should be the means of thy recovery, as they give thee good ground still to trust in a covenant God, and in His immutable counsel and oath. O lie not then in guilt, rest not in unbelief, give not place to the devil. The Lord has put words into thy mouth, may He help thee, in the faith of thy heart, to take them up and say, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness” (Mic 7:8-9). If the Lord open to thee the rich treasury of grace in this scripture, and enable thee to depend on the ample security here given for raising thee from thy fall, then consider, in the

Third place, the express promises made in the covenant, that the believer shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. These promises are not conditional, made to the believer upon certain terms, as if upon doing his part God would do His also; for he does not stand by his own will, or strength, or faithfulness. He does not hold out to the end by his own diligence and watchfulness in means, or

receive the crown of glory as the merited reward of any works of righteousness done by him. The promises are all of free grace, not dependent on man's will, but on God's; not yea and nay, but of absolutely certain fulfilment. They were all made in the covenant to Christ the Head, and are already made good to Christ, as the Head, for the use of His members. "For all the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him Amen" (2Co 1:20). He was given for the covenant of His people, and as such He undertook to do all their works for them and in them, and therefore all the promised blessings of the covenant are laid up in His fulness. "In him they are yea"—and laid up, as the head has the fulness of the senses for the use of its members, "in him they are Amen." He communicates the promised blessings freely, not conditionally; by believing, and not for working. "Therefore," says the apostle, speaking of Christ's righteousness, "it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16).

In this sovereign manner and style runs the covenant, and every promise in it: I will be their God, of Mine own mere motion and grace, and according to the good pleasure of Mine own will, and they shall be My people. My will shall make them willing in the day of My power (Psa 110:3), for I will work in them both to will and to do (Phi 2:13); yea, I will be a Father unto them, and they shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2Co 6:18). The word *Father* relates to His children, and expresses the unchangeable love of His heart towards them; it is a dear covenant name, and denotes the inseparable connection between Him and His children; whenever they hear it, it should always excite in them an idea of His everlasting affection. He loves His family as a Father, and loves everyone of them with the same almighty love. He cannot change. He cannot cease to be a Father, and they cannot cease to be His children. His name is a security to them, that they cannot perish, for if one of them could, they all might. And then His covenant purpose to bring many sons unto glory would be defeated, His relation to them as a Father would be broken, He would be a Father without children, He would deny them the promised blessings, He would forget to be gracious to them, His will concerning them would change, or would be over-ruled by some opposite will, and His great plan in the covenant would come to nothing. But these things cannot possibly be. He is the Father of His children, and He has engaged, by promise and oath, to love, to bless, and to keep them for ever. Out of perfect love He gave them to His Son, Who undertook to be their Saviour; He came and was made man, Jehovah incarnate, to live and die for them. He was so delighted with them (for He has all their names written in His book), and with the work, that He was straitened till it was accomplished. Blessings on Him for ever! It is finished. The royal Saviour is upon the throne, almighty to save His dear redeemed. *He would lose His name, which is above every name, the honours of His salvation would fade away upon His head, and the glories of His offices would come to nothing, if one, whom Jesus lived and died to save, should perish. But it is not possible. Whom He loves, He loves unto the end.* "I give unto them," says He, "eternal

life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” They are His seed, and it was covenanted that He should see His seed. They are the travail of His soul, and He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. How can He be satisfied, if any one of them should be lost? He prayed, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” (Joh 17:11). And the Father always heard Him. He prayed that they might be with Him where He is, to see His glory: and the Holy Spirit covenanted to bring them to it. He undertook, as His name, Spirit, imports, to breathe life into them, to call, to convert them, to keep them, and to give them everything needful for their spiritual life. How can they fail of coming to glory, being thus kept for it by the power of God? The Holy Spirit would lose His name, Spirit, or breath of life, and His office, which is to abide with, and to dwell for ever in, the elect people of God, if any one of them should die from God, and perish. Thus there is full security given by the names and offices of the Trinity, that believers shall be kept from falling away. The *Father* cannot be without His children. The glory of *Jesus* would fade away if one of His redeemed was plucked out of His hand. The divine honours of the *Spirit* of life would be eclipsed if He was to forsake His charge, and suffer any of the redeemed to fall into hell. But these things cannot be. The will of the Father, Son, and Spirit is the same concerning the salvation of the elect, which is as secure as covenant bonds and oaths can make it.

Art thou then, O my soul, established in this great truth? Dost thou yield to the power of the evidence which the blessed Trinity have vouchsafed to give thee? Meditate carefully upon it for the growth of thy faith. Search the Scriptures, and observe how clearly God declares His fixed purpose to keep His people, and to hold them up unto the end. The great preacher of the gospel in the Old Testament Church speaks thus of the unchangeable will of a covenant God: “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). A great preacher in the New Testament Church has confirmed the same precious truth. He is speaking of the golden chain of salvation, and showing how inseparable every link of it is, and in this prospect he triumphs: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom 8:33-37). By the mouth of these two infallible witnesses the truth is established. They depose that the covenant is immutable, and that nothing can separate believers from the love wherewith God loves them in His Son. O most comfortable doctrine! How encouraging is it in any undertaking to set about it with certain hope of success. How animating in our Christian walk, how reviving in the dark and difficult path of it, to

have God's promise that He will keep us, and bring us to a happy end. How pleasing is it to go on by faith in our warfare, casting all our care upon Him Who careth for us (1Pe 5:7). How delightful is it to trust His promise, and daily to find it made good: "Ye are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation." Here, O my soul, thou art to seek for strong consolation amidst the trials and difficulties of thy walk. Thou art afraid of falling—God has engaged to hold thee up. Thou hast been tempted to think thou shouldst fall quite away, and come to nothing—but God says, thou art preserved in Christ Jesus. His covenant and oath are made to confirm the faith of thy persevering. Thou standest by faith, and thy faith should lead thee to rest safely on what God says about thy standing; and for thy faith itself, its continuing, its increasing, thou hast His infallible faithfulness to depend upon. *Thou art weak, but He keeps thee by His power. Thine enemies are strong—but none of them shall pluck thee out of His hand. Thou art willing to join them, and to depart from the living God, but He has promised to put His fear into thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from Him. He meets with thy doubts, and answers all thine objections in a word: "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

Be of good courage, then, O my soul, and go forward, strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (Eph 6:10), and He will bring thee safe to the end of thy journey. He has promised it. Put thyself into His hands, and give Him the glory of keeping thee. He will hold up thy goings in His paths, that thy footsteps slip not. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore. How then canst thou miscarry, safe under His guidance and keeping? Commit thy ways unto the Lord. Do it simply. Look up by faith to His promise, and then lean on His arm. Thus going on thou mayest rejoice at every step in the Lord thy God. He has left thee a sweet hymn upon the subject, with which the weary travelers to Zion have oft refreshed their spirits. Take it up, and sing it after them. Study it; mix faith with it, and with perfect reliance on what God, Who cannot lie, has promised in it to do for thee, sing and make melody with it in thy heart unto the Lord:

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isa 27:2-6)

O my good God and faithful keeper, I do believe these precious promises; help mine unbelief. Forgive my distrusting Thy faithfulness, and enable me steadfastly to rely upon it for the future. What return can I make unto Thee for grafting me into the true vine? O Lord, this love surpasseth knowledge. I was fit for nothing but the fire, and Thou hast brought me into the vineyard of red wine, and hast enabled me to trust in that blood of the Lamb which cheer-

eth God and man. On this my soul lives, and is refreshed; and being through grace in Him, and living upon Him, I bless Thee, holy Father, for Thy faithful promise to keep me unto the end. I am still an easy prey to all those who seek the hurt of my soul, but Thou hast given me Thy word that, lest any hurt me, Thou wilt keep me night and day. I confess, gracious God, that I have dishonoured thee by doubting of Thy love, and by questioning its unchangeableness, but now I believe that fury is not in Thee to any one branch in the true Vine. There is love, and nothing but love, in all Thy dealings with Christ, and with His. Forgive my guilty fears and suspicions of Thy forsaking me, arising from my weakness, and from the strength of mine enemies. I now see that Thou canst as easily consume them as fire can briars and thorns. Lord, increase my faith in Thy promised strength, that I may lay hold of it for peace, and may keep fast hold of it for maintaining peace with Thee, always and by all means. O grant me this, my good God, that my faith may work more by love. Let me take deeper root in Jesus, and grow up more into Him, blossoming and budding and flourishing in His vineyard. I depend upon Thee to keep me a branch in Him, and to make me a fruitful branch bringing forth plentifully the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the glory and praise of God. I believe the work is Thine; Thou hast begun it, and Thou wilt carry it on until the day of the Lord Jesus. Thou art faithful to Thy Word and work. In dependence upon Thy faithfulness I hope to persevere. Let it be done unto me according to Thy promises, wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust. Hear, Lord, and answer for Thy mercies' sake in Jesus, to Whom, with Thee and the Eternal Spirit, three Persons in one Godhead, be equal glory and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

William Romaine (1714-1795): Anglican minister, author of the respected trilogy *The Life, The Walk, and The Triumph of Faith*. Born at Hartlepool, County Durham, and educated at Christ Church, Oxford. He preached evangelical doctrine to large crowds despite the opposition of the church hierarchy. Romaine was a notable Hebrew scholar and published a four volume revision of Marios de Calasio's Hebrew dictionary and concordance.



ADVANTAGES OF PERSEVERANCE

Elisha Coles (1608-1688)

FOR the firmer support and comfort of His people, as also to allure and bring in others who are hankering about the door, or yet in the high-ways and hedges, it has pleased the holy and only wise God to indulge us with plain and positive assurance of the certain continuance of all who have once believed and received the grace of God in truth, albeit¹ that many concerned in this assurance attain not to it. Faith and holiness are of an abiding nature, and this is that we call “perseverance.” All and every one of God’s elect, being once regenerated and believing, are and shall be invincibly carried on to the perfect obtainment of blessedness and glory.

This affords matter of eminent support to believers, especially in difficult cases; it also evinces² matter of duty on the believer’s part, and something of direction in reference to both.

Stand still and behold the salvation of the Lord; and, at the sight of this great thing, say in your hearts, with a holy astonishment, “What hath God wrought!” Let your souls be filled and enlarged with everlasting admirings of that grace, that sovereign grace, which has so impregnably secured the salvation of His chosen, that no manner of thing whether within them or without them shall be able to defeat it, or hinder them of it; no, not “the gates of hell”; nay, not so much as one of the stakes thereof shall be removed, and that for ever. Shaken you may be, and tossed with a tempest, but not overturned, because you have an eternal root. Electing love is of that sovereignty, that it rules and over-rules all, both in heaven and earth. Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord, the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier, Counselor, and Comforter, in all They have done, do, or will do, do still pursue that purpose. When you shall see how God has carried on His work in you, even bearing you on eagles’ wings until He had brought you to Himself, how will you magnify His work, and admire it then! Begin it now.

Let us consider what advantages this great truth of believers’ invincible perseverance yields to us.

1. *As it is a part of the doctrine of election, which teaches that nothing in us, but love and grace in God was the only original cause of our salvation; the knowledge whereof will work in the soul a holy love towards God, Whom nothing offends but sin.* Simon answered right, when he said, “He that had most forgiven him, would love most” (Luk 7:43); whence it follows that he who believes the free remission of all his sins from first to last, must needs love God more than he who believes only the pardon of those that are past. Now this grace of love being

¹ **albeit** – although; even though; notwithstanding.

² **evinces** – shows clearly.

the strongest and most operative principle, he that is led by it must act accordingly; that is, vigorously, and without weariness, as Paul did. And Joseph, having received large tokens of God's love to him, and expecting more yet, argues against and, with a holy disdain and slight, puts by the temptation: "How can I do this, and sin against God," Who has dealt, and will deal, so bountifully with me? Divine love is of infinite efficacy.

2. *As it teaches the soul to depend upon God for its keeping, as having His almighty power absolutely engaged for it.* Whereas, if the efficacy and event of all that God does for me should depend upon something to be done by myself, who am a frail creature, and prone to revolt, I should still be in fear, because still in danger of falling, and losing all at last; and this fear, being an enfeebling passion, must needs render my resistance, and all my endeavors, both irregular and weak: whereas a magnanimous and fearless spirit, who sees himself clothed with a divine power, shall have his wits, as we say, more about him to discern dangers and advantages, and, consequently, how to avoid the one, and improve the other.

3. *As it gives assurance "our labor shall not be in vain."* This made these believing Hebrews to endure that great fight of afflictions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods because they knew they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance (Heb 10:34). All manner of accomplishments put into one, and made your own, would not so invincibly steel your foreheads and strengthen your hearts, as to be sure of success, and to come off conquerors at last: the apostle, therefore, brings it in as the highest encouragement in our Christian warfare (Rom 6:14, 8:37). And our blessed Lord Himself, Who of all others had the hardest task to perform, it made His face as a flint, because He knew He should not be confounded (Isa 50:7).

Make it one, and that the main part, of your business, to foil and *disprove* the objections that are brought against this doctrine; and your nearest way to it is by "growing in grace" (2Pe 3:18, 1:5-10). Lay *aside* and cast away every weight; especially the sin that most easily besets you; your bosom sin, whatever it be; cast them to the moles and the bats; they are not fit mates for day-light creatures (1Th 5:5-6). It is a noble prize you run for; therefore clog not yourself with any thing that may hinder or retard your pace. *Watch* against the beginnings and very first motions of sin; nip it in the bud; *abstain* from all appearance of evil; and *walk not* on the brink of your liberty. It is easier to keep out an invader, than to expel him being entered; to keep down a rebel and prevent his rising, than to conquer him when he is up. Great and black clouds have small beginnings; the bigness of your hand at first, may rise and spread so as to cover the whole heavens; therefore, keep off sin at staff's end.

Be diligent and industrious in it. Think not, because it is God Who performs all things for you, that therefore you may sit still, or be remiss in your duty; your arms and armor were not provided to rust in your tent. There may be, indeed, such a juncture in Providence, that it may be your duty, and consequently your strength, to sit still, as was theirs at the Red Sea (Exo 14:13);

this is when all further motion is shut up to you; and then the Lord will do His work without you; but usually there is something to be done on our part. Though the Lord would go forth before David, and smite the Philistines, yet David must bestir himself (2Sa 5:24). This thing is constantly to be affirmed, that they who have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works (Ti 3:8), and do it the rather, “to cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we” (2Co 11:12).

Cleave to Jesus Christ, and to Him only; and trust not to your holding of Him, but to His holding of you. This did David, when he says, “Thou holdest me by my right hand” (Psa 73:23). Follow Him, as men follow the court, whose dependence is upon it. While following Him, you cannot do amiss; nor will any good thing be withheld, whether for strength, counsel, or otherwise. Since there are such arguments for believers’ perseverance, let us all so demean ourselves, that we may have them all stand on our side, for proof and evidence that we are of that happy remnant, whom the great God has set apart for Himself, and whom He has made and wrought for this self-same thing; and as it was His purpose, so let it be our spirit and practice to glorify the riches of His grace.

1. *If born of God, let us show forth the virtues of our Father,* and bear ourselves as His children, both towards Him, and towards the world. Let us live upon Him, and live to Him; rejoicing always before Him; first, for His own blessedness, and then for ours, as derived from His, and by Him reserved in heaven for us; and all, as designing to honor Him as our Father.

2. *If we have faith, let it appear by our works.* It must be some singular thing that must distinguish us from other men; it is not profession, nor works, nor actions neither, as to the matter of them and so far as visible to men, that will approve us believers; but the principle from which they grow, and the end they drive at; the result of Abraham’s faith was, “to give glory to God,” and so will ours, if Abraham’s seed.

3. *Let us carry ourselves under all dispensations, not only quietly, but thankfully, and so as to answer God’s end.* Walk humbly; hate the thing that is evil; have the world under your feet; esteem precious of Christ; honor His ordinances; let every grace have its perfect work; and rejoice in hopes of that glory which all these things are preparatory to.

4. *If one with Christ, and He our Mediator, then let us walk as He walked,* Who held His own will always subject to His Father’s, reckoning it, “His meat to do His will, and to finish His work” (see Joh 4:34). Let us also wait His advice and counsel in every business, and follow it; commit our cause to Him, and interest Him in all our concernments.

5. *Apply yourselves to every attribute of God, according to the present occasion; and dwell upon them, and leave them not until you have the grace and help intended by them.* They are all made over to the heirs of salvation, to live upon: let it not be said, that in the midst of our abundance we are in straits!

6. *If made for the glory of God, make good your end.* He is glorious in holiness, and by holiness only can you glorify Him. Bear, therefore, on the forehead of

your design and conversation, that royal inscription, “Holiness to the Lord” (Exo 28:36). By this you will “set to your seal that God is true” (Joh 3:33), and approve yourselves to be “children that will not lie” (Isa 63:8). It will also be of singular use and service to yourselves, as to that other end of your being: that you have “glorified God on the earth,” will be a substantial argument that “He will glorify you” in the world to come (Joh 17:4). *For though your personal righteousness be not your title to the heavenly inheritance, yet your constant progression in holiness will be your best evidence, next to the immediate witnessings of the Spirit, that you have a title, and that your title is good.* Since, therefore, we were made for and expect such things, “what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2Pe 3:11).

Well it is for us, who find in ourselves so great proneness to backslide, that our eternal condition does not depend on ourselves, but upon that foundation of God mentioned in Timothy, where the apostle, speaking of some who had made shipwreck of the faith, lest true believers should faint in their minds at the sight and apprehension of it, he tells them that nevertheless, that is, notwithstanding this woeful backsliding of some, perhaps of eminent profession, yet “the foundation of God standeth sure,” as if he had said, that they who are of this foundation are sure to be kept: and he confirms it with his seal, “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” He knows whom He has chosen, and concerning whom He has covenanted, that “they shall not depart from Him,” and therefore He will not let them go. They shall be kept as those seven thousand were, from bowing the knee to Baal, adding this caution withal, that “every one which nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19): which, as it is a means of God’s appointing to keep from apostasy, so it shall be to them an evidence that they are of that foundation, and shall be kept. For, it being His scope to comfort believers against their misgivings which arise from a sense of their own weakness, and a like aptness in themselves to revolt, He needs must use an argument suitable to such an end: and therefore, in saying, “The foundation of God standeth sure,” He must intend, believers standing sure upon it; for the standing sure of the foundation would be small comfort to us, if yet we might be blown off it, or sink beside it. Does God take care for sparrows? For oxen? For ravens? Much more for believing souls, who have committed themselves to His keeping. Let the fowler do all he can, not a sparrow shall fall to the ground. You will say, Without the will of God they cannot: and the will of God is, that they shall not. A thousand may fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, but it shall not come nigh him (Psa 91:7). He that determined such a sparrow shall not fall, determined also to prevent that which would cause him to fall; and therefore, either the fowler shall not find the bird, or the bird shall discern his approach, or smell the powder, and be gone; or if he shoot, he shall miss his mark; or if he hit, it shall light on the feathers that will grow again; a believer’s heel may be bruised, but his vital parts are out of reach, and therefore safe.

*Thou shalt beneath His wings abide,
And safe within His care confide;
His faithfulness shall ever be
A sure protection unto thee.*

Taken from *A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty*.

Elisha Coles (1608-1688): A native of Northamptonshire, received some training in Calvinist tenets in his youth, but no formal university training. He is best known for his book on God's sovereignty, one of the most popular 17th century books written by a lay theologian.



HOW TO TRUST GOD'S PROMISES FOR OUR ASSURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE

L. R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003)

It is Written—Praise the Lord

IT is stated in the *written Word* of God by the Holy Spirit what every born-again child of God has in the *living Word*, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This to me is the greatest assurance one will find or need in this life. The purpose of this article that the Lord has laid upon my heart is to show you what all believers are and have in the Lord Jesus Christ and to show you that in Him all the promises of God are yea, and Amen, unto the glory of God (2Co 1:20). I have gone over and over these blessed Scriptures thousands of times in my Christian life; and they have been precious to me; for they have been the hidden treasures, hid in Christ for me (Col 2:3), to be my spiritual food and drink.

I know as you pray and meditate upon these precious truths you will find as I have, that the Lord will “make unto you a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6).

It is written—we are complete in Christ (Col 2:10).

It is written—we are a new creation in Christ (2Co 5:17).

It is written—we are saved from the wrath of God through Christ (Rom 5:9).

It is written—we have passed from death unto life (Joh 5:24).

It is written—we are under no condemnation in Christ (Rom 8:1).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have everlasting life in Christ (Joh 3:36).

It is written—we are justified freely from all things by His grace in Christ (Rom 3:24).

It is written—we are made righteous without works through Christ (Rom 4:6).

It is written—we are blessed in Christ because our sins are covered (Rom 4:7).

It is written—we are doubly blessed in Christ because our sins are no longer imputed to our account (Rom 4:8).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we are free from sin by Christ (Rom 6:18, 22 with Joh 8:36), that is, sin is no longer the rule of my life, nor do I live under its power anymore (Rom 6:14).

It is written—we shall never be separated from His love by anything (Joh 13:1; Rom 8:35-39).

It is written—we have peace with God, for we are in Christ, Who is our peace (Rom 5:1; Eph 2:14).

It is written—we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand in Christ (Rom 5:2).

It is written—we have the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17).

It is written—we are safe in the arms of the Son and the Father (Joh 10:28-29); I call it the double hiding place (Col 3:3).

It is written—we sit together in heavenly places with Christ (Eph 2:6).

It is written—we find His grace sufficient in all things (2Co 12:9-10; 9:8), because our sufficiency is of God in Christ (2Co 3:5).

It is written—we are risen with Christ; we are hid with Christ in God; we shall appear with Him in glory (Col 3:1-4).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have rest in Christ (Mat 11:28).

It is written—we have pastures green to feed in, in Christ (Joh 10:9).

It is written—we shall not die the second death, in Christ (Joh 11:26).

It is written—we shall not abide in darkness in Him (Joh 8:12; 12:46).

It is written—we shall be where He is in eternity (Joh 14:3).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we can ask and receive anything in His name (Joh 14:13).

It is written—we are not under the Law but under grace in Him (Rom 6:14).

It is written—we have the Spirit Who helps us to pray (Rom 8:26).

It is written—we are conformed to His image (Rom 8:29).

It is written—we have been predestinated, called, justified, glorified in Him (Rom 8:28-30).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—He is made unto us by God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1Co 1:30).

It is written—we are on the only foundation (1Co 3:11).

It is written—we are the temple of God in Christ (1Co 3:16; 6:19; 2Co 6:16).

It is written—our work in Christ is not in vain (1Co 15:58).

It is written—we have the earnest of the Spirit (2Co 5:5, 1:22; Eph 1:14, 4:30).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have been reconciled to God through Christ (2Co 5:19).

It is written—we have become rich in Him (2Co 8:9; Col 2:3).

It is written—we are delivered from this present evil world by Christ (Gal 1:4).

It is written—we are justified by the faith of Christ (Gal 2:16).

It is written—we have been crucified with Christ and live by His faith (Gal 2:20).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have been redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).

It is written—we are children of the free woman, children of promise (Gal 4:26-31).

It is written—we have the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

It is written—we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6).

It is written—we have forgiveness of sins in Christ (Eph 1:7).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have been raised from the grave of sin (Eph 2:1).

It is written—we are saved by His grace (Eph 2:8-9).

It is written—we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10).

It is written—we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Eph 5:30).

It is written—we have the whole armour of God to fight against Satan (Eph 6:11-18).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we are confident that He will finish His work (Phi 1:6).

It is written—we are certain that to die will be gain (Phi 1:21).

It is written—we are to suffer for His sake (Phi 1:29).

It is written—we always have our great God working in us (Phi 2:13).

It is written—we have a citizenship which is in heaven (Phi 3:20).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we shall have a body like His (Phi 3:21).

It is written—we have the peace of God (Phi 4:7).

It is written—we can do all things through Christ (Phi 4:13).

It is written—we have all our needs supplied in Christ (Phi 4:19).

It is written—we have been delivered from the power of darkness (Col 1:13).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have redemption through His blood (Col 1:14).

It is written—we are holy, unblameable, unproveable in God's sight (Col 1:21-22).

It is written—we have Christ within, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

It is written—we have had all handwriting of ordinances that were against us blotted out (Col 2:14).

It is written—we have been called unto holiness in Him (1Th 4:7).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we shall be raised with Him in the morning of the resurrection (1Th 4:16-18).

It is written—we shall be preserved blameless until His coming (1Th 5:23).

It is written—we shall be admired in Him (2Th 1:10).

It is written—we have that everlasting consolation and good hope through grace (2Th 2:16).

It is written—we have His faithfulness toward us (2Th 3:3).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have Christ as our One Mediator (1Ti 2:5).

It is written—we have been given the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind (2Ti 1:7).

It is written—we were given all we have in Christ before the world began (2Ti 1:9).

It is written—we shall be kept in the day of judgment (2Ti 1:12).

It is written—we are assured that the Lord knows them that are His (2Ti 2:19).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have been given spiritual feet to flee from sin (2Ti 2:22).

It is written—we have a God Who cannot lie (Ti 1:2).

It is written—we have the grace of God which has taught us all things (Ti 2:11-12).

It is written—we have the angels ministering unto us (Heb 1:14).

It is written—we are one with the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10-11).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have a throne of grace to come to (Heb 4:14-16).

It is written—we have an unchanging God (Heb 6:17-18).

It is written—we have a hope which is the anchor of our soul (Heb 6:18-20).

It is written—we have One Who is able to save us to the uttermost (Heb 7:25).

It is written—we have written in our hearts and minds this so great salvation (Heb 8:10).

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have eternal redemption in Christ (Heb 9:14).

It is written—we have One Who appears in the presence of God for us (Heb 9:24).

It is written—we have been perfected forever in Christ (Heb 10:14).

It is written—we may enter the holiest by the blood of Christ (Heb 10:19).

It is written—we have the same hope as the faith heroes (Heb 11:10, 16, with v. 40), for the whole chapter belongs to us.

Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have a heavenly Father Who chastens us (Heb 12:6-13).

It is written—we have received a kingdom that cannot be moved (Heb 12:28).

It is written—we are blessed to have to endure trials and temptations (Jam 1:2-4, 12).

It is written—we have the promise of more grace (Jam 4:6).

It is written—we have an inheritance kept by the power of God (1Pe 1:3-5).
Praise the Lord.

It is written—we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2Pe 1:3).

It is written—we have fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Spirit (1Jo 1:3).

It is written—we have a confession box where Christ our Great High Priest listens to us (1Jo 1:9).

It is written—we have the blessed hope of new heavens and a new earth with a new body like Christ's (2Pe 3:13; 1Jo 3:1-2).

Praise the Lord.

Let me sum all this up with these precious words:

Christ is the true medicine to restore my soul.

Christ is the meat and drink to refresh me.

Christ is the fountain of life from which I drink to quench my thirst.

Christ is the light in my darkness—then I shall not remain in darkness.

Christ is the joy in my sadness—then what shall overcome me?

Christ is the advocate against my accuser—then who shall lay any charge to God's elect?

Christ is the wisdom against my folly—who can seduce me?

Christ is the righteousness against my sin—who shall condemn me?

Christ is the mercy-seat against the judgment seat.

Christ is the throne of grace against my condemnation.

Christ is my peace and rest against an evil conscience.

Christ is my victory against all my enemies—if God be for us who can be against us?

Christ is my propitiation against all my trespasses.

Christ is my strength against all my weaknesses.

Christ is the way against my wandering—then who shall deceive me?

Christ is the power in the midst of my infirmities.

Christ is my everlasting High Priest to intercede for me.

Christ is all in all—the Anchor of hope—the Flower of humility, the Rose of meekness—the Incense of prayer—the Fountain of blessing—the precious Pearl of great price—the Rock of my salvation—the triumphant Conqueror of hell—the Prince of Peace—the Sun of righteousness—the Bright and Morning Star—the Word upholding all things—the Light enlightening all things—the Love sustaining all things.

Again I say, Christ is all in all. Unto the lost I would say, "Look unto Christ and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for He is God, and there is none else" (Isa 45:22). Unto the child of God I would say, "Look—and keep on looking—unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your faith" (Heb 12:2).

Listen one more time:

“Christ is all in all”—Let us praise Him.

L.R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003): Born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father’s Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he began a church, Christian bookstore, and gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide, beginning to reproduce sermon booklets on a mimeograph machine. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Mount Zion Bible Church was founded. In subsequent years the ministry grew to include several printing presses, the prison ministry (1984), the Chapel Library audio tape ministry (1987), the Free Grace Broadcaster quarterly magazine (1988), and the Mount Zion Bible Institute (1995).

