

THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

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A SERMON
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
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“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”
Psalm 91:5

If Moses wrote this Psalm, he might represent the fowler as being in his case the king of Egypt, who sought to slay him, or the Amalekites, who pounced upon Israel in the plain when they little expected it. If David penned it, he might have compared Saul to the fowler, for he himself says he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains.

But we believe, if the verse is applicable to either of those cases, it was intended by the psalmist not to have a private interpretation, but to be applicable to all time. And we believe it is spoken concerning that arch-enemy of souls, the great deceiver, Satan, of whom we just now sang—

*“Satan, the fowler, who betrays
Unguarded souls a thousand ways”*

“The prince of the power of this world, the spirit which still works in the children of disobedience,” is like a fowler, always attempting to destroy us. It was once said by a talented writer that the old devil was dead and that there was a new devil now—by which he meant to say that the devil of old times was a rather different devil from the deceiver of these times.

We believe that it is the same evil spirit, but there is a difference in his mode of attack. The devil of five hundred years ago was a black and grimy thing, well-portrayed in our old pictures of that evil spirit. He was a persecutor who cast men into the furnace and put them to death for serving Christ. The devil of this day is a well-spoken gentleman—he does not persecute—he rather attempts to persuade and to beguile.

He is not now the furious Romanist, so much as the insinuating unbeliever, attempting to overturn our religion, whilst at the same time he pretends he would but make it more rational and so more triumphant. He would only link worldliness with religion, and so he would really make religion void, under the cover of developing the great power of the Gospel and bringing out secrets which our forefathers had never discovered.

Satan is always a fowler. Whatever his tactics may be, his object is still the same—to catch men in his net. Men are here compared to silly, weak birds, that have not skill enough to avoid the snare and have not strength enough to escape from it. Satan is the fowler. He has been so and is so still—and if he does not now attack us as the roaring lion, roaring against us in persecution, he attacks us as the adder, creeping silently along the path, endeavoring to bite our heel with his poisoned fangs, and weaken the power of grace, and ruin the life of godliness within us.

Our text is a very comforting one to all believers when they are beset by temptation. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

First, *a few words concerning the snare of the fowler*. Secondly, the *deliverance*. And thirdly, the *certainty of it*, dwelling upon that word “surely,” for it seems to be the diamond wherewith this precious golden promise is embellished. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

I. First, then, THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER.

It is an illustration too suggestive for me to thoroughly unravel. I must leave it for your meditations at home to enumerate the divers ways in which a fowler attempts to take his birds, and then you will have suggested to you the divers means which the evil spirit employs for the destruction of souls. Allow me, however, just to begin, and pass over two or three points connected with the fowler and with the evil one.

1. First, *the fowler's snare is intimately connected with secrecy.*

“Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.” Therefore the fowler carefully covers up his trap, or if the trap itself be uncovered, he does well—beguile the bird so that it is utterly ignorant of his intention to take it in the trap—little thinking that the food laid there for its banqueting is really placed there for its enticement and destruction.

The fowler, when he goes after his birds, is very careful lest they should discover him. We hear, for instance, that in the taking of wild ducks, in Lincolnshire, a man will hold before his mouth a piece of turf, in order that the smell of his breath may not be perceived by the birds, who are exceedingly wary.

The temptations of the world are of this secret sort to a Christian, though not to the wicked man, for the wicked man sins with his eyes wide open—dashing into the net knowing it is a net, laying hold of iniquity with both its hands, even when destruction stares him in the face. He will commit a sin that he knows is condemned even by the law of the land—he will rush into a crime, concerning the guilt of which no doubt can be entertained.

Not so the Christian—he is taken by secrecy. “Ah!” says one, “if I thought such and such a thing were really wrong, if I were perfectly convinced of its wrongfulness, I would give it up.” It is just there the difficulty lies. So would the bird say, “If I thought that really were a trap, I would not enter it. If I were perfectly persuaded that net would entangle me, I would not fly to such and such a spot. I would not approach there at all, if I were sure it would be to my destruction.”

How many a professor there is who asks the question, “May I go to this place? May I go to that place?” and some of us answer, “No,” and we are called Puritans for it. But let those who have attempted to keep their godliness intact, whilst they pursue the pleasures of this world, stand up and make the mournful confession that the healthiness of the two things can never exist together.

We must either serve God wholly or serve the evil one wholly. “If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him.” One, or else the other. Many a man has been entrapped into sin by Satan, not knowing that it was evil! Someone has hinted to him in business, for instance—“You may very safely do such and such a thing—all the shopkeepers in the street have done it. It is not actually dishonest—it improves the article, it really does. And although you can thus sell an article at a dearer rate than you ought to sell it, yet you need not tell the public. And if the article is all the better for it, it is quite fair and safe that you should adulterate it.”

And so the good easy man, not opening both his eyes, I think, but shutting one of them a little, lest he should see too well to be able to fill his pockets in the dark, is a little taken aside. And by and by he is led to discover that the act which he has done is the taking of him in the snare of the fowler, for he has been sinning against his God, and his God therefore punishes him for it with many stripes, and lays His rod upon him.

I do not think that a Christian is so often betrayed into a sin that is palpable and known, as he is into a sin that is secret. If the devil comes to my door with his horns visible, I will never let him in. But if he comes with his hat on as a respectable gentleman, he is at once admitted. The metaphor may be very quaint, but it is quite true.

Many a man has taken in an evil thing, because it has been varnished and glossed over and not apparently an evil—and he has thought in his heart there is not much harm in it. So he has let in the little thing and it has been like the breaking forth of water—the first drop has brought after it a torrent. The beginning has been but the beginning of a fearful end.

Take care, Christian, of things that are secret. Take care of the common doings of the world, which are well enough for them, perhaps. We would not deny them their pleasures, for they have no others, but

they are not good for you, for you have a finer life—a life of a finer texture and order than can exist in the haunts of ungodly persons.

Remember, you are not to be a judge for others. Some men, especially those who are unconverted, can, without being led into sin, indulge in many gaities and merriments. But the Christian is like the Englishman, who cannot hope to survive long where the jungle fever reigns. The native can live there, but he cannot.

And so you who are twice-born will find your piety ruined, by that which to a worldly man does not lead him into greater evil than that which he would naturally commit. You are to have a stricter rule on yourselves than others and are to be more stern in your piety than the world would have you be. For sin is usually hidden and the snare is not often made apparent. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

2. In the second place, *the snare of the fowler is generally noted for its adaptation.*

You do not find a fowler setting the same snare for one bird as for another. He knows his bird and he adapts his bait to it. He would be an unwise fowler who should go to work with the same machinery to catch the lark that flies on high as the duck that swims along the stream. The fowler is wiser than that—he adapts his snare to the condition of the bird which he desires to take.

Satan, the fowler, does just the same. There is one man here. He tempts him to drunkenness. Perhaps that would naturally be his sin, if left without grace in his heart. And Satan knowing it to be his weak point, attempts to overcome him by surfeiting gluttony, and drunkenness.

Another man is utterly impervious to any temptation to that bestial habit, but it may be, he is easily taken in another snare—the snare of lust. Therefore Satan adapts his temptation to the hot blood of the man who naturally would be inclined to live a life of sin.

Another one, perhaps, eschews every lascivious and sensual habit—then Satan comes to him and adapts his temptation to the shape of pride. The man is naturally a melancholy man, fond of solitude—Satan gets him, if he can, to wrap himself up in a solitary dignity, to say, “I am holy.” “Lord, I thank you, I am not as other men are.”

Or if a man is not naturally inclined to a very high degree of pride, Satan takes him with sloth. The man likes an easy life—Satan therefore adapts his bait to him by letting him sit still, fold his arms, and so perish by slothfulness. And mark this—he who sits still in the frost, when the snow is on the ground, in the depths of the wild regions of the frozen zone, must as surely perish by his idleness, as if he drove a dagger to his heart. Satan knows that and so adapts his bait accordingly.

Oh! how often it happens, beloved, that you and I condemn a thing in another person which we allow in ourselves, perhaps without knowing it. We say of such a one, “How proud he is!” Well, our pride is not exactly of that shape. We have got another shaped pride, but the same article—labeled differently, but the same thing.

Satan adapts the pride to each particular case. We are rich—he does not perhaps tempt us to the pride of riches, but he tempts us to the pride of mastership and makes us harsh masters to our servants. Or if he does not tempt us to that pride, he perhaps enchants us with the pride of generosity, and we are apt to boast of our kindness, and of what we have given away.

He will always adapt his trap to his man and his bait to his bird. He will not tempt you all with the same temptations he would tempt me with. Nor me with the temptations with which he would naturally assail another. “The snare of the fowler.” A cunning enemy we have to deal with. He knows our weak points, he has been dealing with men for these last six thousand years. He knows all about them.

He is possessed of a gigantic intellect, though he be a fallen spirit. And he is easily able to discover where our sore places are and there it is he immediately attacks us. If we are like Achilles, and cannot be wounded anywhere but in our heel, then at the heel he will send his dart and nowhere else. He will find out our easily besetting sin, and there, if he can, he will attempt to work our ruin and our destruction. Let us bless God that it is written, “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

3. In the next place, *the fowler’s snare is frequently connected with pleasure, profit, and advantage.*

In the bird's case, it is for the seed scattered on the ground that he flies to the snare. It is some tempting bait which allures him to his death. And usually Satan, the fowler, uses a temptation wherewith to beguile us.

"Oh!" says one, "I cannot give up such and such a thing, it is so pleasant. Sir, you never knew the charms of such and such a pursuit, otherwise you could never advise me to relinquish it." Yes, my friend, but it is just the sweetness of it to you that makes it the more dangerous. Satan never sells his poisons naked, he always gilds them before he vends them. He knows very well that men will buy them and swallow them, if he does but gild them beforehand.

Take care of pleasures—mind what you are at when you are at them. Many of them are innocent and healthful, but many of them are destructive. It is said that where the most beautiful cacti grow, there the most venomous serpents are to be found at the root of every plant.

And it is so with sin. Your fairest pleasures will harbor your grossest sins. Take care. Take care of your pleasures. Cleopatra's asp was introduced in a basket of flowers—so are sins often brought to us in the flowers of our pleasures. Satan offers to the drunk the sweetness of the intoxicating cup, which rejoices him, when his brain is rioting in frolic and when his soul is lifted up within him.

He offers to the lustful man the scenes and pleasures of carnal mirth, and merriment, and delight, and so he leads him astray with the bait, concealing the hook which afterwards shall pain him. He gives to you and to me, each of us, the offer of our peculiar joy. He tickles us with pleasures, that he may lay hold upon us, and so have us in his power.

I would have every Christian be especially on his guard against the very thing that is most pleasing to his human nature. I would not have him avoid everything that pleases him, but I would have him be on his guard against it. Just like Job, when his sons had been feasting in their houses. He did not forbid them doing it, but he said, "I will offer a sacrifice, lest my sons should have sinned in their hearts, and should have cursed God foolishly." He was more careful over them at the time of their feasting than at any other season.

Let us do the same. Let us remember that the snare of the fowler is generally connected with some pretended pleasure or profit, but that Satan's end is not our pleasing, but our destruction.

4. In the next place, *sometimes the fowler very wisely employs the force of example.*

We all know the influence of the decoy-duck, in endeavoring to bring others into the snare. How very often Satan, the fowler, employs a decoy to lead God's people into sin! You get with a man—you think him to be a true Christian. You have some respect for his character. He is a high professor, can talk religion by the yard and can give you any quantity of theology you like to ask for.

You see him commit a sin—ten to one but you will do the same, if you have much respect for him—and so he will lead you on. And mark, Satan is very careful in the men whom he chooses to be decoys. He never employs a wicked man to be a decoy for a good man. It is very seldom, when Satan would decoy a Christian into a snare, that he makes use of an open reprobate.

No, he makes use of the man who is supposedly religious and who looks to be of the same quality as yourself, and therefore entices you astray. Let a bad man meet me in the street and ask me to commit sin! The devil knows better than to set him at any such work as that, because he knows I should pass by immediately. If he wants his errand well done, he sends one to me whom I call brother, and so through the brotherhood of profession I am apt to give him credence and pay him respect.

And then if he goes astray, the force of example is very powerful, and so I may easily be led into the net too. Take care of your best friends. Be careful of your companions. Choose the best you can, then follow them no farther than they follow Christ. Let your course be entirely independent of every one else. Say with Joshua, let others do what they will, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

5. Note, once more, that *sometimes the fowler, when he fails to take his bird by deceit and craft, will go a-hawking after it*—will send his hawk into the air to bring down his prey.

It often happens, when the devil cannot ruin a man by getting him to commit a sin, he attempts to slander him. He sends a hawk after him and tries to bring him down by slandering his good name. I will

give you a piece of advice. I know a good minister, now in venerable old age, who was once most villainously lied against and slandered by a man who hated him only for the truth's sake.

The good man was grieved—he threatened the slanderer with a lawsuit, unless he apologized. He did apologize. The slander was printed in the papers in a public apology and you know what was the consequence? The slander was more believed than if he had said nothing about it.

And I have learned this lesson—to do with the slanderous hawk what the little birds do—*just fly up*. The hawk cannot do them any hurt while they keep above him—it is only when they come down that he can injure them. It is only when by mounting he gets above the birds that the hawk comes sweeping down upon them and destroys them.

If any slander you, do not come down to them. Let them slander on. Say, as David said concerning Shimei, “If the LORD hath given him commandment to curse, let him curse,” and if the sons of Zeruiah say, “Let us go and take this dead dog's head,” you say, “Nay, let him curse.” And in that way you will live down slander.

If some of us turned aside to notice every bit of a sparrow that began chirping at us, we should have nothing to do but to answer them. If I were to fight people on every doctrine I preach, I should do nothing else but just amuse the devil and indulge the combative principles of certain religionists who like nothing better than quarrelling.

By the grace of God, say what you please against me—I will never answer you, but go straight on. All shall end well, if the character be but kept clean. The more dirt that is thrown on it by slander, the more it shall glisten and the more brightly it shall shine. Have you ever felt your fingers itch sometimes to be at a man who slanders you?

I have. I have sometimes thought, “I cannot hold my tongue any longer now. I must answer that fellow.” But I have asked of God for grace to imitate Jesus, who, “when he was reviled reviled not again,” and by His strength let them go straight on. The surest way in the world to get rid of a slander is just to let it alone and say nothing about it, for if you prosecute the rascal who utters it, or if you threaten him with an action, and he has to apologize, you will be no better off—some fools will still believe it.

Let it alone—let it keep as it is. And so God will help you to fulfill by your wisdom His own promise, “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

And now, ere I close this point, let me observe once more, the fowler, when he is determined to take his birds uses all these arts at once perhaps, and *besets the bird on every side*. So you will remember, beloved, it is with you. Satan will not leave a stone unturned to ruin your soul forever.

*“Amidst a thousand snares I stand
Upheld and guarded by Thy hand.”*

Old Master Quarles says,

*“The close pursuer's busy hands do plant
Snares in thy substance; snares attend thy want;
Snares in thy credit; snares in thy disgrace;
Snares in thy high estate; snares in thy base;
Snares tuck thy bed; and snares surround thy board;
Snares watch thy thoughts; and snares attach thy word;
Snares in thy quiet; snares in thy commotion;
Snares in thy diet; snares in thy devotion.
Snares lurk in thy resolves, snares in thy doubt;
Snares lie within thy heart and snares without;
Snares are above thy head and snares beneath;
Snares in thy sickness, snares are in thy death.”*

There is not a place beneath which a believer walks that is free from snares. Behind every tree there is the Indian with his barbed arrow. Behind every bush there is the lion seeking to devour. Under every piece of grass there lies the adder. Everywhere they are. Let us be careful. Let us gird ourselves with the might of God's omnipotence and then shall His Holy Spirit keep us, so that we shall tread on the lion and adder—the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet, and we shall be “delivered from the snare of the fowler.”

II. Now we pass on to the second point—THE DELIVERANCE.

God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler. Two thoughts here—*from—out of*. First, he delivers them *from* the snare—does not let them get in it. Secondly, when they do get in it, He delivers them *out of it*. The first promise is the most precious to some of us, the second is the best to others.

He shall deliver thee from the snare. How does He do that?

Very often by *trouble*. Trouble is often the means whereby God delivers us from snares. You have all heard of the old story of the celebrated painter who was painting in St. Paul's, and who, looking at his work, went gradually back inch by inch to get a view of it, so that he might see the excellence of its proportions, until his feet were just on the edge of the platform upon which he stood. And he would have fallen down and been dashed in pieces upon the pavement beneath, but just at that moment a workman who stood there, desirous to save his life and not knowing how to do it, hit upon an expedient, which proved to be a very wise one.

Instead of shouting out to his master, “Sir, you are in danger,” which would most certainly have sent him backward, he took up a brush, and dipping it in a pot of paint, dashed it at the picture. The good man rushed forward in anger to chastise him—but when it was explained, he clearly saw that his servant had acted wisely.

Just so with God. You and I have often painted a fine picture, and we have been walking backwards admiring it. God knows that our backsliding will soon end in our destruction. And He, by a sad providence, blasts our prospect, takes away our child from us, buries our wife, removes some darling object of our pleasures, and we rush forward and say, “Lord, why this?”—utterly unconscious that if it had not been for trouble we might have been dashed in pieces, and our lives would have been ended in destruction.

I doubt not that many of you have been saved from ruin by your sorrows, your griefs, your troubles, your woes, your losses, and your crosses. All these have been the breaking of the net that set you free from the snare of the fowler.

At other times, God keeps His people from the sin of the fowler by *giving them great spiritual strength, a spirit of great courage*—so that when they are tempted to do evil they say, with decision, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Oh! that was a noble escape of Joseph, when his mistress laid hold of his garment. That was a noble escape of his, when his soul escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler.

And I doubt not there are many here who have done deeds almost as noble as that of Joseph, who have had grace within their hearts so that they have turned away their eyes from beholding folly, and when they have been tempted to evil they have put their foot upon it and said—“I cannot, I cannot, I am a child of God. I cannot and I must not.” And though the thing was pleasing to themselves yet have they abjured it.

You remember the case of Mr. Standfast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? Madame Bubble had greatly enticed poor Mr. Standfast with her offers. He says, “There was one in very pleasant attire, but old, who presented herself to me and offered me three things, to wit, her body, her purse, and her bed. Now the truth is, I was both weary and sleepy—I am also as poor as an owlet and that perhaps the witch knew.

“Well, I repulsed her once and again, but she put by my repulses and smiled. Then I began to be angry, but she mattered that nothing at all. Then she made offers again, and said if I would be ruled by

her, she would make me great and happy. For, said she, I am the mistress of the world and men are made happy by me.

“Then I asked her name and she told me it was Madame Bubble. This set me further from her, but she still followed me with enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lifted up and cries, I prayed to Him that had said He would help. So just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way.

“Then I continued to give thanks for this my great deliverance, for I verily believe she intended no good, but rather sought to make stop of me in my journey.” That is how God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler—by giving them the spirit of prayer as well as the spirit of courage—so that they call upon God in the day of trouble and He delivers them.

And I have noticed one more very singular thing. Sometimes I, myself, have been saved from the snare of the fowler (I cannot tell how exactly), in this way. I have felt that if the temptation had come a week before, my mind was in that peculiar condition that I should almost inevitably have been led away by it. But when it came, the mind, by passing through some process, had become in such a condition that the temptation was no temptation at all.

We were just brought to such a state that what might have ruined us before, we would not then look at. “No,” we have said, “if you had offered me this some time ago it might have been accepted. But now God has, by some mysterious influence of His Spirit, turned my heart in another direction and it is not even a temptation to me at all—not worthy of a moment’s thought.” So God delivers His people from the snare of the fowler.

But the second thought was that *God delivers His people, even when they get into the snare.*

Alas! my hearer, you and I know something about the net. We have been inside it, we have. We have not only seen it spread, we have been in its folds. We know something about the cage, for we have, unfortunately, been in the cage ourselves, even since we have known the Lord. The fowler’s hand has been upon our neck—it has only been the sovereign grace of God that has prevented him from utterly destroying us.

What a blessed thing it is, that if the believer shall, in an evil hour, come into the net, yet God will bring him out of it! Poor Christian and Hopeful got into the fowler’s net when they entered into the castle of Giant Despair. But the key of promise picked the lock and they escaped.

They were in the fowler’s net, too, when Flatterer cast a net over them and left them in the lane. But there came one who, after he had beaten them full sore, took the net off, and they went on their way, better men than they were before they were in the net.

I know one who is in the net now. Some bird, one of God’s own ones too, has been taken in the snare, and is now groaning and crying out because, alas! alas! he has sinned. I have a person here, a good man, a professor of religion, and a truly worthy one! But alas! he has sinned, and at this hour the tears are in his eyes, and he is saying,

*“The tumult of my thoughts
Doth but increase my woe;
My spirit languishes, my heart
Is desolate and low.*

*“Turn, turn Thee to my soul;
Bring Thy salvation near;
When will Thy hand release my feet
Out of the deadly snare?”*

O backslider, be cast down, but do not despair. God will restore you yet. Wanderer though you have been, hear what He says! “Return, O backsliding children; I will have mercy upon you.” But you say

you cannot return. Then, here is still a promise—“Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

You shall yet be brought out from all the evil into which you have fallen, and though you shall never cease to repent your ways even to your dying day, yet He that has loved you will not cast you away. He will receive you, He will admit you into His dwelling place, and will even now restore you to the number of His people and give you joy and gladness, that the bones which He has broken may rejoice. “Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.”

There have been very remarkable instances of God delivering His people out of the snare of the fowler, as the following illustration will show—

“A young lady who belonged to a church in the city of New York, married a young man who was not a Christian. He was a merchant, engaged in a lucrative business, and the golden stream of wealth flowed in upon him till he had amassed a large fortune. He accordingly retired from business and went into the country.

“He purchased a splendid residence. Fine trees waved their luxuriant foliage around it. Here was a lake filled with fish and there a garden full of rare shrubbery and flowers. Their house was fashionably and expensively furnished. And they seemed to possess all of earth that mortal could desire. Thus prospered and plied with an interchange of civilities among her gay and fashionable neighbors, the piety of the lady declined, and her heart became wedded to the world.

“And it is not to be wondered at that her three children, as they grew up, imbibed her spirit and copied her example. ‘A severe disease,’ it is said, ‘demands a severe remedy,’ and that God soon applied. One morning intelligence came that her little son had fallen into the fish-lake and was drowned. The mother’s heart was pierced with affliction, and she wept and murmured against the providence of God.

“Soon afterwards, her only daughter, a blooming girl of sixteen, was taken sick of a fever and died. It seemed then as if the mother’s heart would have broken. But this new stroke of the rod of a chastening Father seemed but to increase her displeasure against His will. The only remaining child, her eldest son, who had come home from college to attend his sister’s funeral, went out into the fields soon afterwards, for the purpose of hunting.

“In getting over a fence, he put his gun over first to assist himself in springing to the ground, when it accidentally discharged itself and killed him! What then were that mother’s feelings? In the extravagance of her grief, she fell down, tore her hair, and raved like a maniac against the providence of God.

The father, whose grief was already almost insupportable, when he looked upon the shocking spectacle, and heard her frenzied ravings, could endure his misery no longer. The iron entered into his soul and he fell a speedy victim to his accumulated afflictions. From the wife and mother, her husband and all her children were now taken away.

Reason returned and she was led to reflection. She saw her dreadful backslidings, her pride, her rebellion. And she wept with the tears of a deep repentance. Peace was restored to her soul. Then would she lift up her hands to heaven, exclaiming, ‘I thank you, O Father!—the Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Thus did her afflictions yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and her heavenly Father had chastened her, ‘not for his pleasure but for her profit, that she might become partaker of his holiness.’”

So God delivered her soul out of the snare of the fowler. She started afresh in the ways of righteousness, serving God with diligence and zeal, and growing up in His fear. By trouble and trial, by some means or another, God will surely deliver His people out of the snare of the fowler, even when they are in it.

III. And now, to conclude, I am to dwell for a moment or two upon that word “SURELY.”

The assurance of every truth of Scripture is just the beauty of it. If it were not sure, it were not precious. And it is precious just because it is sure.

Now, it says, “Surely he shall deliver thee.” Why? First because He has promised to do it and God’s promises are bonds that never yet were dishonored. If He has said He will, He will. Secondly, because Christ Jesus has taken an oath that He will do it. In ages long gone, Christ Jesus became the Shepherd of the sheep and the Surety of them too.

“If any of them perish,” said He, “at My hand you shall require it,” and therefore, because Christ is responsible, because He is the heavenly sponsor for all God’s people, they must be kept—for otherwise Christ’s bond were forfeited and His oath were null and void.

They must be kept again, because otherwise the union that there is between all of them and Christ would not be a real one. Christ and His church are one—one body. But if any of the members of my body were cut off, I should be maimed, and if Christ could lose one of His children, He would be a maimed Christ. “We are his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

If, then, the whole church were not gathered in, Christ would be an incomplete Christ, seeing He would want His fullness. They must all be saved, for God has determined that they shall be. Nay, the Son has sworn they shall be. And God the Holy Spirit vouches for it they shall be. None of God’s people shall be cast away or else the Bible is not true.

The whole stability of the covenant rests on their final perseverance. The whole covenant of grace rests on this—

*“He shall present our souls,
Unblemished and complete,
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”*

And therefore they must be preserved out of the snare of the fowler, because otherwise the covenant would be null and void. If one should perish the oath would be broken. If one should be cast away the covenant would be void. And therefore they must be kept secure.

*“His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.”*

I have no time to enlarge upon that subject, which is big with glory, and might afford a topic for many discourses. I now close up by saying, Men and brethren, is this promise yours? “Surely he shall deliver thee.” Are you the man?

“How can I tell?” you say. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself wholly on the blood and righteousness of the immaculate Redeemer? I do not ask you whether you are a Wesleyan, a Churchman, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian—my only question is, Are you born again? Have you passed from death unto life? Are you “a new creature in Christ Jesus”?

Is all your trust put in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has His life become your model and does His Spirit dwell in your mortal body? If so, peace be unto you. This promise is yours. You may have been the worst of men, but if you have faith in Christ those sins are all forgiven and you may take this promise to be yours forever.

But if you are self-righteous, self-sufficient, ungodly, careless, worldly—there is no such promise for you—you are in the snare, you shall be there, and you shall perish, unless you repent, for it is written, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” May God save you from perishing by giving you an interest in the blood of Christ.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.