

WHAT HAD BECOME OF PETER?

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A SERMON

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“Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.”
Acts 12:18.

WE can very well understand that there would be great excitement. It was the most improbable thing in the world that Peter should escape from custody. In the innermost dungeon, securely chained, watched by a fourfold guard, with no powerful friends outside to attempt a rescue—it was marvelous that, in the morning, the bird had flown! The prison doors were closed and the guards in their places, but Peter, where was he? We marvel not that “there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.”

We will use this striking narrative as an illustration—what if we make it an allegory? The sinner fast bound in his sin is, by the mercy of God, set free and brought out from his spiritual prison into the streets of the New Jerusalem. And then there is no small stir among his old companions—what has become of him? Many questions are asked and many strange answers are given. They cannot understand it. The vain world esteems it strange—it admires much—but hates the change. The carnal mind cannot understand conversion. There is “no small stir about what has become of Peter.”

We shall, first of all, dwell a little upon *the escape of Peter as illustrating the salvation of certain sinners*. Then upon *the consequent stir about it*. And then upon *the quiet conduct of the man who is the object of all this stir*—“What had become of Peter?”

I. First, then, THE IMPROBABLE EVENT.

Peter was *in prison*. It was a most unlikely thing that he should come forth from Herod’s jail, but it is a far more unlikely thing that sinners should be set free from the dungeons of sin! For the iron gate which opened into the city to turn upon its hinges of its own accord was amazing, but for a sinful heart to loathe its sin is stranger by far! Who can escape from the grasp of sin? No person is more terribly shut up than is the sinner in the prison of original depravity! It is not merely *around* us, but *in* us, compassing our path whether we lie down or rise up! Stronger than granite walls and bars of iron are the forces of evil. Evil has penetrated our souls. It has become part of ourselves. Where shall we fly from its presence, or how shall we escape from its power? Vain are the wings of the morning—they cannot enable us to fly from our own selves.

O marvelous thing, that the Ethiopian should escape from his blackness and the leopard from his spots! There are some men in whom evil is more than ordinarily conspicuous. They have done violence to conscience. They have quenched, as far as possible, the inner light of God. They have defied the customs of society, they have resolved to sin at random and they do so. What a miracle it is that such as these should be emancipated from the slavery they choose so eagerly—that these whose feet are set fast in the stocks of vice, in the innermost dungeon of transgression, should ever be set at liberty! And yet how often this has happened! The foundations of the prison have been shaken and the prisoner’s bands have been loosed. The saints of God can, all of them, bless Him for setting them at liberty from sin. The snare is broken and they have escaped! Yes, and many of them can praise Him for deliverance from very great sins, black sins, iron sins, sins which had entered into their souls and held their spirits captive! No man can set another man free from iniquity, nor can any man burst down his own prison doors. No Samson is strong enough for that—but there is one—“mighty to save,” who has come to proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and the opening of the prison to them that are bound by iniquity! And He has so proclaimed it that many of us are now free through His grace. O that many others, now shut up in the spiritual Bastille, may be set free!

But, besides being in prison, Peter was *in the dark*. All the lamps had been quenched for the night in his miserable place of confinement. Such is the estate, spiritually, of every unconverted sinner—he is in the dark—he does not know Christ, nor apprehend his own condition, nor comprehend eternal realities. What a shade of darkness is he in who has never heard the gospel! But, alas, there are some who have heard it, *often* heard it, and yet their eyes are held so that they cannot see the light and they are as badly in the dark as those upon whom the lamp has never shone! Does it not seem impossible to convert such darkened ones? You have held up, as it were, the very sun in the heavens before their eyes, while you have preached salvation by Christ, and yet so blind are they that they have seen nothing! Can these blind eyes see? Can these prisoners of midnight escape from the prison through its long corridors and winding passages? The thousands in this city who never attend the house of prayer—is it possible to get at them? Can the grace of God ever come to them? Yes, we bless God that as the angel came into Peter's prison and brought a light with him, so the Spirit can come into the prison of man's sin and bring heavenly illumination with Him and then he will see, in a moment, the truth of God as it is in Jesus which he never knew before! Glory be to God, He can lead the blinded mind in today's light and give it eyes to see and a heart to love the divine truth! We can testify of this, for so has God worked upon *us*—and why should He not thus work upon others? But it is a great marvel—and when it is performed, there is “no small stir.”

Peter's case, in the third place, had another mark of hopelessness about it. He was in prison. He was in the dark and *he was asleep*. How can you lead a man out of prison who is sound asleep? If you cannot enter and awaken him, what can you do for him? Suppose the doors were opened and the chains were snapped, yet if he remained asleep, how could he escape? We find that the angel smote Peter on the side. I daresay it was a hard blow, but it was a kind one. Oh, how I wish the Spirit of God would smite some sleeping sinner on the side at this moment! I would not mind how sharp or cutting the blow might be for the time being if it made him start up and say, “How can I escape from this dreadful cell of sin?” My brothers and sisters, how difficult it is to awaken some minds from their indifference! The most indifferent people in this world are those who have prospered in business for a long time without a break—they are accumulating money as fast as they can count it and they have not time to think about eternal things! Another very hardened class consists of those who have enjoyed good health for a long time and have scarcely known an ache or a pain. They do not think about eternity. It is a great blessing to enjoy health, but it is also a great blessing to suffer sickness, for it is often the means of awakening the slumbering heart! Many dream that because things go smoothly with them, they are all right. And yet they are peculiarly in danger. O Spirit of the living God, smite them on the side! I have known this smiting come to some by a sermon, to others by the personal remark of a friend, to others by the death of a companion, or by the loss of a dear child, or by great trouble and need. Well, if your souls are saved, you will not, in later days, be sorry for the awakening trouble which helped to bring you to the Savior! Yes, the most indifferent have been awakened—and why should it not be so again? The church prayed for Peter and those prayers brought the angel to awaken him—let us pray for indifferent sons and careless daughters! Let us pray for the godless, Christless population around us and God's Spirit will yet awaken them and make them cry with a bitter cry, “Lord, save us, or we perish!”

There was further difficulty about Peter's case. He was in the prison, in the dark, asleep and *he was also chained*. Each hand was fastened to a soldier's hand. How could he possibly escape? And herein is the difficulty with some sinners—they cannot leave their old companions. Suppose the happy young man should propose to think about religion? Why, this very night he would be ridiculed for it! Suppose he endeavored to walk in the ways of holiness—is there not chained to his left hand an unholy companion? It may be some unchaste connection has been made—how shall he break away from it? Let a man be joined to an ungodly woman, or let a woman have once given herself up to an unholy alliance and how hard it is to set them free! Yet Peter did come out of prison though he was chained to his guards—and Christ can save a sinner though he is bound hand and foot by his intimate association with other sinners as bad as himself! It seems impossible that he should be set at liberty, but nothing is impossible with God. There may be some here who have had to snap many an old connection and get rid of many an evil association, but by divine grace it has been done! We give God the glory of it and do not wonder at the “stir” which it has made!

In addition to all this, Peter was not only chained, but *he was guarded by soldiers placed outside the prison*. And, oh, how some sinners, whom God means to bless, are similarly guarded! The devil seems to have an inkling that God will save them one day and, therefore, he watches them. Fearful lest by any means they should escape out of his hands, he guards them day and night. When men receive a tender conscience, or have their minds a little awakened, Satan will not trust them to enter the house of prayer, or if they do, he comes with them and distracts their attention by vain thoughts or fierce temptations! Or if they are able to hear the sermon attentively, he will meet them outside and try to steal away the good seed from their hearts. He will assail the man with temptation here and temptation there—he will assault him through some chosen instrument, and then again by another messenger of a like character so that if by any means he may keep him from being saved!

But when the Lord means to save, He makes short work of the guards, the prison, the darkness, the chains, the devil and all his allies! If the Lord means to save you, man, woman—whoever you are—He will overcome your old master and his guards. The Lord's eternal will shall assuredly overcome your will, the will of Satan, the lusts of the flesh and your own resolves! And although you may have made a league with death and a covenant with hell, yet if the eternal Jehovah wills it, He can break your covenant, set you free and lead you a captive at the wheels of His chariot of fire—for with God, nothing is impossible!

Once more, Peter was, in addition to all this, *on the eve of death*. It was his last night, the night before his execution. It is a very sweet thing to think of Peter sleeping. It reminds one of the saints whom we read of in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. When the jailer's wife came in the morning to call him, he was so sweetly asleep that she had to shake him to awaken him. It was a strange thing to disturb a man and say, "It is time to get up and be burnt!" But he slept as sweetly as though he would be married that morning instead of meeting a cruel death! God can give His people the greatest peace in the most disturbing times. So Peter slept. But that is not the point I wish to dwell upon. The next morning he was to die, but God would not have him die. Perhaps someone who hears or reads these words is despairing—so despairing that he is ready to lay violent hands upon himself or, perhaps, there is one so sick that if the Lord does not appear to him very soon, it will be too late. Blessed be God, He never leaves His elect to perish in sin! He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. He comes in at the last moment and when it seems as though eternal destruction would swallow up His chosen one, He stretches out His hand and achieves His purpose! May this remark be a message from God to someone! Though you have gone far in sin and are near your end, yet the Lord, who can do anything and everything, may come to you and save you even now, at the eleventh hour—and then there will be a "stir" indeed!

We have thus remarked upon a whole series of improbabilities, but I have noticed that it is often the most unlikely people who are saved. There are many of whom I thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me," and I have been disappointed in them. And there are many others, who came to hear out of curiosity, and were the least likely to be impressed, who, nevertheless, have been met with by sovereign grace. Does not this encourage you to say, "Why should not the Lord meet with me?" Ah, dear soul, why not? And what is more, He will regard you if you listen to this word of His, "He who believes on the Son has everlasting life." To believe on Jesus Christ is simply to trust Him. Then do you trust Him? For if you do trust your guilty soul entirely on Jesus, He *has* met with you and you *are* saved *now*. Go and sin no more—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! That is salvation in a nutshell. Whoever reposes his trust in Jesus is saved. God grant such faith to you!

II. Secondly, in consequence of this great event, THERE WAS NO SMALL STIR, "what had become of Peter?" When the Lord saves an unlikely individual, there is sure to be a stir about it.

The text says, "There was no small stir *among the soldiers*." So, generally, the stir about a sinner begins among his old companions. "What has become of Peter? I thought he would have met us tonight at our drinking spot. What has become of Peter? We were going to the theater together. What has become of Peter? We intended to have a jolly time of it at the horse races. What has become of Peter? We had agreed to go to the dancing saloon together." Those who were his old companions say, "We did not believe he would ever have been made religious. He'll never make a saint! We'll fetch him back. He

has got among those canting Methodists, but we'll make it too hot for him. We will jest at him and jeer at him till he can't stand it—and if that does not do, we will threaten him—cast doubts on his creed and set fresh temptations before him.” Ah, but if God has set him free from sin, he is free, indeed, and you will never lead him back to prison again! When you meet him, you will find him a new man—and you will be glad to get away from him, for he will prove too strong for you! Often when a man's conversion is thorough, not only is he rejoiced to get away from his old companions, but his old companions are wonderfully glad to keep clear of him! They do not like his new manner. He is so strange a man to what he was before. They say, “What has become of Peter? His ways are not ours. What has happened to him?” If a dog were suddenly turned into an angel, the other dogs would be puzzled—the whole kennel would take to howling at him!

But after the soldiers came *Herod*. Herod wondered, “What has become of Peter? Did I not put 16 men to guard him? Did I not provide heavy chains for his feet? Did I not chain him wrist to wrist to a soldier? Did I not put him in the innermost ward of the prison? What has become of Peter?” Herod grew very angry. He was delighted to have killed James, and he meant to have killed Peter and, therefore, he cried, in great chagrin, “What has become of Peter?” What a sight it would be to see the devil when he has lost some chosen sinner, when he hears the man who once could swear, beginning to pray, when he beholds the heart that once was hard as adamant beginning to melt! I think I hear him say to himself, “What has become of Peter? Another of my servants has deserted me! Another of my choice followers has yielded to my foe! What? Has Christ taken another lamb from between the jaws of the lion? Will He leave me none? Shall I have no soldiers? Shall none of my black guard be left to me? Am I to be entirely deserted? What has become of Peter?” Oh, it is a glorious thing to cause a howling through the infernal regions and to set devils biting their tongues because poor sinners have snapped their chains! Pray that as the prayers of the church then set Peter free, and made Herod angry, so the prayers of the church now may set sinners free and put the devil to shame!

But we must not forget *the Jews*. They had expected to see Peter die and when they found that they would have to eat the Passover with the bitter herb of Peter's escape from prison, they began to say to one another, “What has become of Peter?” They could not understand his escape. Many in these days are like the Jews. They are outsiders—they do not associate with sinners in their grosser vices, but they look on. Whenever they hear of a man converted, if he is indeed really changed, they say, “What has happened to him? We don't understand him!” They put him down as a fanatical fool. Their maxim is that if you like to go to a place of worship, all well and good. And if you like to have a religion, all well and good. But don't make a fuss about it! Don't get carried off your legs by it—keep it to yourself and be quiet about it. They think that to be lukewarm is the finest condition of mind—whereas the Savior has said, “Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” When a man becomes genuinely converted, especially if he has been a notorious sinner, these irreligious religious people cry out, “What has become of Peter?” The Lord grant that there may be much of this outcry in these days!

And surely, also, there was no small stir *among God's own people*. There was a great stir in that prayer meeting when Rhoda went back and said, “There's Peter at the gate!” “Never, never!” “But I know his voice. He has been here many times. I can't be mistaken!” “Ah,” said one, “it may be his ghost—it can't be Peter himself. It is impossible!” So, sometimes, when a sinner who has been very notoriously evil, has been converted, after he had been the subject of many prayers, God's people will say, “What? *That* man converted? It cannot be!” When Paul, who had persecuted the church, was brought to be a Christian, it was very hard to make the disciples believe it. They had heard by many of this man—how he had put the saints to death—surely he could not have become a disciple of Christ! There was no small stir what had become of Paul in those days! Christians could hardly think that his conversion was genuine. I pray the Lord, in these times, to convert some very terrible opposer of His gospel, some notorious enemy of the truth of God. I pray that some of those great philosophers of this learned age who are always startling us with new absurdities, may be made to feel the power of the sovereign grace of God! I do not know why they should not. Let us pray for it, and it will come to pass! Let us ask the Lord to save even those who brandish their silly learning in the face of the eternal wisdom, and they may yet be brought down to sit humbly at the Savior's feet, and then there will be no

small stir in the church! “What has become of Professor so and so?” O Master, for Your own glory’s sake, grant that it may be done!

III. The last point is this—THE QUIET CONDUCT OF THE MAN ABOUT WHOM THERE WAS ALL THIS STIR.

What had become of Peter? He was out of prison. Where was he? I will tell you. In the first place, *he had gone to a prayer meeting*. [See Sermon #1247, Volume 21—THE SPECIAL PRAYER MEETING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is a very good sign that a man has been really awakened when he goes uninvited to a prayer meeting. I love to see a stranger come stealing in and sit in a corner where God’s people are met for supplication. Any hypocrite may come to worship on a Sunday, but it is not every hypocrite who will come to the meeting for prayer! Anybody will come to listen to a sermon, but it is not everybody who will draw near to God in prayer. Surely, when the prayer meeting comes to be loved, it is good and hopeful evidence. What has become of Peter? He is not at the gin palace. What has become of Peter? He is not at the races. What has become of Peter? He is not with his old associates at the skittle ground. No, but he is drawing near to God where humble believers are crying to the Most High for a blessing!

The next thing was, *he joined the Christians*. I do not say that Peter had not done so before, but on this occasion, he went to the place where the Christians were and sat down with them. So that sinner whom God sets free from sin straightway flies to his own company. “Birds of a feather flock together,” and those who bear the true feather of the white dove and have been washed in Christ’s blood, “fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows.” You do not love Christ if you do not love His people. If you love the Lord who has saved you, you will love the people whom the Lord has saved and you will, like Peter, find your brothers and sisters and join with them. See then, you who have been making a stir about what has become of the new convert, we have told you where he is! He has joined the church of God. He is going to be baptized and he is following Christ through evil report and good report. What do you say to that?

I will tell you yet further what has become of Peter. *He has began to tell his experience at a church meeting*. Peter did that very soon. He beckoned with his hand and told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. What a delight it is to see a man who was just now black in the mouth with blasphemy, stand up and bless the Lord for what His grace has done for him! “I would think it strange,” says one, “if that ever happened to me.” My dear hearer, I would not think it strange, but would bless God for it! God grant that it may happen and that I may hear of it! No experience in the world is so sweet as that of a sinner who has been in captivity to evil and has been brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. An uncommon sinner who has been remarkably converted tells a more than ordinarily encouraging story in our church meetings and we delight in such glad tidings! That is what had become of Peter.

And then, lastly, it was not long before *Peter was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ*. And oh, you who have been wondering what has become of some ungodly companions of yours, I would not be surprised if you hear them telling others what God has done for their souls! I would like to have heard John Newton’s first sermon after he had been a slave trader with his life full of all manner of villainy—and God had met with him in mercy. Oh, it must have been a sweet sermon, wet with tears! I will be bound to say that there were no sleepy hearers. He would talk in a way that would melt others’ hearts because his own was melted! I would like to have heard John Bunyan, though under a hedge, preaching the gospel of Jesus, while he told what God had done for a drunken tinker, and how He had washed him in the precious blood of Jesus and saved him! Those who know what sin is and what the Savior has saved them from, can speak “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Peter could say, “I was in prison, but I gained my liberty and it was the work of God.” He could bear good testimony to what God has done for him!

I hold up the blood red standard at this time. I am a recruiting sergeant and I want, in God’s name, to enlist fresh soldiers beneath the standard of the cross! “Whom will you enlist?” asks one. “What must their characters be?” They must be guilty! I will have nothing to do with the righteous! The Savior did not come to save those who are not sinful—He came to save sinners! I looked out of my window last

winter, when it had been raining for several months almost incessantly, and I saw a man with a garden hose watering plants. And I looked at him again and again, and to this moment I cannot understand what he was doing! It did seem to me an extraordinary thing that a man should be watering a garden when the garden had been watered by the rain for a hundred days or so with scarcely a pause! Now, I am not going to water you who are already dripping with your own self-righteousness. No, no, what need have you of grace? Christ did not come to save you good people! You must get to heaven how you can, on your own account. He has come to wash the filthy and heal the sick—and oh, you filthy ones, before you I hold up the gospel banner and say again, “Who will enlist beneath it?” If you will, the great captain of salvation will take your guilt away and cast your sins into the depths of the sea—and make you new creatures through the power of His Spirit.

“Well,” says one, “If I am enlisted, and become a new creature, what shall I do?” I will not say what you *shall* do, but if the Lord saves you, you will love Him so much that nothing will be too hard, or too heavy, or too difficult for you! You will not need driving, if you once receive His great salvation—you will be for doing more than you can and you will pray for more grace and strength to attempt yet greater things for His name’s sake. A man who has had much forgiven, what will he not attempt for the service and Glory of Him who has forgiven him? May I be fortunate enough to enlist beneath the Savior’s banner some black offender! That is the man for Christ’s service! That is the man who will sound out His name more sweetly than anybody else! That is the man who will be afraid of no one! That is the man who will truly know the power of the gospel of Christ! Oh, that the Lord would bring such men among us, for we need them in these days—men who will come right out, without doubt, fear, or quitting, facing all criticisms, defying all opinions and each one saying, “Sinners, Christ can save you, for He saved me! I was a drunkard and a thief, but God has forgiven and cleansed, and washed me, and I know the power of His salvation!” Pray, members of the church, that both among men and women there may be many such conversions and that throughout this city of London there may be no small stir, “What has become of Peter,” and may that stir be to the praise and glory of God! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 PETER 1.

Verse 1. *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.* Peter here uses both his names—Simon or Simeon, which was his first name and signifies, “hearing with acceptance.” And happy are they who have the hearing ear and the receptive heart. And then there is what I may call his Christian name, the name which Christ gave him, Petros, or Cephas, a rock or stone. Those who learn to hear well, since faith comes by hearing, may hope to obtain even greater stability of character than Peter had. Observe that Peter calls himself, “a servant of Christ.” There is no higher honor than to be a servant of God. “To serve God is to reign.” An ancient philosopher was the author of that maxim and Christianity fully endorses it. He is a true king who is a servant of God. In this respect, all believers are on a level with Peter, but here is his distinguishing title, “an apostle of Jesus Christ,” a sent one, one who had seen the Lord and who could bear personal testimony to the fact of His existence, His death and His resurrection. Hence the apostleship has ceased, since there are no longer any who lived in our Lord’s days upon the earth. Mark the reason why this epistle, like the first, is called “the general epistle of Peter,” since it is addressed, not to any one church, as Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, but to all saints. Not to the Hebrews alone, but to the Gentiles as well. It is a general epistle, addressed to all those who have “obtained like precious faith.” These words were written by the Apostle Peter many centuries ago, yet they come to us as fresh as if he had written them but yesterday! And may God grant us grace to profit from them as they are read by us today! After the apostle’s titles comes the salutation of his epistle.

2-5. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped*

the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this—“Since it is God who, by His divine energy, has made you partakers of the divine nature, see that you use your grace given energy—rest not idly upon your oars because the tide of grace carries your ship onward.”

5. *Giving all diligence.* It is not man’s effort that saves him, but on the other hand, grace saves no man to make him like a log of wood or a block of stone. Grace makes man active! God has been diligently at work with you—now you must diligently work together with Him.

5-7. *Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.* As you have seen the mason take up first one stone and then another, and then gradually build the house, so are you Christians to take first one virtue and then another, and then another, and to pile up these stones of grace one upon the other until you have built a palace for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

Faith, of course, comes first, because faith is the foundation of all the graces, and there can be no true grace where there is no true faith. Then “add to your faith virtue,” which should have been translated, “courage.” True courage is a very great blessing, indeed, to the Christian—without it how will he be able to face his foes? “And to courage knowledge,” for courage without knowledge would be foolish rashness, which would lead you to the cannon’s mouth when there was nothing to be gained by flinging away your life.

“And to knowledge temperance,” for there are some who no sooner get knowledge than they are carried away with the new doctrine which they have learned and become like intoxicated men, for it is possible to be intoxicated even with the truth of God! Happy is that Christian who has temperance with his knowledge who, while holding one doctrine, does not push that to the extreme, but learns to hold other doctrines in due conformity with it. “And to temperance patience,” or endurance, so that we are able to endure the “trial of cruel mocking” or sharp pains, or fierce persecutions, or the usual afflictions of this life. He is a poor Christian who has no power of endurance. A true Christian must “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

“And to endurance godliness”—having a constant respect to God in all our ways, living to God and living like God as far as the finite can be like the infinite. “And to godliness brotherly kindness.” O dear friends, let us be very kind to those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus! Let the ties of Christian kinship unite us in true brotherhood to each other. “And to brotherly kindness charity.” Let us have love to all men, though especially to the household of faith.

8. *For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* I am sure you do not wish to be barren. I cannot imagine that any of you will be content to be unfruitful, so seek after all these virtues and may God help you to give diligence to the attainment of them.

9, 10. *But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall.* He who is diligent in seeking these graces is kept from falling. Every Christian is safe from a final fall, but he is not safe from a foul fall unless he is kept by grace.

11. *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* In this life you shall enjoy all the privileges of the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. And in the life to come you shall go into the harbor of eternal peace like a ship with all her sails full, speeding before a favorable wind— not as one that struggles into harbor—

“Tempest-tossed, and half a wreck.”

12. *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.* We are not merely to preach new truths of God which people do not know, but we are also to preach the old truths with which they are familiar. The doctrines in which they are well established are still to be proclaimed to them. Every wise preacher brings forth from the treasury of truth things both new and old—new, that the hearers may learn more

than they knew before—old, that they may know and practice better that which they do already know in part.

13, 14. *Yes, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.* In the last chapter of the gospel according to John, it is recorded how Christ prophesied concerning the death of Peter, that when he was old, he would stretch forth his hands and another should gird him, and carry him where he would not. The evangelist adds, “This spoke He, signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God.” The prospect of crucifixion was thus always before Peter’s mind—and knowing what was to happen to him—he was not alarmed, but was rather quickened to greater diligence in stirring up the saints to make their calling and election sure. Hear behind you, O Christian, the chariot wheels of your Lord! Hear behind you the whizzing of the arrow of death and let this quicken your pace! Work while it is called today, for the sun even now touches the horizon and the night comes when no man can work. If we knew how short a time we have to live, how much more earnest, how much more diligent would we be! Let us be up and doing! “Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober,” working diligently until the Lord comes, or calls us home to Himself.

15-18. *Moreover I will endeavor that you may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.* Peter and James and John were with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration and Peter here bears his witness that they were not deceived when they bowed down before Christ and worshiped Him as Lord, nor were they deluded in expecting His coming and believing in His power.

19, 20. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* Even the prophets themselves did not always know the full meaning of their own prophecies. Many prophecies have never been completely understood until they have been fulfilled. This passage also appears to me to mean that no prophecy is to be restricted to any one event, so as to say, “This prophecy has been entirely fulfilled.”

21. *For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* So that they sometimes spoke what they did not themselves understand. The prophecy carried its own key within itself and the key could not be found until the prophecy was fulfilled. I believe that the prophecies in the Revelation and in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel are very much of this character, and that while it is quite right to watch for and expect the coming of the Lord, we shall spend our time more profitably in preaching the doctrines of the gospel than in meditating upon the mysterious prophecies of the word. They will be understood when they are fulfilled, but we do not think they will be fully understood before that time.

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