

MAN'S WEAKNESS—GOD'S ANOINTING

NO. 334

A SERMON
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*"I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too hard for me."
 2 Samuel 3:39.*

YOU will remember that David was secretly anointed king over Israel by Samuel, but he waited many a weary year before the crown actually rested upon his head. For a long time he was an exile from the very country of which he was afterwards to be the sovereign. He was hunted about by the remorseless cruelty of Saul till he became like a partridge upon the mountains, and the feet of the wild roe were not more used to flight than those of David. A band of men gradually gathered round him, over whom he became the captain, and he lived the life of an adventurer, the leader of heroic soldiers, who at once protected their country from its foreign foes, and sheltered its disaffected subjects. At last Saul fell in battle upon Mount Gilboa, and Jonathan, the heir-at-law to the throne, also fell upon that dewless mountain. David was assured of the death of Saul by the fact that the head of the king was brought to him by an Amalekite, whose crime he punished with death, though the rogue hoped to have been rewarded with abundance of treasure.

David's own kinsmen at once recognized him as the leader of their clan and he, in Hebron, began to reign over Judah and the south of the country. But the mass of the nation had not yielded to him and Abner, the commander-in-chief of Saul's standing army, fearful lest he might lose his influence, and be supplanted by Joab, who naturally would become commander-in-chief under David, set up Ishbosheth as the successor of Saul. And so there became two kingdoms; David was the acknowledged head of the one, and Ishbosheth, the master of the larger part of the territory. Abner was playing king-maker and he soon showed that he felt his power and meant to use it. Having engaged in a quarrel with Ishbosheth, on account of Abner's desire to take to wife a concubine of Saul, he at once resented the interference of Ishbosheth, and determined to put down the king whom he himself had put up. He came to David, therefore, and made terms with him, upon which he would give up to him the kingdom, and Ishbosheth would cease to be his rival. Joab hears of this, and not wishing to be supplanted, and perhaps seriously believing that Abner was not honest, follows after him, entices him back, and just outside the walls of Hebron, a city of refuge, slays him in cold blood—a most dastardly and treacherous murder! David had nothing to do with it; he did his best to exonerate himself from it, and pronounced an awful curse upon Joab, the murderer, and upon all his posterity. He had not, however, the manly courage to summon Joab to the bar as a murderer. David was afraid of him; the man had all the army at his back—and instead of being, as in his youthful days, fearless of man, David became for a while a time-server and permitted the guilty to escape. He prepared a glorious funeral for Abner, and made Joab walk as mourner in the train, accompanied by his king, who sang a poetic and mournful dirge over the bleeding corpse. Then David said to his courtiers and friends, "I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too hard for me. The men who have been my bravest comrades and stood by me in the darkest hour, have been too hard for me. They have compelled me to submit to an action which my soul detests; they are criminals whom I cannot punish. The sons of Zeruah are too hard for me."

It was necessary to state these historical particulars in order to set my text in its context, and now I wish to show how this passage in sacred history is but the transcript of what has occurred many and many a time in the history and experience of all the people of God.

I. The first remark I shall make will be this. *We may be anointed, and yet weak.* Every believer is an anointed king. He was really anointed in the covenant of election before the world was. When Jesus Christ was set up from everlasting, His people were really set up in Him. When He was proclaimed King, and when His Father promised glorious honors to Him as the result of what He would do, His people were really constituted a royal priesthood in the person of their representative and covenant head. Every child of God also was actually anointed when Jesus Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive and received gifts for men. When Jesus took His seat at the right hand of the Eternal Father, amidst the songs of angels and the shouts of cherubim, all His elect in Him did virtually take their thrones. “For He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” But in our souls, our anointing time comes in that hour when, being called by divine grace and washed from sin, we begin to reign over sin, self, the world, death and hell, by virtue of our union with Christ. Every believer is a king today! It may be that he does not wear his crown, and lives beneath his dignity; yet he is a king by divine right. He is of a kingly, no, of a divine race—he is sprung from the loins of the King of kings, and he is soon to enter upon his full dominion—for when Jesus shall appear, then being like He is, he shall reign with Him forever and ever!

The Christian is then today, in many more senses than I can now stay to enumerate, an anointed king, and yet it is quite possible that he may be groaning out, “I am weak;” for weakness and divine anointing may stand together! You may be the object of God’s grandest purposes; and yet in yourself, you may be the meanest of men. God may yet intend to accomplish by you the greatest marvels, and it may be necessary that, as a prelude to these wonders, you who are God’s anointed should be compelled to feel very deeply your utter weakness!

God’s children are often very weak *in faith*—they stagger at the promises through unbelief. It is not always in their power to “set to their seal that God is true.” They always have the seal of God on them, but they cannot always set their seal to God’s promises. There are times when the strength of the flesh through sin has overcome the powers of the soul—when we can get no further than to cry, “I would, but I cannot believe; I do not doubt His love to His people, but it is a grave question with me, whether I am one of His people at all.” Christians have ebbs of faith as well as floods; they have winters as well as summers; they have times of drought and years of famine. Sometimes they are diminished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; the eyes of their faith grow dim and the light of God’s countenance, being withdrawn from them, it becomes a woeful day for them, and they sigh and cry, and groan, and scarcely can call their lives their own. “Oh,” cries one, “that is my condition, but I thought I could not be a child of God, for I said, ‘If it is so, why am I thus?’” Oh, this is a common failing with the Lord’s people! Think not that your name is cut out of the register because of the weakness of your faith; for there are many in heaven whose names on earth were Little-Faith, and Ready-to-Halt, and Dependancy, and Much-Afraid! You may be an anointed king, and yet exceedingly weak in your faith.

The weakness of a Christian’s faith may also affect all his other graces. It must do so; for when faith is strong, every other grace is strong; when that is weak, all things else decline. It may be today that your *hope* has become very dim; you are in bondage through fear of death, and see not the mansions in the skies. You have forgotten that you are in Christ, and now you no more look for His appearing. Your hope declines, and all your comfort dies. All this is possible, and yet you may be an anointed king. Pluck up heart, my brothers! When you cannot read your title, the inheritance is just as sure; when you cannot feel your union with Christ, the union is none the less a fact! And when you dare not hope, even then—if you are Christ’s—your soul is in His hands, and you shall never perish, and neither shall any pluck you from Him. Let me add again that when the Christian grows weak in his faith and hope, it is no wonder that he is feeble in *all his efforts* to serve his master. “Oh,” says one, “I preach now, but have no power in preaching; I pray, but it is not prayer; I totter on the knees which should be strong. I, who could once prevail, and bid defiance to earth and hell, now tremble like Peter before a little maid, and am downcast and abashed by the smallest threat or slander from the lips of my meanest foe.” Oh, but Christian, all this is possible, too, and yet you may be an anointed king; for there is a sad difference between the estate of

God's people now, and their glory, by-and-by, yes, and a wondrous difference now between the privileges to which they have a right, and the privileges to which they have the power to attain! Sure, if they were what they might be, and what they should be, they would be on earth well nigh as happy as in heaven! God has given them power to tread on serpents, and to defy the violence of flames; He has girded them with a majesty unrivalled and unequalled; He has put a crown of pure gold on their heads; even now He has shod them with badgers' skins, and clothed them with blue and purple, and fine linen. He has made them kings and priests unto God, even this day, and they dwell in the curtains of Solomon! They have His providence for their provision; they have His angels for their servitors; they have His heaven for their last resting place, and His bosom for their reposing place today; and yet are they often weak, and often cast down by reason of trouble, and the strength of the flesh, and the perversity of their corrupt hearts. "I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too hard for me."

My dear brothers and sisters, let me remark that David at this special time felt his weakness more particularly because he was in a new position. David had been an adventurer in the cave so long, that he had grown used to it, and you never find him saying *when* he hid himself in Engedi, "I am this day weak." No, after the first season of bitterness, I believe he came to love Adullam's dreary cave; and the bleak mountains were dear to him; but he has come into a new place—nations are at his feet—men bow before him! It is a new position and he says, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." Whenever you make a change in life; whenever God calls you to another set of duties, you will surely find out what perhaps you do not now believe—that you are weak, though anointed king.

Here, too, David had come into new temptations. The arrows had been shot at him before, from one direction alone; now the storm ceases on one side, and begins on the other! If men knew that the storm would always come to one side of the house, they would repair and strengthen it, and then they would not fear the blast; but if all of a sudden it whirled round and took the other corner, how would they be prepared for that? Take care, Christian men and women, how you change your position—often it is a change for the worse—the arrows may not fly on the right, but they will meet you on the left, and perhaps that may be your weakest side, and there will you be smitten in the most tender part. David had now no more the temptations which beset a venturer, but those which cluster thick around the throne; for where there is the honey of royalty, there will surely be the wasps of temptations! High places and God's praise seldom well agree. A full cup is not easily carried without spilling, and he who stands on a pinnacle needs a clear head and much grace.

And then further, David had now come into new duties. It was his duty to have taken Joab, and have made him suffer the full penalty of the law for having killed Abner. A king must defend the oppressed and avenge the murdered—but David fails to perform the new duty, for he feels that he is too weak.

Brothers and sisters, I shall leave this point when I have only called you to remember that whether you know it or not, whether new circumstances shall have shown it to you or not, you are this day weak, though anointed kings! You are never more mistaken than when you think yourselves strong; you are never nearer the truth than when you have the very lowest views of yourself; when you are stripped and emptied, and poured from vessel to vessel, it is *then* that you are where you ought to be. When you can say, "I can do nothing apart from Him," and yet can feel that you can do everything *with* Him—then you are on the verge of safety—you are on the eve of triumph and honor; God is with you, and will greatly bless you as long as you know where your great strength lies!

II. The second head. *It was but little wonder that David's kingdom was weak, for it was but newly gained;* and it is but little marvel if we, also, are very weak in the beginning of our spiritual life. When a king has had time to set himself down upon his throne, and to sweep away before him this party and that, either by politics or by the power of the sword, and so to put down every rival, then his throne becomes confirmed. But here is David, a man who is not descended from the royal race—and who, apart from the divine anointing, which the sons of Belial would never recognize, had no right to the throne whatever. And it is not much wonder that the house of Saul should be troublesome to him, and that his

old comrades, taking too much upon themselves because of their past services, should be too strong for him to manage! Young Christian, it is no wonder that you are weak, when the good work has only lately begun with you! See the lambs in the fold—it is well that they have been shorn in good weather—for what would become of the shorn lamb in the untempered wind? Shall we suppose that the young sapling shall stand as firmly as the oak with its gnarled roots, and its hoary branches which have been twisted together by many a storm? What? Shall a babe fight a battle? Shall a new-born infant go forth to war? Do you wonder because the new creature is weak? Wonder rather at its power, than at its weakness! Does Satan triumph over you, and do you marvel that old Satan is more than a match for a young Christian? Does the old world sometimes oppress your heart, and are you astonished that an old world, with a thousand arts, should be too much for a babe like you? Does your old heart within—that old Adam of yours that is 40 years old—seem too strong for that new Adam, which is newly created in you? Why, you need not marvel—the old man has had time to gather up his strength—time to learn the arts of war and the new man is unaccustomed, as yet, to fight. It is true I have infant grace in the new creature heart more strong than Hercules, who strangled serpents in his cradle. We have seen the newly-converted sinner strangling his sins, and conquering his lusts, but we cannot expect that he should always be the master of his fears, so as to overcome doubts, answer questions, and confound gainsayers! No, young Christian, trust in the Lord your God, for you shall go from strength to strength, until in Zion you shall appear before God. I meet with many young Christians who are greatly troubled because they have not reached the attainments of older converts. Do you expect children to carry heavy burdens, or to be skillful in the arts, or learned in the sciences? No! We wait for riper years and greater maturity, and we expect but little from the boy at school. Even so in babes in grace—it were an idle folly to look for the attainment of the perfect man in Christ Jesus! Some Christians, as the old Puritan says, are born with beards. Some young Christians get experience very early, and God calls them to hard fights and great enterprises while they are yet but lambs—but our Master does not usually make captains of His drummer boys. No, no! He picks the man for the place—He will have his veterans for the front ranks, and put lads behind for a little while. Yet sometimes they step forward and, like David, bring down Goliath. And occasionally the babes and sucklings have accomplished greater works than the veteran saints, yet that is not the rule, nor must you sigh and cry if the young kingdom of grace in your soul is as yet apparently weak, and sometimes appears to tremble in the scales.

III. And now another parallel. Let us remark that *David was weak only in the flesh*, and that the Christian is truly only weak there, too. Why was David weak? “Because,” he said, “the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me. I cannot subdue them; I cannot keep them under; I cannot manage any kingdom while such turbulent spirits as these interfere and intermeddle with everything.” Ah, David, and did you not know this before? How different is this from your language when you were but a lad! Did not the Philistine say to you, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the fowls of heaven.” Did you know yourself to be weak *then*? And yet you said, “You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” Ah, what a fall is there, David! Ought you not now to have said the same? “Joab, I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts, and though all the hosts of Israel are at your beck and command, I will do equal justice to strong and weak, and your murderous spirit shall die and suffer because of what you have done in this, my kingdom.” Oh, that David’s virgin throne should have been stained with the unavenged blood of a murdered man! Here was lack of faith, you see. David had as strong a God as ever; but he was weak in the flesh. And that, my brothers and sisters, blessed be God, is the only weakness a Christian can know! We are never weak in our God—we are always weak in ourselves! Whenever you are in the midst of a difficulty, and you sit down and say, “I cannot do this,” who ever thought you could? You ought to have known that you could do nothing! But if your difficulty is ever so severe, and your position ever so trying, is the everlasting arm too weak for your defense? Is the eternal eye unable to see through the difficulty? Or has eternal love failed you? “Oh, but I am so weak!” Of course you are! And the weaker you are the better! But Jehovah is not weak; the Eternal One faints not, and neither is

He weary; there is no searching of His understanding. David was weak because he lived by sight; if he had lived as in the days of his youth, by *faith* in the covenant God who had anointed him, he never would have complained of weakness, but would have done his duty, even should heaven itself totter about his ears! Christian, have done today with talking of what you are, and of what you are not! Remember the Christian's standing is not on the shifting sand of creature weakness, but on the immovable rock of divine confidence! The reason why the church of these days is such a poor trembling thing is because she always looks to man, and seldom looks to God. If the world is to be evangelized, we examine our funds; we look down the lists of our subscribers; we count our missionaries. Oh, if we counted and reckoned *on our God*, and looked first and only *to Him*, we might yet say to dead nations, "Live," and the voice of faith would make them live! And means, apparently inadequate, would soon suffice—if once our faith sufficed to challenge, and to plead the promises of our God! I am sure of this, my brothers and sisters, that there are very few Christians on the face of the earth who live by faith as they should. Yea, we are all at times pestered with that leprosy of the flesh, that looking to means, to circumstances, to that which is before our eyes, instead of ever seeing that which is invisible, and resting on that mighty arm which, when we cannot see it, is still at work, and which, when we cannot feel it, still feels for us and upholds all things by its power!

IV. I said that we were weak only in the flesh and now I want you to observe in the fourth place, that it is where the *flesh is strong that we are weak*. Why was not David strong? Why, because of the sons of Zeruah, yet these sons of Zeruah were his greatest strength! What could he have done without Joab and Abishai—Joab the man who smote the garrison of Jebus, and Abishai who slew 300 men in single-handed fight? What could he do without these? These were David's mighty men, those who always led the van, and with a tremendous shout dashed among the Philistines and scattered the uncircumcised! These were David's glory! Often, I do not doubt, as he walked in the midst of his companions in Engedi, he would look on Joab and Abishai and say, "What noble helpers! What men! How trained in the daring deeds of war! With feet leaping from crag to crag like the wild roe—with eyes piercing through the cloud of the battle—with arms whose crash is as the tempest, with faces terrible as lions making the stout-hearted tremble!" These were David's pride, his glory, his strength, yes, and they were his weakness. So is it with us. *Whatever is our strength in the flesh* is sure to be our weakness in the spirit. Let me give you an instance. Jacob was a man whose strength was in his cunning. He was a wise business man; he was a shrewd calculator; he was wise as the children of this generation. Yes, but that cunning was Jacob's weakness! It was that which always brought him into trouble. He is cunning, first of all, with his poor old father Isaac. Instead of leaving the matter to God, he must deceive his father with a lie—and as the result of it, he is driven from the house of which otherwise he would doubtless, by the divine will—have become a peaceful possessor. He goes to Laban. Here, no doubt, he looked well to himself in the bargain about Rachel, and as he did not trust his father-in-law, his father-in-law did not trust him—and Jacob finds Leah instead of the beloved one! Then it comes to the point of wages, and Jacob is very wise there. Laban is hard with him, and then he is very crafty with Laban. Laban first says he shall have the ring-streaked sheep, and then those rods in the drinking trough show what a wise man Jacob was. His visages are changed, and changed and changed again, but Jacob outwits Laban. The whole history of that good man is of one strong in his wits, but weak in his faith—always a supplanter and, therefore, being always supplanted! Thus the wisdom of man is rather an impediment than an assistant to the purpose of God. Whenever we are raised up by God to do any work for Him, we must not sit down and say, "Well I think I am qualified for the work, because I have such-and-such gifts." It is just these very things which you possess which will be the heavy hindrances, and not the successful assistants of your labor! Remember that your sons of Zeruah will be hard to manage. They will be too strong for you!

Our Welsh brothers are the best men in the world for preachers, qualified by God for it by their fiery spirit, and yet if you were to mark the career of many a minister with a fiery spirit, it is just that which causes him to make shipwreck of his church by quarrels and divisions! A Scot brother is qualified for

theological studies by the coolness of his temperament, and yet it will often happen that that very coolness often palsies his life, and cripples him as a minister of the Word. I believe the strength of God's ministers generally lies in the points where they are the weakest, and their weakness usually lies in their strength. That is to say, natural strength will be toned down by a *spiritual weakness*, and a natural weakness will be exalted and be made the vehicle and channel for *spiritual* strength! It has often been so. The very physical appearance of Paul, his personal presence which was said to be weak and contemptible, becomes to him the subject of glorying; he glories in his infirmity, for it is the means of giving honor to God.

"This is strange logic," says one. It is, sir—God's logic is strange! Gideon fears the Midianites because of the slender number of his soldiers, but the Lord says, "The people are yet too many for Me." The king of Judah, on another occasion, hires for so many hundred thousand talents, a number of mercenary troops from the king of Israel. "Now," he says, "I shall win the battle." But before the battle begins, the prophet bids him send these men back; God can do better without means than He can with means who are audacious enough to think themselves necessary! The Lord will always throw the sword away from His hand when that sword begins to boast itself! Assyria is His axe to cut down the cedars, but if the axe glories, the axe itself must be cast away! And so will it be with you if you set down any good thing you have ever done, to yourself—God will bring you down! Learn instead to be wise, and if you have any excellence or any power, pour contempt on it; and if you have any weakness, and any infirmity, glory in it because the power of God shall rest upon you!

V. And now one other remark, and may God bless the Word to the comfort of all His people. It is this. *We are anointed kings, and yet we are weak; but our weakness shall not prevent our reigning by-and-by.* David's kingdom did not shake, even when his heart failed him; and it would have stood just as fast if he had knocked away Joab and Abishai who seemed to be the props that supported it. God had sworn that David should sit upon the throne—David's strength lay in *God's truthfulness, not in Joab's valor.* It was David's business to believe that come what may, God's purpose must stand, and God would do all His pleasure. It is just the same with you, Christian, today. However weak you may be, and whatever means may have failed you, remember God has said it—you shall be saved! He has promised that you shall be glorified with Christ; and so you must be, come fair, come foul. Whatever happens, God must be as good as His Word. There are some professed Christians who believe that God's people may fall away and perish everlastingly. I don't know whether they think it is the weak Christian or the strong; but they believe that there are some who, though they serve God for years, may yet in a dark and evil hour forsake the Lord their God, and may ultimately be cast away. Brothers and sisters, we reject, renounce, and abhor that doctrine, as being not the truth of God, but an insinuation of Satan! We believe that every child of God, from the least to the greatest; every man, woman, or child who has put his trust in Jesus, is as safe now from finally perishing as though he were in heaven! We uphold and teach, and it is our joy to believe, that all who have given themselves to Christ, and who have been saved by His love, shall be kept safely in the hour of temptation, and presented at last without spot or wrinkle or any such thing before His Father's face! It is on this doctrine I am about to dwell a minute, while I say that we shall reign. Weak as we are, we shall reign in heaven, by-and-by, and I shall attempt to show you why. For, in the first place, if we do not, *God's attributes will, every one of them, suffer an eclipse!* Where is the *power* of God, if He cannot keep the people whom He has bought with His blood, and whom He has called by His Spirit? Is the power of sin greater than the power of God? And is man's free will to be omnipotent, and God's purpose to fail, because men *will not let God* succeed? I say that God's omnipotence would be blotted and blurred if He suffered the very meanest of His chosen ones to fall away and perish! Or where were His *love*? If Christ can keep His spouse and does not, where is His affection? If Jesus can save His people and will not where is His love and what is its vaunted value? It is either in God's power to keep a man from going down to hell, or it is not—if it is not, then God is not omnipotent; if it is in His power, but not in His love, His love—I say it with reverence to His name—is not the everlasting love of which Scripture says so much! And then, His *wisdom*, too—would not that

suffer? If His anointed sons shall not reign, why did He anoint them? Why does a wise God begin a work He does not carry on? Has God purposed anything which He finds to be an error and, therefore, forbears to execute it? God forbid we should indulge such blasphemy! And where, my brothers and sisters, where is *divine truth*? What truth would there be in a passage like this—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." If one of them should perish, that passage would be not true! And again, those words of the apostle Paul—"If when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life?" Where would the reasoning be there? Where is the truth of God in those statements, if His people are not saved by Jesus' life? Then the apostle Paul was deceived when he said, "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." Then God did not mean it when He said, "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of My love shall not be removed, says the Lord who has mercy upon you." Where is the meaning of that divine assurance—"Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." I say, beloved that the Bible is like the husks of the winepress when the generous juice has been pressed from there, if you take the doctrine of final perseverance out of it. If God can change, if His purpose can fail, if His love can be taken away from one on whom it was ever set, I am not a Christian, nor would I think it my boast, and my honor to serve God, if he were such a faithless one as this free-will theology makes Him to be!

But further than this, if all for whom Jesus shed His blood, and all who believe in God through Jesus are not saved, then God's Son is dishonored! He is the head, but He is the head of a mangled body; He is a king, but He is like the king of Naples, a king without a territory; He is a husband, but He is a husband without a spouse, or with a spouse that is only half there, half His, and half the devil's! And then again, if God's people are not saved, and if His Davids do not reign, then you have to accept the blasphemous alternative that God is defeated by man! Here it is—God wills to save me, but I am told that my free will may master God! Away with your free will! Is free will to be God? If it is a god, fall down and worship it, and be an idolater as base as the worshippers of Baal! But I know that God is master of man, and that man's will shall never match with God, but God will have His way! I ask now, in the name of reason, and of Scripture, what is there that can hinder God from saving the man whom He has promised to save? "Why, his hard heart can hinder him!" Yes, but he had that hard heart when God began with him, and God overcame that bad heart, and can He not overcome it to the end? "Oh, but the man may not be willing!" Yes and he was not willing at the first, but God *made him willing*, and He that mastered his will, then—may He not still master it? "Oh, but Satan may overcome him!" And is Satan to make the purpose of God of no effect? And is a child of God to be a child of hell tomorrow—alive today, dead tomorrow, and then alive again? O miserable doctrine! Where is now our strong consolation if this is our portion?

In presenting such as the everlasting gospel, I feel confidence, because it is worth your having. Trust your souls with Christ today, and you are saved! "He who believes on Christ Jesus shall be saved." "No," say our antagonists, "he shall not. He may be, or he may not be; he may believe on Christ, but whether he is saved or not depends upon his own will." Sir, you lie against God and Scripture! "He who believes shall be saved," come what may. "*Yes, if he keeps on believing.*" Sir, it says no such thing! It says, "He who believes shall be saved"—he shall, he must keep on believing! Where God begins the work, He will carry it on. Let me quote again that passage—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." "Ah," said a foolish minister once, "but they may pluck themselves out!" A pretty idea! "No man shall pluck them out of His hands," and they may pluck themselves out as if they were not men! Or, says another, they may slip between His fingers. But then what becomes of that passage, "They shall never perish?" If one of His sheep shall ever perish, that Word of God is either false or else had no meaning in it!

I was riding lately with a good brother in Christ who did not believe in final perseverance. He said, "I don't believe that many Christians ever fall away. I don't think one in a thousand does, perhaps not one in a million, but it is possible, just possible, and I think we ought to say it is." "But," I said, "one in a million does not improve your case at all! Because if one in a million, why not you? Why not me? Why not the rest? Why not all? If some for whom Christ died may perish, why not all? And then a Christian may die and never 'see of the travail of his soul.' If some who believe may fall away and perish, why not all? Then how shall the promise stand if they believe and yet were not saved? If Christ may lose a part of His Church, why may He not lose all? Besides," I said, "I should feel that if one child of God may fall, certainly it must be me; but why should one fall more than another?" My friend said, "Because one is more wicked than another." "What is this but the old covenant of works? Their standing depends not on themselves, but on God. How shall they be prevented from falling?" "By God's grace, I suppose." "Well, then, if God's grace can keep one, it can keep another! And if it cannot keep one Christian from going into sin, how am I to hope it will keep another? And if some Christians persevere, and come to heaven, why may not others? What is the reason why?" "*Because some are better than others?*" Then off with the crown from Jesus' head, and put it on the head of the law, and sing 'Hallelujah,' to our good works after all! No, my brothers and sisters; when your soul is given up to Christ, it is Christ's business to save it, not yours! When you have committed yourself into Jesus' hands—

*"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep;
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep!
Nor death nor hell shall ever divide
His darlings from His breast;
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."*

Fly into His bosom, sinner; fly now, and you shall rest there forever! And neither sin, nor Satan, nor self, shall ever pluck you thence; for he who believes is saved! He who believes in Christ, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The water which He shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life! God grant you the blessing of perseverance, for Jesus' sake!

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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