

ENDURING TO THE END

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A SERMON
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“He that endureth to the end shall be saved.”
Matthew 10:22

THIS particular text was originally addressed *to the apostles* when they were sent to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps bright visions floated before their minds, of honor and esteem among men. It was no mean dignity to be among the twelve first heralds of salvation to the sons of Adam.

Was a check needed to their high hopes? Perhaps so. Lest they should enter upon their work without having counted its cost, Christ gives them a very full description of the treatment which they might expect to receive, and reminds them that it was not the commencement of their ministry which would win them their reward, but “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.”

It would be well if every youthful aspirant to the Gospel ministry would remember this. If merely to put our hand to the plough proved us to be called of God, how many would be found so, but alas, too many look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom. The charge of Paul to Timothy is a very necessary exhortation to every young minister, “Be thou faithful unto death.” It is not to be faithful for a time, but to be “faithful *unto death*,” which will enable a man to say, “I have fought a good fight.”

How many dangers surround the Christian minister! As the officers in an army are the chosen targets of the sharpshooters, so are the ministers of Christ. The king of Syria said to his servants, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.” Even so the arch-fiend makes his main attack upon the ministers of God. From the first moment of his call to the work, the preacher of the Word will be familiar with temptation.

While he is yet in his youth, there are multitudes of the softer temptations to turn the head and trip the feet of the youthful herald of the cross. And when the blandishments of early popularity have passed away, as soon they must, the harsh croak of slander, and the adder’s tongue of ingratitude assail him, he finds himself stale and flat where once he was flattered and admired. Nay, the venom of malice succeeds to the honeyed morsels of adulation. Now let him gird his loins and fight the good fight of faith.

In his after days, to provide fresh matter Sabbath after Sabbath, to rule as in the sight of God, to watch over the souls of men, to weep with them who weep, to rejoice with those who do rejoice, to be a nursing father unto young converts, sternly to rebuke hypocrites, to deal faithfully with backsliders, to speak with solemn authority and paternal pathos to those who are in the first stages of spiritual decline, to carry about with him the care of the souls of hundreds, is enough to make him grow old while yet he is young and to mar his visage with the lines of grief. Till like the Savior, at the age of thirty years, men shall count him nearly fifty. “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” said the adversaries of Christ to Him when He was but thirty-two.

If the minister should fall my brethren, if set upon a pinnacle, he should be cast down, if standing in slippery places, he should falter, if the standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may, what mischief is done to the church, what shouts are heard among the adversaries, what dancing is seen among the daughters of Philistia! How has God’s banner been stained in the dust, and the name of Jesus cast into the mire!

When the minister of Christ turns traitor, it is as if the pillars of the house did tremble. Every stone in the structure feels the shock. If Satan can succeed in overturning the preachers of the Word, it is as if

yon broad-spreading tree should suddenly fall beneath the axe, prone in the dust it lies to wither and to rot. But where are the birds of the air which made their nests among its boughs, and whither fly those beasts of the field which found a happy shadow beneath its branches? Dismay has seized them, and they flee in fright.

All who were comforted by the preacher's words, strengthened by his example, and edified by his teaching, are filled with humiliation and grief, crying, "Alas! my brother." By these our manifold dangers and weighty responsibilities, we may very justly appeal to you who feed under our ministry, and beseech you, "Brethren, pray for us." Well we know that though our ministry is received of the Lord Jesus, if hitherto we have been kept faithful by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet it is only he who endures to the end who shall be saved.

But my brethren, how glorious is the sight of the man who does endure to the end as a minister of Christ. I have photographed upon my heart just now, the portrait of one very, very dear to me, and I think I may venture to produce a rough sketch of him, as no mean example of how honorable it is to endure to the end.

This man began while yet a youth to preach the Word. Sprung of ancestors who had loved the Lord and served His church, he felt the glow of holy enthusiasm. Having proved his capabilities, he entered college, and after the close of its course, settled in a spot where for more than fifty years he continued his labors.

In his early days, his sober earnestness and sound doctrine were owned of God in many conversions both at home and abroad. Assailed by slander and abuse, it was his privilege to live it all down. He outlived his enemies, and though he had buried a generation of his friends, yet he found many warm hearts clustering round him to the last.

Visiting his flock, preaching in his own pulpit, and making very many journeys to other churches, years followed one another so rapidly that he found himself the head of a large tribe of children and grandchildren, most of them walking in the truth.

At the age of fourscore years, he preached on still, until laden with infirmities, but yet as joyful and as cheerful as in the heyday of his youth, his time had come to die. He was able to say truthfully, when last he spoke to me, "I do not know that my testimony for God has ever altered as to the fundamental doctrines. I have grown in experience, but from the first day until now, I have had no new doctrines to teach my hearers. I have had to make no confessions of error on vital points, but have been held fast to the doctrines of grace, and can now say that I love them better than ever."

Such a one was he, as Paul the aged, longing to preach so long as his tottering knees could bear him to the pulpit. I am thankful that I had such a grandsire. He fell asleep in Christ but a few hours ago, and on his dying bed talked as cheerfully as men can do in the full vigor of their health.

Most sweetly he talked of the preciousness of Christ, and chiefly of the security of the believer, the truthfulness of the promise, the immutability of the covenant, the faithfulness of God, and the infallibility of the divine decree. Among other things which he said at the last was this, which is, we think, worth your treasuring in your memories. "Dr Watts sings—

*'Firm as the earth Thy Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust.'*

What, Doctor, is it not firmer than that? Could you not find a better comparison? Why, the earth will give way beneath our feet one day or another, if we rest on it. The comparison will not do. The Doctor was much nearer the mark when he said—

*'Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands.
Till the decisive hour.'*

“Firm as His throne,” said he, “He must cease to be king before He can break His promise, or lose His people. Divine sovereignty makes us all secure.” He fell asleep right quietly, for his day was over, and the night was come, what could he do better than go to rest in Jesus? Would God it may be our lot to preach the Word so long as we breathe, standing fast unto the end in the truth of God. And if we see not our sons and grandsons testifying to those doctrines which are so dear to us, yet may we see our children walking in the truth.

I know of nothing, dear friends, which I would choose to have as the subject of my ambition for life, than to be kept faithful to my God to death, still to be a soul-winner, still to be a true herald of the cross, and testify the name of Jesus to the last hour. It is only such who in the ministry shall be saved.

Our text, however, occurs again in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, at the thirteenth verse, upon which occasion it was not addressed to the apostles, but to the disciples. The disciples, looking upon the huge stones which were used in the construction of the temple, admired the edifice greatly, and expected their Lord to utter a few words of passing encomium.

Instead of which, He, who came not to be an admirer of architecture, but to hew living stones out of the quarry of nature, to build them up into a spiritual temple, turned their remarks to practical account, by warning them of a time of affliction, in which there would be such trouble as had never been before, and He added, “No, nor ever shall be.”

He described false prophets as abounding, and the love of many as waxing cold, and warned them that “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” So that this solemn truth applies to every one of you.

The Christian man, though not called to the post of danger in witnessing publicly of the grace of God, is destined in his measure to testify concerning Jesus, and in his proper sphere and place, to be a burning and a shining light. He may not have the cares of a church, but he has far more, the cares of business. He is mixed up with the world. He is compelled to associate with the ungodly.

To a great degree he must, at least six days in the week, walk in an atmosphere uncongenial with his nature. He is compelled to hear words which will never provoke him to love and good works, and to behold actions whose example is obnoxious. He is exposed to temptations of every sort and size, for this is the lot of the followers of the Lamb.

Satan knows how useful is a consistent follower of the Savior, and how much damage to Christ’s cause an inconsistent professor may bring, and therefore he empties out all his arrows from his quiver that he may wound, even unto death, the soldier of the cross.

My brethren, many of you have had a far longer experience than myself. You know how stern is the battle of the religious life, how you must contend, even unto blood striving against sin. Your life is one continued scene of warfare, both without and within. Perhaps even now you are crying with the apostle, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

A Christian’s career is always fighting, never ceasing, always plowing the stormy sea and never resting till he reaches the port of glory. If my God shall preserve you, as preserve you He must, or else you are not His, if He shall keep you, as keep you He will, if you have committed your souls to His faithful guardianship, what an honor awaits you!

I have in my mind’s eye, just now, one who has been for about sixty years associated with this church, and who this week, full of years, and ripe for heaven, was carried by angels into the Savior’s bosom. Called by divine grace while yet young, he was united with the Christian church early in life. By divine grace, he was enabled to maintain a consistent and honorable character for many years. As an officer of this church, he was acceptable among his brethren and useful both by his godly example and sound judgment. While in various parts of the church of Christ, he earned unto himself a good degree.

He went last Sabbath day, twice to the house of God where he was accustomed of late years to worship, enjoying the Word, and feasting at the communion table with much delight. He went to his bed without having any very serious illness upon him, having spent his last evening upon earth in cheerful

conversation with his daughters. Ere the morning light, with his head leaning upon his hand, he had fallen asleep in Christ, having been admitted to the rest which remains for the people of God.

As I think of my brother, though of late years I have seen but little of him, I can but rejoice in the grace which illuminated his pathway. When I saw him, the week before his departure, although full of years, there was little or no failure in mind. He was just the picture of an aged saint waiting for his Master, and willing to work in His cause while life remained.

I refer, as most of you know, to Mr. Samuel Gale. Let us thank God and take courage—thank God that He has preserved in this case, a Christian so many, many years, and take courage to hope that there will be found in this church, many, at all periods, whose grey heads shall be crowns of glory. “He that endureth to the end,” and only he, “shall be saved.”

But dear friends, perseverance is not the lot of the few. It is not left to laborious preachers of the Word or to consistent church officers, it is the common lot of every believer in the church. It must be so, for only thus can they prove that they are believers. It must be so, for only by their perseverance can the promise be fulfilled, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Without perseverance, they cannot be saved, and as saved they must be, persevere they shall through divine grace.

I shall now, with brevity and earnestness, as God enables me, speak upon our text thus, *perseverance is the badge of saints—the target of our foes—the glory of Christ—and the care of all believers.*

I. First then, PERSEVERANCE IS THE BADGE OF TRUE SAINTS.

It is their Scriptural mark. How am I to know a Christian? By his words? Well, to some degree words betray the man, but a man’s speech is not always the copy of his heart, for with smooth language many are able to deceive. What does our Lord say? “Ye shall know them *by their fruits.*” But how am I to know a man’s fruits? By watching him one day? I may, perhaps, form a guess of his character by being with him for a single hour, but I could not confidently pronounce upon a man’s true state even by being with him for a week.

George Whitefield was asked what he thought of a certain person’s character. “I have never lived with him,” was his very proper answer. If we take the run of a man’s life, say for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and if by carefully watching, we see that he brings forth the fruits of grace through the Holy Spirit, our conclusion may be drawn very safely.

As the truly magnetized needle in the compass, with many deflections, yet does really and naturally point to the pole, so if I can see that despite infirmities, my friend sincerely and constantly aims at holiness, then I may conclude with something like certainty, that he is a child of God.

Although works do not justify a man before God, they do justify a man’s profession before his fellows. I cannot tell whether you are justified in calling yourself a Christian except by your works. By your works, therefore, as James says, shall ye be justified. You cannot by your words convince me that you are a Christian, much less by your experience, which I cannot see but must take on trust from you.

But your actions will, unless you are an unmitigated hypocrite, speak the truth, and speak the truth loudly too. If your course is as the shining light which shines more unto the perfect day, I know that yours is the path of the just. All other conclusions are only the judgment of charity such as we are bound to exercise. But this is as far as man can get it, the judgment of certainty when a man’s life has been consistent throughout.

Moreover, *analogy shows us that it is perseverance which must mark the Christian.* How do I know the winner at the foot race? There are the spectators, and there are the runners. What strong men! what magnificent muscles! what strength and sinews! Yonder is the goal, and there it is that I must judge who is the winner, not here, at the starting point, for “They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize.” I may select this one, or that other person, as likely to win, but I cannot be absolutely sure until the race is over.

There they fly! see how they press forward with straining muscles, but one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath, and others are far behind. One only wins—and who is he? Why, he who continues to the end.

So I may gather from the analogy, which Paul constantly allows us, from the ancient games, that only he who continues till he reaches the goal may be accounted a Christian at all.

A ship starts on a voyage to Australia—if it stops at Madeira, or returns after reaching the Cape, would you consider that it ought to be called an emigrant ship for New South Wales? It must go the whole voyage, or it does not deserve the name. A man has begun to build a house, and has erected one side of it—do you consider him a builder if he stops there, and fails to cover it in or to finish the other walls?

Do we give men praise for being warriors because they know how to make one desperate charge, but lose the campaign? Have we not, of late, smiled at the boasting dispatches of commanders, in fights where both combatants fought with valor, and yet neither of them had the common sense to push on to reap the victory?

What was the very strength of Wellington, but that when a triumph had been achieved, he knew how to reap the harvest which had been sown in blood? And he only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continues till war's trumpet is blown no more.

It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon, he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior," or if it be not, you know not the noble spirit of God's princes. But why do I multiply illustrations, when all the world rings with the praise of perseverance?

Moreover, *the common-sense judgment of mankind* tells us, that those who merely begin and do not hold out, will not be saved. Why, *if every man would be saved who began to follow Christ, who would be damned?* In such a country as this, the most of men have at least one religious spasm in their lives. I suppose that there is not a person before me, who at some time or other did not determine to be a pilgrim.

You, Mr. Pliable, were induced by a Christian friend who had some influence with you, to go with him some short way, till you came to the Slough of Despond, and you thought yourself very wise when you scrambled out on that side which was nearest to your own home. And even you, Mr. Obstinate, are not always dogged, you have fits of thoughtfulness and intervals of tenderness.

My hearer, how impressed you were at the prayer meeting! how excited you were at that revival service! When you heard a zealous brother preach at the theater what an impression was produced! Ah! yes, the shop was shut up for a Sunday or two, you did not swear or get drunk for nearly a month, but you could not hold on any longer.

Now, if those who were to begin, were saved, why you would be secure, though you are at the present time as far from anything like religion, as the darkness at midnight is from the blazing light of midday. Besides, common sense shows us, I say, that a man must hold on, or else he cannot be saved, because *the very worst of men are those who begin and then give up.*

If you would turn over all the black pages of villainy, to find the name of the son of perdition, where would you find it? Why, among the apostles. The man who had wrought miracles and preached the Gospel, sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver—Judas Iscariot, betrays the Son of Man with a kiss. Where is a worse name than that of Simon Magus? Simon, "believed also," says the Scripture, and yet he offered the apostles money if they would sell to him the Holy Ghost.

What an infamous notoriety Demas has obtained, who loved the present evil world! How much damage did Alexander the coppersmith do to Paul? "He did me much evil," said he, "the Lord reward him according to his works." And yet that Alexander was once foremost in danger, and even exposed his own person in the theater at Ephesus, that he might rescue the apostle.

There are none so bad as those who once seemed to be good. "If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" That which is best when ripe, is worst when rotten. Liquor which is sweetest in one stage, becomes sourest in another. Let not him that putteth on his armour boast as though

he putteth it off,” for even common sense teaches you, that it is not to begin, but to continue to the end which marks the time of the child of God.

But we need not look to analogy and to mere common sense. *Scripture is plain enough*. What says John? “They went out from us.” Why? Were they ever saints? Oh! no—“They went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

They were no Christians, or else they had not thus apostatized. Peter saith, “It hath happened unto them according to the proverb, the dog hath returned to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire,” indicating at once most clearly that the dog, though it did vomit, always was a dog. When men disgorge their sins unwillingly, not giving them up because they dislike them, but because they cannot retain them, if a favorable time comes, they will return to swallow once more what they seemed to abandon.

The sow that *was* washed—ay, bring it into the parlor, introduce it among society, it *was washed* and well-washed too, whoever saw so respectable a member of the honorable confraternity of swine before? Bring it in! Yes, but will you keep it there? Wait and see. Because you have not transformed it into a man, on the first occasion it will be found wallowing in the mire. Why? Because it was not a man, but a sow.

And so we think we may learn from multitudes of other passages, if we had time to quote them, that those who go back into perdition are not saints at all, for perseverance is the badge of the righteous. “The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” We not only get life by faith, but faith sustains it, “the just *shall live* by faith,” “but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

What we have learned from Scripture, dear friends, has been abundantly confirmed *by observation*. Every day would I bless God that in so numerous a church we have comparatively so few who have proved false, but I have seen enough, and the Lord knows, more than enough, to make me very jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I could tell of many an instance of men and women who did run well.

“What did hinder them that they should not obey the truth?” I remember a young man of whom I thought as favorably as of any of you, and I believe he did at that time deserve our favorable judgment. He walked among us, one of the most hopeful of our sons, and we hoped that God would make him serviceable to His cause. He fell into bad company.

There was enough conscience left, after a long course of secret sin, to make him feel uncomfortable in his wickedness, though he did not give it up, and when at last his sin stared him in the face, and others knew it, so ashamed was he, that though he bore the Christian name, he took poison that he might escape the shame which he had brought upon himself. He was rescued—rescued by skill and the good providence of God, but where he is, and what he is, God only knows, for he had taken another poison more deadly still which made him the slave of his own lusts.

Do not think it is the young alone, however. It is a very lamentable fact that there are, in proportion, more backslidings among the old than the young, and if you want to find a great sinner in that respect, you will find him, surely, nine times out of ten, with grey hairs on his head.

Have I not frequently mentioned that you do not find in Scripture many cases of young people going astray? You do find believers sinning, but they were all getting old men. There is Noah—no youth. There is Lot, when drunken—no child. There is David with Bathsheba—no young man in the heat of passion. There is Peter denying his Lord—no boy at the time. These were men of experience and knowledge and wisdom. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

With sorrow do we remember one whom, years ago, we heard pray among us, and sweetly too, esteemed and trusted by us all. I remember a dear brother saying very kindly, but not too wisely, “If he is not a child of God, I am not.” But what did he, my brethren, to our shame and sorrow, but go aside to the very worst and foulest of sins, and where is he now? Perhaps the ale-house may tell, or worse places still.

So have we seen that earth's sun may be eclipsed, earth's stars may go out, and all human glory melt into shame. No true child of God perishes—hold that fast, but this is the badge of a true child of God, that a man endures to the end, and if a man does not hold on, but slinks back to his old master, and once again fits on the old collar, and wears again the Satanic yoke, that is sure proof that he has never come out of the spiritual Egypt through Jesus Christ his leader, and has never obtained that eternal life which cannot die because it is born of God.

I have thus then, dear friends, said enough to prove, I think, beyond dispute, that the true badge of the Christian is perseverance, and that without it, no man has proved himself to be a child of God.

II. Secondly, PERSEVERANCE IS THEREFORE, THE TARGET OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

We have many adversaries. Look at *the world!* The world does not object to our being Christians for a time. It will cheerfully overlook all misdemeanors in that way, if we will now shake hands and be as we used to be. Your old companions who used to call you such *good fellows*, when you were bad fellows, would they not very readily forgive you for having been Christians, if you would just go back and be as in days gone by?

Oh! certainly, they would look upon your religion as a freak of folly, but they would very easily overlook it, if you would give it up for the future. "O!" saith the world, "come back, come back to my arms once more, be enamored of me, and though you have spoken some hard words against me, and done some cruel deeds against me, I will cheerfully forgive you."

The world is always stabbing at the believer's perseverance. Sometimes she will bully him back, she will persecute him with her tongue—cruel mocking shall be used. And at another time, she will cozen him, "Come you back to me, O come you back! Wherefore should we disagree? You are made for me, and I am made for you!" And she beckons so gently and so sweetly, even as Solomon's harlot of old. This is the one thing with her, that you should cease to be a pilgrim, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair.

Your second enemy, *the flesh*. What is its aim? "Oh!" cries the flesh, "We have had enough of this. It is weary work being a pilgrim, come, give it up." Sloth says, "Sit still where you are. Enough is as good as a feast, at least, of this tedious thing." Then, lust cries, "Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare." The flesh cares not how soft the chain, so that it does but hold us fast, and prevent our pressing on to glory.

Then comes in the devil, and sometimes he beats the big drum, and cries with a thundering voice "There is no heaven, there is no God, you are a fool to persevere." Or changing his tactics, he cries, "Come back! I will give you a better treatment than you had before. You thought me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation, come and try me. I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago. I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theater or the casino, come with me, and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell you, I can dress in broad cloth as well as in corduroy, and I can walk in the courts of kings, as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. O come back!" he says, "and make yourself one of mine." So that this hellish trinity, the world, the flesh, and the devil, all stab at the Christian's perseverance.

His perseverance in service they will frequently attack, "What profit is there in serving God?" The devil will say to me sometimes, as he did to Jonah. "Flee you unto Tarshish, and do not stop in this Nineveh. They will not believe your word, though you speak in God's name." To you he will say, "Why, you are so busy all the six days of the week, what is the good of spending your Sunday with a parcel of noisy brats in a Sunday school? Why go about with those tracts in the streets? Much good you will get from it. Would not you be better with having a little rest?"

Ah! that word *rest*—some of us are very fond of it, but we ought to recollect that we spoil it if we try to get it *here*, for rest is only beyond the grave. We shall have rest enough when once we come into the presence of our Lord. Perseverance in service then, the devil would murder outright.

If he cannot stay us in service, he will try to prevent our perseverance *in suffering*. “Why be patient any longer?” says he, “Why sit on that dunghill, scraping your sores with a potsherd?—curse God, and die. You have been always poor since you have been a Christian. Your business does not prosper. You see you cannot make money unless you do as others do. You must go with the times, or else you will not get on. Give it all up. Why be always suffering like this?” Thus the foul spirit tempts us.

Or you may have espoused some good cause, and the moment you open your mouth, many laugh and try to put you down. “Well,” says the devil, “be put down—what is the use of it? Why make yourself singularly eccentric, and expose yourself to perpetual martyrdom? It is all very nice,” saith he, “if you will be a martyr, to be burnt at once, and have done with it, but to hang, like Lord Cobham, to be roasted over a slow fire for days, is not comfortable. Why,” saith the tempter, “why be always suffering—give it up.” You see then, it is also perseverance in suffering which the devil shoots at.

Or perhaps, it is perseverance *in steadfastness*. The love of many has waxed cold, but you remain zealous. “Well,” saith he, “What is the good of your being so zealous? Other people are good enough people, you could not censure them. Why do you want to be more righteous than they are? Why should you be pushing the church before you, and dragging the world behind you? What need is there for you to go two marches in one day? Is not one enough? Do as the rest do. Loiter as they do. Sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as other virgins do.” Thus is our perseverance in steadfastness frequently assailed.

Or else, it will be *our doctrinal sentiments*. “Why,” says Satan, “do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal, they are giving away what does not belong to them—God’s truth, they are removing the old landmarks. Acts of uniformity are to be repealed, articles and creeds are to be laid aside as useless lumber, not necessary for this very enlightened age. Fall in with this, and be an Anythingarian. Believe that black is white. Hold that truth and a lie are very much akin to one another, and that it doesn’t matter which we do believe, for we are all of us right, though we flatly contradict each other. That the Bible is a nose of wax to fit any face, that it does not teach anything material, but you may make it say anything you like. Do that,” saith he, “and be no longer firm in your opinion.”

I think I have proved—and need not waste more words about it—that perseverance is the target for all enemies. Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by His Spirit you may endure to the end.

III. Thirdly, brethren, PERSEVERANCE IS THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

That He makes all His people persevere to the end is greatly to His honor. If they should fall away and perish, every office, and work, and attribute of Christ would be stained in the mire. If any one child of God should perish, where were Christ’s covenant engagements? What is He worth as a mediator of the covenant and the surety of it, if He has not made the promises sure to all the seed?

My brethren, Christ is made a leader and commander of the people, to bring many souls into glory. But if He does not bring them into glory, where is the Captain’s honor? Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeems for a time and then suffers us to perish, where is its value? If it only blots out sin for a few weeks, and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where, I say, is the glory of Calvary, and where is the luster of the wounds of Jesus?

He lives, He lives to intercede, but how can I honor His intercession, if it be fruitless? Does He not pray, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am,” and if they be not finally brought to be with Him where He is, where is the honor of His intercession? Has not the Pleader failed, and the great Mediator been dismissed without success?

Is He not at this day in union with His people? But what is the value of union to Christ, if that union does not insure salvation? Is He not today at the right hand of God, preparing a place for His saints. And will He prepare a place for them, and then lose them on the road? Oh! can it be that He procures the harp and the crown, and will not save souls to use them?

My brethren, the perishing of one true child of God, would be such dishonor to Jesus, that I cannot think of it without considering it as blasphemy. One true believer in hell! Oh! what laughter in the pit—what defiance, what unholy mirth! “Ah! Prince of life and glory,” saith the prince of the pit, “I have defeated You. I have snatched the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive I have delivered. I have torn a jewel from Your crown. See, here it is! You did redeem this soul with blood, and yet it is in hell.”

Hear what Satan cries—“Christ suffered for this soul, and yet God makes it suffer for itself. Where is the justice of God? Christ came from heaven to earth to save this soul, and failed in the attempt, and I have him here,” and as he plunges that soul into deeper waves of woe, the shout of triumph goes up more and more blasphemously—“We have conquered heaven! We have rent up the eternal covenant. We have foiled the purposes of God. We have defeated His decree. We have triumphed over the power of the Mediator, and cast His blood to the ground!”

Shall it ever be? Atrocious question! It *can never be*. They who are in Christ are saved. They whom Jesus Christ has really taken into union with Himself, shall be with Him where He is. But how are you to know whether you are in union with Christ? My brethren, you can only know it by obeying the apostle’s words, “Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

IV. I close therefore, with but a hint on the last point, PERSEVERANCE SHOULD BE THE GREAT CARE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN—his daily and his nightly care.

O beloved! I conjure you by the love of God, and by the love of your own souls, be faithful unto death. Have you difficulties? You must conquer them. Hannibal crossed the Alps, for his heart was full of fury against Rome, and you must cross the Alps of difficulty, for I trust your heart is full of hatred of sin.

When Mr. Smeaton had built the lighthouse upon the Eddystone, he looked out anxiously after a storm to see if the edifice was still there. It was his great joy when he could see it still standing, for a former builder had constructed an edifice which he thought to be indestructible, and he expressed a wish that he might be in it in the worst storm which ever blew, and he was so, and neither himself nor his lighthouse were ever seen afterwards.

Now you have to be exposed to multitudes of storms. You must be in your lighthouse in the worst storm which ever blew, build firmly then on the Rock of Ages, and make sure work for eternity, for if you do these things, you shall never fall. For this church’s sake, I pray you do it, for nothing can dishonor and weaken a church so much as the fall of professors.

A thousand rivers flow to the sea, and make rich the meadows, but no man hears the sound thereof. But if there be one cataract, its roaring will be heard for miles, and every traveler will mark the fall. A thousand Christians can scarcely do such honor to their Master as one hypocrite can do dishonor to Him.

If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, pray that your foot slip not. It would be infinitely better to bury you in the earth than see you buried in sin. If I must be lost, God grant it may not be as an apostate. If I must, after all, perish, were it not better never to have known the way of righteousness than after having known the theory of it, and something of the enjoyment of it, turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Let your prayer be not against death, but against sin. For your own sake, for the church’s sake, for the name of Christ’s sake, I pray you do this.

But you cannot persevere except by much watchfulness in the closet, much carefulness over every action, much dependence upon the strong hand of the Holy Spirit who alone can make you stand. Walk and live as in the sight of God, knowing where your great strength lies, and depend upon it you shall yet sing that sweet doxology in Jude, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

A simple faith brings the soul to Christ, Christ keeps the faith alive. That faith enables the believer to persevere, and so he enters heaven. May that be your lot and mine for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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