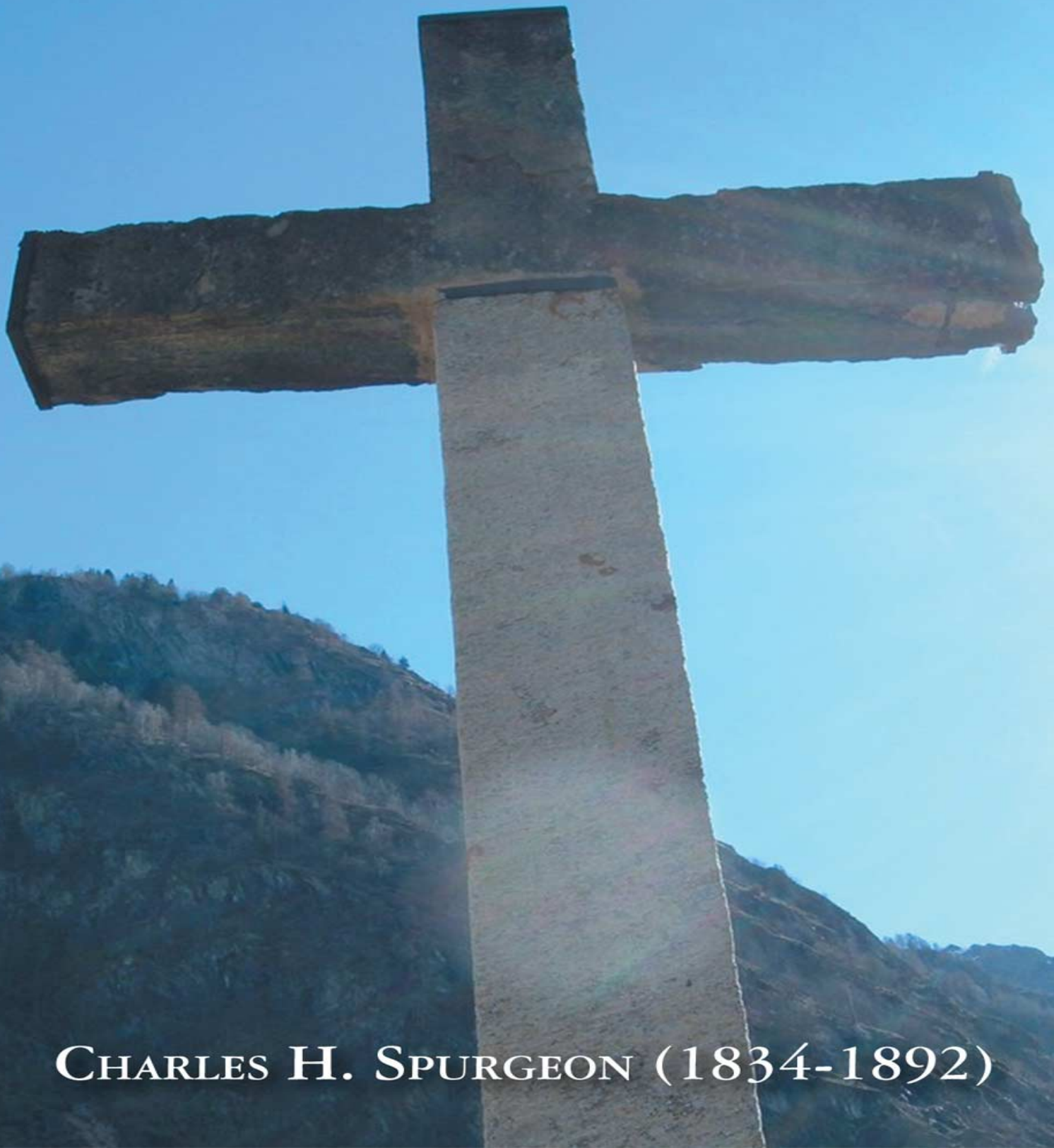


PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS



CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

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Charles H. Spurgeon

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Introduction

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” —Jeremiah 32:40

Last Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher, and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree,¹ covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit, and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife. I felt great tenderness, and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy; the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. Today, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King Himself come near and feast His saints today! May the Comforter Who convinced of sin now come to cheer us with the promise! We noticed concerning the fig tree that it was confirmed in its barrenness; it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation: not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil; but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of grace. May the Lord show us how He establishes His saints in righteousness, and makes the works which He has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of His appearing!

We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God, and are even in league with God. God has made with them a covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into covenant with men, but He has done so. God has pledged Himself to His people, and they have, in return, through His grace, pledged themselves to God. These are heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their

God. This covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed. It is not a thing of passing time, but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!

These covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that He is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has He appeared to you, and said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3)? Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? Your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has He given Christ to you? Has He made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, He has done you good; for these gifts are the outcome of the covenant, and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.

These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge ye, whether it be so in your own case. This is the covenant promise—“I will put my fear in their hearts.” Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please Him? Do you desire to be like Him? Are you like Him in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short; and does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious presence of God your heaven below? Is it all the heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the everlasting covenant: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the covenant: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that covenant: “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this; but I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak is

in itself enough for the delight of all true believers. When you have an abundance of solid food wherewith to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask, nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings. However badly I may carve it, you who have appetites will not fail to feed thereon. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

1. The Everlasting Covenant

First, here is the everlasting covenant: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them.”

In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this covenant is called “a new covenant”; and it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto His people, that if they would keep His laws and walk in His statutes, He would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full. All these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey His Law. Truly Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their need, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels’ food; He sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night He lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He Himself walked in the midst of them, and revealed Himself to them as He had done to no other nation; they were a people near unto Him, a nation beloved of the Lord. But under the exceedingly favourable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares, and no neighbours to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God. Nay, they did not even remain faithful to Him as their God, for they worshipped a molten image, and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eateth grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs, and they cried, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exo 32:4). Thus they brake the covenant in the most wanton and wicked manner. Such a covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people; therefore the Lord, in His immeasurable grace, resolves to make with them a covenant of a new kind, which cannot thus be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old covenant. The breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32: “Which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them.”

After long patience, He visited them for their iniquities, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into His rest. In after-ages He gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them. He made them to be carried away captive; and at last He

suffered the Romans to burn their holy city, and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them. But in these days, the Lord hath in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all believers, a new covenant; not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new covenants, for they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the covenant of grace; they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God's mercy, and then combine with it conditions which make it rather justice than grace. Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new covenant is all of grace, from its first letter to its closing word; and we shall have to show you this as we go on.

It is an "everlasting" covenant, however; that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration; but this is an "everlasting covenant." Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word "everlasting" means lasting forever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that "an everlasting covenant" means a covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?

The first reason why it is an everlasting covenant is that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The covenant of works was made with the race in the first Adam; but the first Adam was faulty and failed full soon. He could not bear the stress of his responsibility, and so that covenant was broken. But the Surety of the new covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ; and He is not faulty, but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of His chosen, and He stands for them. They are regarded as members of His body, and He is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative. The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into covenant with God on the behalf of His people; and because He cannot fail—for in Him there is no infirmity or sin—therefore the covenant of which He is the Surety must stand. He abideth forever in His Melchizedek priesthood, and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in His nature and in His work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain, and, therefore,

the covenant stands in Him. When it is written, I have given “thee for a covenant of the people” (Isa 42:6), we see that the covenant cannot fail, because He cannot fail Who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all His believing people in the covenant, therefore the covenant is everlasting.

Next, the covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it; but when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which He was the Surety. He has magnified the Law, and made it honourable by His own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government, and made amends to holiness for man’s offences. The Law is more glorified by His atoning death than it was dishonoured by man’s sin. This Man hath offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the covenant that He sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remaineth only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises—unconditional promises, full of grace and truth, such as these—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:25-27). Will not God be true to His engagements? Yes, verily. When He makes a covenant, and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the free grace of God. The first covenant was conditioned upon the obedience of men. If they kept the Law, God would bless them; but they failed through disobedience, and inherited the curse. The divine Sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit, but according to mercy; not according to the personal character of men, but according to the personal character of God; not according to what men might do, but according to

what the Lord Jesus would perform. Sovereign grace declares that He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The covenant which saves men according to God's will and good pleasure is founded upon a rock; for God's free grace is always the same, and God's sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal 3:6). The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the covenant; but if it be of pure grace, then the covenant is everlasting.

Again, in the covenant, everything that can be supposed to be a condition is provided. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent; but then the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Ghost worketh in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter heaven, that we should be holy; but the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and worketh in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. All that is required is also supplied. If there be, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a covenant gift which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that the condition, which might seem to put the covenant in danger, is so surely provided for, that thence ariseth no flaw or fracture.

Moreover, the covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working He always advances from the good to the better. The old Law² was put away because He found fault with it, and therefore the new covenant must last till a fault can be found with it, which will never be. This is the glory which excelleth: no brightness can exceed the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God or more safe to man, than the plan of salvation set forth in the covenant of grace. The moon gives way to the sun, and the sun gives way to a lustre which shall exceed the light of seven days; but what is to supersede the light of free grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-begotten that we might live through Him! The

covenant of grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last forever.

Beloved, rest in the covenant of grace as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a covenant, “ordered in all things, and sure” (2Sa 23:5), to be made with guilty man? It was also divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Saviour like the Only-begotten of the Father? Who could have given Him for a covenant but the Father? The covenant is divine in its maintenance. Note well the Word of the Lord: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” He does not say, “They shall make a covenant with me”; but “I will make a covenant with them.” That God is the maker of the covenant is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even His promise and His oath; those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head; and very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.

2. The Unchanging God of the Covenant

Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon the unchanging God of the covenant: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

Please notice the terms here: the Lord does not merely say, “I will not turn away from them,” but, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” He will not cease to work good for His chosen. The Lord is always doing His people good, and here He promises that He will never leave off blessing them. Not only will He always love them, but He will always prove His love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of His goodness. In effect He says, “I will not cease blessing them; I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good.” Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in His doings towards His covenanted ones?

He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because He has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks, and in His voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good”; and we are sure that He will not forfeit His Word. I do not need to bring forth more reasons: this suffices, the Lord hath said it. Hath He said, and will He not do it?

Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why He should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when He began to do them good they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels, and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state. In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because He could see no good in us, why did He begin to do us good when we were without desire towards Him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants, and a dunghill of sins when He began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first He revealed His love towards us. The

same motive which led Him to begin leads Him to continue; and that motive is nothing but His grace.

Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that He foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises His heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit; He proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, He entered into a covenant with us, and began to bless us with all our sin before His mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account. There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, "Come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet" (Isa 1:18). He entered into a covenant that He would not turn away from us, to do us good; and no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to Him when He thus pledged His word of grace.

Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God at this day viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved, and yet He promised to do us good.

*"He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all."*

And if today I am sinful, if today I have to groan by reason of my evil nature, yet I am but where I was when He chose me, and called me, and redeemed me by the blood of His Son. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). We were undeserving objects upon whom He bestowed His mercy, out of no motive but that which He drew from His own nature; and if we are undeserving still, His grace is still the same. If it be so, that He still deals with us in the way of grace, it is evident that He still views us as undeserving; and why should He not do good towards us now as He did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that He sees us now in Christ. Behold, He has put His people into the hands of His dear Son. He has even put us into Christ's body; "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph 5:30). He sees us in Christ to have died, in Him to have been buried, and in Him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the

Father, so in Him are we well-pleasing to the Father also; for our being in Him identifies us with Him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ's acceptance with God, it standeth firmly, and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good. If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy; but in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ He cannot reject His people; until He repudiates the atonement and the resurrection, He cannot cast away any of those with whom He has entered into covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from His people, from doing them good, because He has shown them so much kindness already; and all that He has done would be lost if He did not go through with it. When He gave His Son, He gave us a sure pledge that He meant to finish His work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (Luk 14:30); but that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out His whole Deity to save His people, and given His whole self in the Person of the Well-beloved for our redemption; and can you believe that He will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous. Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favoured that we dare not fear that His favour toward us will cease. So heavenly, so divine is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of love that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely that the secret of the Lord is with us, and He will forever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed. Like Paul, each one of us may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2Ti 1:12). The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that He will complete His designs of grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that He will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when He has hidden His face He has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of His countenance, but never the love of His heart. When the Lord has turned away His face from His people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and

eager for His love. How often He has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves His Spirit! When we have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” (Job 23:3), we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, ye tried people of God; the Lord’s chastenings have always been for your good. When the Lord has bruised you till the wound has been blue, your heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away your comforts, He has done you good by driving you closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched you by your losses, and made you healthy by your sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when He is seen in darkest colours, has not turned away from doing us good, we are persuaded that He will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument, that He has involved His honour in the salvation of His people. If the Lord’s chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of His redemption? Will not the enemy say of the Lord, “He had not the power to carry out His covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them”? Shall that ever be said of God? Will He thus lose the glory of His omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail; neither can I conceive that He can withdraw His declarations of love to those with whom He is in covenant. The God Whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fainteth not, neither is weary. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him?” (Job 23:13). “He will ever be mindful of his covenant” (Psa 111:5). Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing—

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

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence; for the text is the inspired Word of God, and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus saith the Lord, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

3. The Persevering People in the Covenant

The third part of our subject leads us to see the persevering people in the covenant: “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

Let me read very distinctly these words: “They shall not depart from me.” If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints: “They *shall not* depart from me.” The salvation of those who are in covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive: “They shall not depart from me.”

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord, and wholly lose the life of God: what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly. If a man abide not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it; if grace were gone, safety would be gone. “Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” (Luk 14:34). “It is impossible...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” (Heb 6:4, 6). If the work of grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Ghost has indeed regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not saved it from total apostasy, what can be done? There is such a thing as being “born again” (Joh 3:3); but there is no such thing as being born again and again.

Regeneration is once for all: it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and this sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have

become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, “Though I go back to my old sin, and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a believer.” Nay, nay, profane talker; the text saith not, “They shall be saved though they depart from me”; but “They shall not depart from me”—which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! For they must perish, and with them no covenant of peace has been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, “I will put them where they shall not be tempted. I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth.” No, the Lord does not take His people out of the world; but He allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict, but He “giveth us the victory” (1Co 15:57). We are tempted as was our Lord; but we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander, and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this—“They shall not depart from me.” What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted; but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to Him, and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached that the man who is converted may live as he likes. We have never said so; we have never even thought so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes; or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he could live as he likes, he would never sin, but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live; but that they shall not depart from Him.

This is effected by putting a divine principle within their hearts. The Lord saith, “I will put my fear in their hearts.” It would never be found there if He did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. “I will put my fear in their hearts”; that is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before His Law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness

of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot, and to obey the Lord Whom once we defied. “I will put my fear in their hearts” is the first great act of conversion, and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart. The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones; for the Lord still puts His fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell; He has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all His own, and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, He knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God’s great holdfast upon His people, “I will put my fear in their hearts.”

What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see His infinite greatness, and the fact that He is everywhere present with us; and then, filled with a devout sense of His Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, “my fear,” also intend filial fear. God is our Father, and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). This child-like love kindles in us a fear to grieve Him Whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from Him. There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex Him? He favours me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to His will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot; and when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favour, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander. Our cry is, “The Lord bathes me in His love; He indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with Himself, and how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Loved of Him so specially, and united to Him by an everlasting covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God; but it is our joy to do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

See, beloved, this perseverance of the saints, is perseverance in holiness: “They shall not depart from me.” If the grace of God has really changed

you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, He has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life, but He has said it: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Joh 4:14). The work that is done in regeneration is not a temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed; but it is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth which cannot die, for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth forever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to glory.

If any differ from what I have said, I cannot help it; but I would beg them not to differ from the text; for the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There it stands, "They shall not depart from me." But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of His people? I answer: it is the work of the Spirit of God, but the Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word; for faith cometh by hearing, and holy fear cometh through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word. That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures; for as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed truth, and meditation thereon. Study the doctrines of grace, and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts. Be much in private prayer; for that stirs up the fire, and makes it burn more brilliantly. In fine,³ seek to live near to God, to abide in Him; for as you abide in Him, and His words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit, and so shall you be His disciples.

I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might, and many were comforted by it; but, better still, many were set thinking, and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward. Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door, but it is all door, and when you get in, there is nothing to be had; you are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not; but if a door should seem strait,

yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the covenant of grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them. "Oh!" says one, "if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it. If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it; but if it is pure silver all through, let me have it." Does the gift of grace make us partakers of the divine nature, and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? Then let us have it. I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness. The sweetmeat which tempted me to Christ was this—I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said—if I give myself to Christ, He will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to Him, and He keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, "They shall not depart from me!"

To use an old figure: be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time; so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life: take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you forever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour. Faith in the everlasting covenant stirs my heart's blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm. I can never give up my belief in what the Lord hath said, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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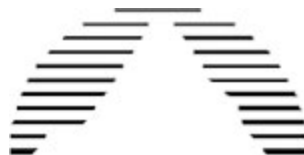
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Notes

[[←1](#)]

The Withered Fig Tree – available from Chapel Library.

[←2]

old Law – the old covenant.

[←3]

In fine – to conclude; to sum it all up.



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