

A VILE WEED AND A FAIR FLOWER

NO. 1449

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me.”
Hebrews 13:5, 6.

IS it not deeply humiliating, beloved Friends, that the best of Christians should need to be cautioned against the worst of sins? May the consecrated become *covetous*? Is it possible that the regenerate may drivel into misers? Alas, what perils surround us, what tendencies are within us! Although a man may be a sincere Believer in the self-sacrificing Jesus, yet it is necessary to say to him, “Let your conversation be without covetousness.” Covetousness is a vice of a very degrading kind and it is, therefore the more surprising that those who have a renewed nature and in whom the Spirit of God dwells should require to be warned against bowing down their souls before it. But such is the necessity that once and again the saints are warned against “covetousness, which is idolatry.”

As long as Israel is in the wilderness, she is not out of danger from the golden calf. There would be no superfluous text in the Bible had there been no peril; there would have been no precept but, alas, the best of saints may be betrayed into the most base sins. Moreover, the common talk of the people with whom we daily mingle in business is so much about buying and selling and getting gain that we are apt to be entangled in their nets and find ourselves in the meshes of their craft before we are aware of it. It is hard to live where greed grasps all and not to try to save a little for ourselves out of the wreck. “Take heed and beware of covetousness,” is a necessary caution for these latitudes.

It appears from our text that the children of God need, also, to be exhorted to cherish that most simple and natural of virtues—contentment. One would think that at least, in some instances, they would have this good thing as a matter of course. Among our villagers we have met with persons so well satisfied with their lowly lot that they would not cross the sea to gain an empire! Yet their contentment has sprung up wild as the daisies and buttercups of their own meadows, for they have not been acquainted with the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, or the blessed hope which makes trials light to bear! Do Christians, then, need to be admonished with precepts and stimulated with promises to make them yield the commonplace virtues of life? Do their fields refuse to grow “the herb called heartsease,” which simple folk have gathered unsown from their little garden plots?

Must Believers be exhorted with earnestness if you would have them content? It is even so! Against the worst of vices they need to be warned and towards the humblest of virtues they need to be exhorted. O Lord, You know us better than we know ourselves, for You understand what poor, faulty things even Your own children are! The best of men are men at best. Unless the Grace of God had engaged to keep them every moment and to defend them from the temptations of their many foes, they would long ago have utterly perished from the way! Great need have they to say, “The Lord is my helper,” for if He is not, they will fall prey to covetousness and discontent!

At this time I have to address you, not upon some high and lofty theme, but upon a simple matter of every-day life. Here in this sublime Epistle which tells us of the Person of Christ—the glory of His Sonship and the grandeur of His Priesthood—here in this storehouse of interpretation which opens up the most cherished statutes and ordinances of the Old Testament only to show how they fade and vanish before the excellence of the New Covenant, here, I say, in this Epistle to the Hebrews, we find ourselves charged to avoid a vice which reason, itself, should cause us to abhor! And it challenges us to exhibit a virtue which Nature, itself, should commend to us!

Plain is the sailing; the rock is conspicuous—shun covetousness! The haven is open—anchor in content! Yet we need, even here, the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that we may shun covetousness and cultivate contentment. Plain and pointed are the words, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have.” May our lives as plainly show these commands written out in act and deed by the Holy Spirit. Our discourse, therefore,

like the text which dictates it, must run out in three distinct branches. There is a covetousness to be eschewed, a contentment to be entertained and a confidence to be established—this last is referred to in the words—“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me.”

I. First, I shall have to say a little about COVETOUSNESS. We are told that our conversation is to be “without covetousness.” The term, “conversation,” includes, as you know, the whole of our lives. It is true that we are not to *talk* covetously, but conversation means far more than speech. It includes thoughts, words and actions—in fact, the whole of life. Taking the first meaning of conversation, namely, *talk*, we ought not in our words to be on the side of those who grip for wealth or growl for wage—who grasp for power or grind the poor. We ought not, in our talk, to take part with the churl and the bigoted.

If we hear of a mean transaction and it is called a sharp stroke of business and commended as something clever, we are not to sanction it even with a smile, but make our looks and our language, alike, discountenance over-reaching and oppression. The skinning of flints and driving of screws are practiced by many people as if they were positively meritorious and there are those who, while they would shrink from doing anything so questionable, themselves, will smile at the crooked policy of others, perhaps feebly blaming the fraud, but all the while admiring the cuteness which carried it out and pocketed the result.

With satiric praise, instead of severe censure, they will say, “Wonderful man that! Nobody can ever get on the blind side of his head. He can get blood out of turnips and profit out of losses.” Those who praise sharpers are the patrons of thieves! Never think that dexterity will condone deceit, or cleverness excuse a lie. Let your conversation savor of Grace and generosity and of kindness altogether unselfish. And never let it flatter the successful trickster or the greedy grinder of the needy. Never let your language be such as might help to sharpen the cunning of a Laban or sanction the churlishness of a Nabal. May this be far from you! “Let your conversation be without covetousness.”

But our conversation has to do with our *actions* as well as our words. The sugar of words is sickening if it is not attended with the honey of *deeds*. Let our whole life, in our dealings with our fellow men, be moved by liberal principles and enriched with a generous spirit. Let us be full of kindness, full of thoughtfulness, full of a desire that others may live as well as ourselves—that our coming into a country may not be like the coming of the Tartar’s horse of which it is said that no grass will grow where once it sets its foot. The miser is a creature too hungry, too greedy, too ravenous to allow any other cattle to feed after him. He makes the land barren by gnawing the very roots out of the ground. There are some whose whole life is the use of the rake to scrape everything to themselves and these men leave nothing for others, however honest and industrious they may be. This is not Christ-like, nor will Christ acknowledge one who thus lives to himself. Let your actions, then, in trade and labor, as well as your words, be without covetousness.

But this will not do unless the word, “conversation,” takes in our desires, our projects, our plans, our thoughts. We must be without covetousness within, for if that vice reigns in the soul, it is sure to rule in the life. Our prayer should be that of David, “Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.” Why is a man miserly in his actions? Why, because he is miserable in his *thoughts*. If the inner man were right, the outer man could not be wrong. Beloved, may God cleanse our ways, both in private and in public, from anything like greed, that we may be obedient to the text, “Let your conversation be without covetousness.”

It is so very easy a thing to be covetous that no class of society is free from it. A man may be very poor and still covetous and a man may be exceedingly rich and still may think that he is not half rich enough. It is not possible to satisfy the greedy. If God gave them one whole world to themselves, they would cry for another and, if it were possible for them to possess Heaven as they now are, they would feel themselves in Hell, because others were in Heaven, too—for their greed is such that they must have everything or else they have nothing! Unless they can call all things *theirs*, they are as miserable as Haman, who, although all Shushan bowed before him, was not content—because one poor Jew who sat at the gate would not pay him homage.

A covetous spirit can enter anywhere and can live anywhere. It is necessary that we search ourselves, lest the wretched lust of greed should fix itself upon us, for, remember, it can live in one room in a back street, but it can also live in the most sumptuous mansion of Belgravia. It can starve itself to save a shilling and it can indulge itself in all manner of extravagance to grasp a fortune. Covetousness has many ways of manifesting itself and the text does not warn us against

one of those ways, but against them *all*. “Let your conversation be without covetousness.” I have said that covetousness has many ways of showing itself. Let me mention some of them.

In some it is most seen in repining and complaining against their lot. God has so circumstanced them that they scarcely ever have more than barely enough. They have struggled to rise, but they have never succeeded, probably because they have not the capacity for doing so. There must be people in the world to take the rough side of it and these men are evidently of the number, for although they are anxious to make headway in the world, they never rise an inch. Now, if we know our lot, it is idle to refuse it. If we do so, our conversation is not without covetousness—we are not satisfied with the things that we have. We are not satisfied with our heavenly Father’s will, nor willing that He should be Father and that we should be children. We have not learned to say, “Not as I will, but as You will.”

Here is the neglected part of our education and we must go to the school, again, of the Holy Spirit. There are some complaining ones who would be no happier if their lot were changed. If they were lifted from a cottage to a palace they would still repine, for repining is far more a matter of the *heart* than of the condition. And a mind that has not bowed to the will of God in one place would be rebellious in another, also. There are some who have all that heart could wish who still murmur and still think that God deals harshly with them. This disease is born and bred in our very bones and it needs the Grace of God to get it out of us!

It is ill when it shows itself in a perpetual fault-finding with all that Providence appoints—in always grumbling that we are left out in the cold as if in every distribution of Divine love we came in for the last portion and the least share and were doomed to be the forgotten ones of the family. Shake off that spirit, Beloved! God help us all to get rid of every particle of it, for it savors not of Grace, but it is earthly, sensual, devilish. In some others this covetous principle shows itself in envying others. If others are better off, or more esteemed, they straightway seem to regard them as enemies, cannot think well of them, cannot wish them well, would almost rejoice to see them dragged down! I have known some rich persons that were very proud. I have known some poor people who were still prouder and their envying of those who were better off has developed in them a pride of an almost ferocious character akin to the fury of savages! Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who is able to stand before envy?

Now, if I envy a man, I am clearly guilty of covetousness, for I wish that something which he has were not his but mine. And that may happen to you when you do not think about his property. You may be covetous of his gifts. Somebody in the little school to which you belong can address the children better than you—do you ever catch yourself feeling jealous of him? Go before God and weep over it and *pray* the feeling down! Possibly you are a minister and alas, even with us this wretched feeling will come in. Some star outshines ours and we are likely to be eclipsed and straightway we are covetous of our honor. We do not like it, Brothers, but if we were right at heart with God as we ought to be, we would glory in being excelled by our fellow servants! We would be glad for our heavenly Father to be better served than we can serve Him and for the Church of God to have more valued servants in it than we are ever likely to be.

This is not easy, because envy—that compound of meanness and malice—that vilest reptile of the old serpent’s brood preys upon us! This ill-natured vice shows itself generally in finding fault. Of course our Brothers are not perfect, but why should we take delight in pointing out their peculiarities, their eccentricities, or their shortcomings? If they win a great many to Christ, the question is skeptically mooted, “But how will their converts wear?” What makes us raise the question? Is it brotherly love? If throngs gather around them, we say, “Ah, they are a nine days’ wonder—that little excitement will soon pass off.” Is it Grace or *envy* which makes us hope so?

Perhaps we complain that they are very young. This, I suppose, they cannot help—we were once young, ourselves—and would like to be so still! Or else we say, on the other hand, they have passed their meridian and if they flourish for a little while, their sun is setting and it is not much they will ever achieve. Ah, greed of honor, what is there which you will *not* say? Would God that Christians would cease from tearing one another! Let your conversation be without that covetousness which shows itself in envy. If the Lord has given you one talent, use it! But do not waste your time in finding fault with him who has five talents. If your Master makes you a hewer of wood, throw your strength into your felling and cleaving—do not throw the axe at your fellow servant! And if He makes you a drawer of water, do not empty your buckets on your neighbor, but do your own service well and bring what you have done and lay it at your Master’s feet. This will be thankworthy. This will be Christ like. You will then be obeying the injunction, “Let your conversation be without covetousness.”

And covetousness may show itself in another way, namely, by perpetually craving and desiring that which we have not. The old moralists used to say that the man who would be truly rich had better retrench his appetites than increase his fortune. Some men seem as if they never could fix their thoughts on what they have, but they are always in the other tense and mood—thinking of what they could, would, or should have! They have swallowed the two daughters of Solomon’s horseleech and these continually cry, “Give! Give!” They must have something more—their desires are boundless—the sea is not more ready to swallow up all that it can come at. A little more, they told us some years ago, would content them—and a great deal more has been added to their stores—but still, they need a little more. Let your conversation be without covetousness in that respect and be content with such things as you have.

In many, perhaps in the most numerous class, this anxiety for acquisition betrays itself in fretful fears about the future. And I must, in all honesty, grant that this form of the vice has sometimes the appearance of being the most excusable of the whole. “What shall I do,” we are apt to say, “in case I should be laid aside and a precarious income should suddenly come to an end? It is not for myself, alone—it is for my wife and numerous family that I am chiefly concerned—how would they be provided for?” Many a man lies awake at night desiring to increase his income, not because he is ambitious to be rich, but because he is haunted with the fear of being poor. Gifted, perhaps, for the present with competency, he is still scared with dire forebodings—“What will become of my family if I die?” “Or should such-and-such a source of income be dried up—and it is very precarious—what, then, will become of my household? What then?”

Full many are not content with such things as they have because the dread of a distant season of trial is constantly harassing them. They cannot be happy in the present sunshine because they think, perhaps, a storm is brewing out of sight. They cannot lie down in peace because they want to lay up against a rainy day. In vain their table is bountifully spread unless they have a store in hand against every contingency that may happen! Do you notice how precious is that promise which provides for all possible casualties that may befall you? “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” The censure, therefore, falls where this sacred pledge is unheeded—and he is accounted covetous who walks after the cravings of the flesh rather than after the counsel of the Spirit of God!

If God would have you live by the day, why do you want to gather enough for seven days at once? If your Father bids you trust Him, why do you distrust His paternal care? Use prudent thrift by all means! Do not waste what He gives, nor heedlessly forget that you will have needs tomorrow as well as today—but abstain from fretfulness, murmuring and abhor every tendency to unbelief, lest you provoke Him to anger—

*“Commit all your griefs
And ways unto His hands.
To His sure Word, and tender care,
Who earth and Heaven commands.”*

He would not have you careful about those earthly things after which the Gentiles seek. “Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things.” “Let your conversation be without covetousness.” This covetousness is a great and crying evil! It is expressly forbidden in the Law—it has a commandment all to itself—“You shall not covet.”

O Brothers and Sisters, would you wish to fly into an evil which the Lord, Himself, accounts so gross that He has branded it across the brow with one of the Ten Commands of the Decalogue—“You shall not covet”? Covetous people, I have often observed, are classed in Scripture with the worst of criminals. How revolting to be included in such bad company! Here in this very chapter we read, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness.” Thus covetousness is classed with the very filthiest of vices of the flesh! In another place the Apostle says, “covetousness, which is idolatry”—and thus it is identified with a loathsome impurity of the spirit. Let the Christian dread it!

God is not selfish, God is love—God hoards not, He gives liberally! He refuses not the poor, He delights in mercy. He spreads abroad in the midst of His creatures the good things which belong to Him and He bids them freely gather what He freely gives! Even thus would He have us distribute generously and disperse freely without covetousness. Covetousness is an evil thing! It leads to all sorts of evil and it is especially evil in times of persecution. The Apostle knew that men who loved the world and hugged it were not the men to stand fast for God in the day of trial. Those who had the greatest fondness for worldly wealth were the first to turn aside and forsake the Savior when they had to undergo losses and crosses for His name’s sake. Covetousness is a deadly poison, destructive of all virtue. It dries up the milk of

human kindness in a man's breast and makes him hard, callous, indifferent towards the needs of his fellow creatures. How much infamy it fosters!

The man whose heart is set on covetousness will do anything for gold—he will venture to stain his hands with blood, itself, if he may but gain it. I scarcely know any other vice which can more effectually damn its victim and I speak the more earnestly about it because covetousness can readily enter into a man's heart and he may not know it. St. Francis de Sales said that many came to him to confess all manner of sins and many of them of a glaring nature. But he said that all his life long he never knew anybody acknowledge covetousness. Do you exclaim, "I wonder why this is?" Well, it is because a man does not like to think that he can be covetous! He cannot bring himself to acknowledge that he has quite gone to that length!

When his avarice is the most heartless, he generally calls it by a prettier name, such as *prudence*, thrift, or carefulness, so as to make it look more respectable. There is a great propensity about gold and silver and houses and lands to stick to one's heart and blind the judgment. It is difficult for those who have much to do with *wealth* to be quite clear of *self*. Some men, by Divine Grace, get much and give much—they use the world and do not abuse it—but it is of the earth, earthy after all, and when it comes into contact with these hearts of ours it will corrupt and corrode. He that has this world's goods has need to watch himself lest his possessions should injure him!

And he that has them *not* had need to watch himself, too, lest his indigence should injure him. There is an evil that comes by either the having or the not having. And let each man, therefore, be on his guard against it while he listens to the warning voice of the Apostle, "Let your conversation be without covetousness."

II. Secondly, as there is a vice to be shunned so there is a virtue to be sought. The theme is more pleasing now that we speak upon CONTENTMENT. "Be content with such things as you have." It is, after all, no very great virtue if we should attain it—the more pity, therefore—if we should miss it! The old moralists constantly remind us that we may have the necessities of life upon very easy terms, whereas we put ourselves to great pains for its luxuries. There have been contented persons whose heads have been clear, their hearts simple and their habits temperate, though they have not known the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ought to surely, then, rise to that low average of sanctity in which our moderation shall be known unto all men! To be content with such things as we have should be specially easy to us because we have so much to be thankful for! We have such constant communications from the great Benefactor and so certain an assurance that He will withhold no good thing from those that walk uprightly! I am not speaking, now, of those who have houses and land and goods in abundance, for their repinings are discord, indeed, but I speak of *all* Christians. This world is ours and worlds to come. Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home! It ought to be easy for *us* to be contented since all things are ordered for our good.

Arranged by our own dear Father's hand, His appointments ought not to be difficult for a loving child to approve. The trial of our faith will soon be over—a long life of affliction is but a pin's point of time. Be it ever so painful, we ought to be willing to bear the light affliction which is but for a moment. We know that God loves us, for we feel His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Should not contentment be easy under such circumstances? They say, "There is nothing ill that is well taken," and that is the testimony of a *heathen*—but that no harm can come of that which *our God* means for our good is quite certain. With His sorest chastisements often come to us His sweetest caresses.

Beyond this lower sky when this brief day is over, we shall be rich to all the intents of bliss. We have a heritage which will require everlasting ages to unfold! We have a treasure laid up which fancy cannot paint, of which it would sound fabulous to tell. Do we grope just now in darkness? Yet are we children of the day! In reversion now, in possession soon are the things that are to be revealed to us—and they are far more real than anything we have ever seen with these mortal eyes! It ought not to be a difficult thing for us to be content here for this brief hour.

"What does it matter?" says a traveler, "I shall only stay here one night. I shall be up and away in the morning." And what does it matter to us, Brothers and Sisters? Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we may put up with a few hard things, for we may be where our Lord is in His Glory within the twinkling of an eye! True contentment is absolutely essential to happiness. There is a plant called *selfishness* and if you will pull it up by its roots you will find that it grows in the soil of misery! Were self completely renounced and Christ fully received as All in All, sorrow would be so sweetly accepted by us that the sting of it would be taken away. We must be satisfied with what God appoints or

else we shall be constantly the prey of discomfort and the victims of disappointment. O Christian men and women, will you not seek to be content with such things as you have?

I believe that contentment depends very much upon taking right views of things. There is, to wit, a short view. To live by the day is the way to be cheerful. If you try to live by the month, you will bring home a month's troubles to eat up a day's meat. God has not constructed His people to live by the month—their souls, like their bodies—are fashioned to live by the *day*. His supplies, His promises—the very prayers He puts into our mouths, all deal with days—"Give us this *day* our daily bread." "As your *days* so shall your strength be." Live by the day, then, and you will be content. But also take *long* views as well as short views. Take the view which says, "It will be all the same a hundred years hence." Take the view which says, "We shall soon laugh at this present little vexation."

Take that distant view which says, "When I get to Heaven, this great trial will seem very small. When I look from the hilltops of Glory at my present dilemma, it will probably cause me many a smile to think that I should have been so vexed and tormented by it." Take this view of things—that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses. Full often the more your goods increase the more your cares multiply—the care to keep is often greater than the care to win—while, after all, the care rightly to use ought to be the most weighty care of all! If your God has loaded a neighbor with 10,000 pounds a year, thank God that He has not burdened you in that way! Be glad if He has given you as much as you can easily carry and no more.

When I go for a walk, I like a staff—just one, but I should not like to be compelled to carry a hundred! Some men appear to me to have a hundred times as much as they can possibly need and so they are hampered with what might, in moderation, have been their help. Be not eager for great riches, nor seek after large domains in this world lest you wallow in wealth, stick in it as in a bog and drown your soul! Why load yourself with more clay, when you have as much to carry, now, as you can get along with? Be not surprised, therefore, any of you, but rather be thankful if God does, sometimes, lighten your load a little to quicken your pace in the heavenly journey. The secret of true contentment and the way to get at it is admirably expressed in these words, "Be content with such things as you have, for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Some of the most easy-going people in the world are those who have a government pension of so much a month. It is little, but it is sure. If all the banks break, they will get it. They have no trouble as to how the markets fluctuate, or how different stocks rise and fall in value—or what dividends they might derive from investments. It is not a large income that falls to their lot, 'tis true, but then it is all they require and it is always sure. You say to such a person, "You may set your heart at rest because your supplies come from a sure source." Now, then, that is exactly where the child of God stands for we know Who has said—"Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." Between now and Heaven I do not know who may starve, but I never shall, because the Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want!

Those clever lawyers, those sharp-teethed schemers, those greedy oppressors, those young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing. The Christian man's fortune is made! "Oh, but he may be in great straits." Yes, but he shall be supplied in due time. All that he needs in this time state his heavenly Father will give him. He needs but faith to believe this and he shall find it to be really so—"For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." God's Word ought to be taken as the Truth of God, itself, because it is! A promise from the mouth of God is better than a bond signed and sealed by the wealthiest of men! No negotiable securities can be comparable in value to this declaration of the Lord, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

It is put very strongly. In the original there are five negatives, as in the verse you sang just now—

*"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not, desert to his foes!
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake."*

The five negatives in the last line of that verse correspond with the five placed in this text—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." It means that in no one single instance will the Lord leave you, nor in any one particular will He leave you, nor for any reason will He leave you. If you have cast yourself upon His infinite power and Grace, He will carry you to the end. Not only will He not desert you altogether, but He will not leave you even for a little while! He may seem, for a small moment, to hide His face from you, but He will still love you and still supply your needs. Behind the wall He will pour oil upon the flame if in the front of the wall He permits Satan to throw water upon it.

He will feed you somehow—by the back door, if not by the front—by the ravens if not by the doves. If the brook Cherith fails, He will find a widow woman, even in a distant land who, in all *her* straits shall, nevertheless, feed the servant of God. “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Surely we cannot fail to be content if we do but get fast hold of this promise! Are you not always in the Divine Presence? Does He not say, “I will never leave you”? No carpet on the floor, no paper on the walls? No pictures, no furniture, room mean and unsightly? Yes, but suppose God is there—what does it matter?

Buckingham Palace has not a drawing room to compare with that little room upstairs against the thatch, or with that attic where you cannot stand upright, where the stars peep in at night between the tiles. If God is there, I would sooner live in the worst cottage’s worst room, on the pittance of the parish, than where the floor was paved with marble and the richest hangings adorned the ample chambers but the Divine Glory was unknown! If God is there—(“I will never leave you”)—then wherever the child of God is cast, there is a Glory round about him which makes him sublime in the midst of his poverty. “I will not forsake you,” by which I understand that, as He will not withdraw His Presence, so will He not withhold His help. “I need,” you say. “I need, I need.” Go on with the list. “I need a thousand things.” “I will not forsake you,” He says.

“I will see you through the trial. I will carry you over the difficulty. I will bear you on. I will lift you over. I will bring you out. I will abide with you to the end. I will not leave you nor forsake you.” Is not that enough for your faith to feed on? What more do you need? Suppose He had said, “I will send my angels with you,” or, “I will move all mankind to help you”? It would still not come to so much in its *real* meaning as this—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” But when did God originally say this? Well, you cannot find the exact words in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but He did say the same, in effect, to Jacob at Bethel and to Joshua before he went to the invasion of Canaan.

David said it, in the Lord’s name, to Solomon and Isaiah said the same to the whole people of God. Whatever God says to one saint, He says, virtually, to all saints who have the same faith. This renders the Bible such a rich storehouse of comfort to us! No Scripture is of private interpretation, but all Scripture is given for our personal appropriation! No promise is hedged about as the exclusive property of the one man who received it. If you are of like character and in like case, you may, O Believer, take the Lord’s Words to others as being spoken to yourself! You may plead a promise which God made to Joshua or to Jacob with just as much confidence as if He had made it especially to you. Remember this and be content with such things as you have.

III. Our last point, upon which our time will only admit a word or two, is the CONFIDENCE with which we may encourage ourselves and bid defiance to a frowning world. “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do to me.” This promise of the Lord is fitted to nerve us with courage as well as to solace us with contentment. Chicken-hearts and cowardly fears ill become the disciples of Christ! If we are oppressed, or if we have to encounter opposition, we may just go straight ahead in the strength of our text, and say, “What can man do to me?” If God is our helper, dear Brothers and Sisters, why should we shrink or falter? Why should we droop or look dismayed? Why should we hold our peace or speak with bated breath?

Are there any of you who are afraid to confess my Lord’s name before men, to enlist in His service, to buckle on His armor, to admit yourselves His followers? Parley no longer, I beseech you, with such ungracious fears! Great thoughts have stirred within your breasts while we have presented the consoling word and the Spirit of God has rested upon it. Be great in act as you have been in thought! Since He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” why are you ashamed to come and acknowledge Him? “I am afraid I might dishonor His name,” you say. But He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” “I am very weak,” you say. He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “I might bring dishonor upon the Church to which I should unite myself.” Very likely you would if He left you, but He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

It is always safe to do what God bids. There can be no sound policy in neglecting a Divine precept. So come forward and say boldly, “The Lord is my helper.” Possibly some of you have been persecuted. Hard names have been hurled at you—I hope you did not cry because of that. Poor child of God, your strength is very small if you are afraid of an ugly name! We have had a good many in our time—they have not broken any of our bones, nor will they injure you. “Oh, but you do not know what the chaff of the shop is.” No, but give them some of your wheat in return. Let them see how a

Christian can bear and forbear when their fun grows foul—how he can endure reproach for righteousness' sake! You will be master of the situation, yet.

“Alas, Sir, but I am threatened with the loss of my job unless I will go contrary to Divine commands.” Then do not flinch, but tell your heavenly Father all about it. Commit your cause to Him! Let not 50 jobs or 500 people make you swerve from the course that faith dictates and duty demands! Appeal to God and He will provide for you. Any temporary loss you may sustain will be much more than made up in the prosperity He awards you—or if not in that way, in the peace He promises you and the honor He confers on you in suffering for Christ's sake! Oh that this very night the veil might be taken off many faces, the burden unloaded from many shoulders and fear dispelled from many hearts!

If you have cast off your grievous disquietudes while I have been talking, do not put them on again when you get outside! I have known many a poor tried child of God forget his trouble when he was sitting here, but he looked it up before he reached his home and so he returned to his old condition. “Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” You have been looking too far ahead, dear Brother, dear Sister!

Cure that fault by looking still further! Remember the coming of our Lord and the joy of His appearing and you may ease your pains in the present. Oh to live exempt from care by the energy of prayer! Oh, to believe implicitly in God, to rest calmly in Him, to trust steadfastly in Christ and to take His yoke upon us cheerfully—then we shall find rest to our souls by learning of Him! The Lord help us all to do so, for His name's sake. Amen.

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