

SAINTS GUARDED FROM STUMBLING

NO. 2296

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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“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 Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”
Jude 1:24,25.

THE point and pith of what I may have to say will lie in the alteration of this text caused by the revision of the New Testament. The Revised Version runs thus, “Now unto Him that is able to guard you from *stumbling*.” I am not going to speak at any length upon the rest of the text, but shall dwell mainly upon this remarkable alteration, which certainly gives the meaning of the original better than the rendering in the Authorized Version.

To begin, then, here is a doxology. Jude is writing upon very practical subjects, indeed. His short Epistle is of the most practical kind, but he cannot finish it without a doxology of praise. Is there any work which we should complete without praise to God? Prayer should always have praise mingled with it. The preaching of the Gospel, or the writing of it. The teaching of the young and every other form of Christian service should be combined with the spirit of praise. I think that I may say of praise what we read of salt in the Old Testament—“salt without prescribing how much.” You cannot have too much of praise! “With all your offerings you shall offer salt,” and, “with all your offerings you shall offer praise.” It seems delightful to me to notice how the Apostle Paul stops almost in the midst of a sentence to bow his knees and utter a doxology of praise to his God. And here Jude, with burning words denouncing sin, and urging Believers to purity, cannot conclude his Epistle without saying, “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 Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

Beloved Friends, we may well continue to praise God, for our God continues to give us causes for praise! If we will only think, we shall begin to thank! If we will only consider, even, the mercies of the present, we shall break out with ascriptions of praise to Him. At this very moment, every Believer here has a reason for a doxology. My text begins with, “Now,” and closes with, “now and forever.” The praise of God should be given at the present time and it is to be perpetually carried on—therefore now is the time for it to be rendered—“both now and forever. Amen.”

Consider, then, dear Brother or Sister, you have at this moment a cause for ascribing praise to God, and you have this reason for it, at any rate, that He is able to guard you from stumbling—His ability is to be employed for your good! His power is intended for your keeping! Oh, sing unto the Lord a now song, tonight, with heart and soul bless Him who is able to guard you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

I. Coming to the text at once, I shall notice, first, THE DANGER TO BE DREADED. It is “stumbling.” What is that?

Well, first of all, it is a *lesser form of falling*. A horse may stumble and not fall—yet it is a *sort* of falling. If there is much stumbling, it *will be* a fall! Now, there are faults to which the child of God is very liable, which do not amount to actual falling—but they are *stumbleings*. Like David, we have to say, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.” We are not actually down, but it is a wonder that we are not. We have not broken our knees, but we were within an inch of doing so! A little more and we would have fallen to our serious hurt. The text speaks of, “Him that is able to guard you from stumbling”—to preserve you from the smallest form of grieving the Spirit, or the faintest trace of sin which would not amount to a fall. The Lord can keep you from that which is not a fall, but which might lead to it. I want to set a high standard before you tonight. Jude does not say that you are able to guard *yourselves* from stumbling,

for you are not—but the ascription of praise is to Him who *is* able to guard you, even, from stumbling, and to present you, not only pardoned, but *faultless* before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

Stumbling is, next, not only a form of falling, and a matter, therefore, to be grieved over, but it is a *prelude to falling*. Oftentimes we first stumble and then, after a while, down we go! If we could recover ourselves from the stumble, we should not have to gather ourselves up from the fall. Long before the child of God falls into public sin and injures his character, those who watch him will have perceived his stumbling. He stayed up, just stayed up—but you wondered that he did. He kept on, perhaps for months, but as you looked at him, you said to yourself, “I am afraid that he will come to something worse. I feel sure that he will have a stumble, and another stumble, and then another stumble. And he will be down, by-and-by.” Oh, that a child of God could notice his own stumblings! Then he would soon be delivered from them! But it is too often with us, to change the metaphor, as Hosea says, “Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows it not.” He is getting feeble, he is becoming prematurely old, but he has not seen the change in the color of his hair! He has not looked in the glass of the Word lately, so he is unconscious that he is declining. If Satan cannot conquer Mansoul by storming it, he sometimes triumphs by sapping and mining, gradually undermining the walls and getting a secret entrance in that way. May the Lord make us very watchful—that we may not be ignorant of Satan’s devices—and may our Savior guard us, even, from *stumbling*—for then we shall be kept from falling!

I think that I can put this matter pretty plainly. You must have known, you must have read of, or you must have seen some people whom you believe to be true and real Christians. And in their lives there is nothing glaringly wrong, nothing that is so offensive that they can be excluded from the Church, or for which their Christian friends would condemn them as hypocrites. Yet, somehow, their lives are, to say the least, questionable, doubtful. There is good in them, but that good is blotted. We trust that there is in them a true desire to be right, but there are so many sad failures in their lives that they seem to stumble to Heaven rather than to run there! Now, our desire is that our life may not be of that kind and, therefore, we would lay hold upon this text and plead it before the Throne of God, “Lord, You are able to guard us from stumbling, be pleased to do so, to the praise of the glory of Your Grace!”

You will see that stumbling is *itself a form of evil*, if you think of another phase of it. There were some who stumbled at the doctrine of Christ in His own day. He had a number of followers who kept with Him up to a certain point. But when the Savior said, “Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you,” they went back and walked no more with Him. They could not understand what He meant and they murmured, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” So, being staggered and stumbled at the depth of this great mystery, they turned aside and walked no more with Him.

Beloved, we need God so to uphold us and guard us that, whatever the teaching of His Holy Word may be, we shall receive it without a doubt. I know that there are some Christian people who stumble at one doctrine, especially if they hear somebody denounce it. And there are others who are staggered at another doctrine because they have met some very wise man who knows better than the Word of God and says that it cannot be true! In these days there is very great liability to this kind of stumbling, especially among Christians who do not read their Bibles much—and, I am sorry to say, that there are plenty of such Christians! They read magazines, or perhaps works of fiction, rather than the sure Word of God! And they are thus easily caught in the snare of the fowler.

Many professing Christians do not know what God’s Word really teaches, so they are not established in the faith. They do not know, even, the elements of the doctrines of Christ—they have not examined the immutable foundations of the faith—and they are staggered. And truly, the mysteries of the Kingdom of God are so deep, and the teachings of Christ are so contrary to the reasonings of flesh and blood, that we need not wonder if some are stumbled! Let us cry to Him who is able to guard us from stumbling that, with steady step, we may press on in the way of life and never be ashamed of the Truth of God, lest the Truth of God should be ashamed of us! Let us believe what the Bible says, however difficult the believing may be, because God has said it! This should always stand for us as the grand master argument—not the reasonableness of the doctrine, not because it commends itself to our judgement—but the fact that God has said it! That ends all debate. Christ is able to guard from stumbling as to doctrine.

Many others are stumbled at the Cross. Strange to say, the Cross of Christ has always been the stumbling stone to the ungodly and to mere professors. What? The Cross of Christ an occasion of stumbling? Why, it is the very center of Apostolic teaching—“We preach Christ Crucified.” Nowadays, there are two great points of attack—the one is the Inspira-

tion of Scripture—and the other is the Substitutionary work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The enemies of the Cross will not have a crucified Savior! They stumble at that which is the very foundation of our faith! The Lord will keep us from stumbling at Christ's Cross, I am quite sure. It is the rock of our refuge, the pillar of our hope!

The Cross that Christ carried involves one for us to carry. No sooner does a Christian man become a Believer and confesses Christ in Baptism, than he is sure to meet with some who straightway revile him. He has to take up his cross. A working man among skeptical companions, a young girl in a book-folding warehouse, a wife who has an ungodly husband—as soon as they come out boldly on the side of Christ, straightway they have a cross to carry—and this causes a great many to stumble. Persecution and ridicule are too much for them—by-and-by they are offended—that is, they stumble at the Cross. They would have Christ, but not any shame for Christ's sake! They are like Mr. Pliable, who set out to go to the Celestial City, but when he tumbled into the Slough of Despond with Christian, he said that if he could only get out on the side nearest to his own house, Christian might have the Celestial City all to himself, for he could not go through a slough to get there! How many there are of this kind—fearful ones—cowardly ones! But there is a God who is able to guard us from stumbling and I trust that He will do so. May we never be stumbled by anything that happens to us for Christ's sake! May we take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, if need be—yes, and suffer death itself if it should ever come to that—sooner than turn aside from bearing the Cross after the crucified Christ!

And this stumbling sometimes happens not only at the doctrine of Christ and at His Cross, but at the precepts He has given. If we are to be Christ's, we must obey Him. “You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am.” But one will stagger at one command of Christ and another at another! Though Christ bids us love one another, there are some who can do anything *but* love. They can give their bodies to be burned, but they have no charity. When Christ bids us walk in integrity before all mankind, there are some who can do many good things, but they like little sly practices in trade—and they stumble at Christ because of those evil ways. You know there are many ways in which people try to be as little Christians as they can be, so as just to get into Heaven. Miserable wretches, they want to save their souls and yet, after all, to follow the ways of the world! So they stumble at the precepts of the Holy Christ. They cannot put up with commands like His which lay the axe at the root of the tree. If you are kept by Him who is able to guard you from stumbling, you will love every way of Christ, and every Word of Christ, and your prayer will be, “Teach me Your statutes,” and your heart will willingly obey every precept of the Lord!

Once more, there are some who are staggered by the *experience* of Believers. I speak, now, especially to young beginners. You have begun to be believers in Christ and you have been very, very happy. I am very glad that you are. Long may your happiness continue! But there is another who has been, perhaps, in the way of the Lord for a few months, and suddenly a depression of spirit has come over him and he says to himself, “Oh, dear me, is this the way of God's people?” I remember that within a week after I had found joy and peace in believing, I began to feel the uprisings of inbred sin and I cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” I did not know that such a sigh and cry *could never come out of an unbelieving heart*—that there must be a new heart and a right spirit within the man to whom sin is a burden and who loathes it. I did not know that, then, and I wondered whether I could be a child of God at all! Oh, there are strange experiences for those who are on the road to Heaven! You remember how John Newton sings—

*“I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every Grace
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.
I hoped that in some favored hour
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.
Instead of this He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part.”*

The good man began to discover more and more his own sinfulness and he said, “Lord, is this the way to holiness?” and he was stumbled for a moment.

O Beloved, it is only the Grace of God that can make us feel that whatever experiences we have within us, our faith looks to a living Christ who never changes—and we rest in His finished work! Whether we are up or whether we are down, whether we sing or whether we sigh, we look *beyond* our changing moods unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us! Yet many have been stumbled by their own inner experiences, not understanding them. There is only One who can guard us from such stumblings.

So, then, dear Friends, to close this description of stumbling, if we are guarded from stumbling we shall certainly be kept from falling. *This is an inclusive blessing.* It includes preservation from falling into outward sin and, especially all final falling, all fatal falling! Christ is able to guard us from stumbling—much more is He able to preserve us from falling away, from utterly departing from the faith. But we would do that if it were not for His guardian care. There is nothing that the worst of men have done which the best of men could not do if they were left by the Grace of God! Do not think so much of yourself as to imagine yourself incapable of even the greatest crime. That very thought proves that you are capable of committing *any* crime. I think that it is Mr. Cecil who says, “I thought myself humble, one day, when I said that I did wonder that I should have sinned as I had done in such a way. Whereas,” he said, “if I had been truly humble, I should not have wondered that I sinned like that! I should have wondered at the Grace of God that kept me from even greater sin! And I should have understood that my natural tendencies all went towards evil—and that the marvel was that they did not master me and lead me farther into evil than I had gone.”

Oh, Beloved, we must be kept by God, Himself, or else stumbling, falling—fouly and fatally falling—will be our lot! From that, however, the Lord will preserve us who are truly His. So much, then, upon the danger to be dreaded.

II. Now, I must be somewhat more brief on the second point, THE PRIVILEGE TO BE ENJOYED—“Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling.”

Well, beloved Friends, it is a great privilege to be guarded from stumbling, for *it is a privilege that we greatly need.* I was thinking of the many things that make us in danger of stumbling. There is, first, our weakness. It is the weak horse, you know, that stumbles and falls. It is out of condition, out of health—and down it goes. And we are weak, very weak. Then, consider the many roads that we have to travel. Here is a man who is a preacher, a husband, a father, a master. Some of you are tradesmen, or workmen and, beside your daily occupation, you have all your domestic relationships. Now, what you need is to be guarded all round from stumbling. We have heard of one who was all right at home, but he was very vulnerable outside his house. I have heard of another who was an excellent man in the Church, but if you had asked his wife about him, she would not have liked to describe him. A man may be a very good man at a Prayer Meeting, but he may be a very poor hand when you get him at his work. I have known some move very slowly, indeed, at that time—nobody would have liked to pay them by the day. Now, it is an evil thing when a Christian is bad *anywhere*, but it is a grand thing—and only God can enable us to attain to it—when we do not stumble in any one of the ways which we have to go, but are always kept walking uprightly.

And then, you know, it is the pace that makes some people stumble. See the pace we have to go at now. When I think of our dear old fathers in the country, I almost envy their quiet lives—not up too early, and seldom going to bed very late—not much to do, leading very steady sort of lives. They traveled by broad-wheeled wagons, and we fly over the ground by express trains—and need to go twice as quickly as we can—and all the while we have so much to do.

And, then, it is not only the pace, dear Friends, but it is the loads that some of you have to carry. Oh, the weights that are piled upon some of God’s people in their business! Only God can keep an overloaded heart from stumbling and the ways are very rough just now. You hardly meet anybody in trade who does not say, “Ah, we have a rough bit of ground to travel over now—stones in plenty, and no steam roller!” But there is One who is able to keep you from falling.

Perhaps there are some of you who have not to travel over a rough bit of road. Your path is very smooth, you have all that heart can wish for and every comfort that you could desire. You need to be guarded from stumbling, for you are on a very slippery road. If there has been a thaw and then a frost comes on at night, the road may be very pretty to look at, but it is very bad for a horse’s feet, and so prosperity is a very slippery way for God’s people. The Lord must keep them from falling or they will go down with a crash.

Then there is the length of the road as well as the other things I have mentioned. If we had to serve God only for a short time, one might easily do it, but we may have to go on for 50 years, 60 years, 70 years, 80 years. I think, some-

times, that if martyr days were to come, and they would burn me quickly, I could endure it. But it would be a terrible trial to be roasted on a slow fire! Yet our lives are often so prolonged and filled with trial and temptation, that it is like being roasted alive by a slow fire. The road is long and the pace has become very trying, so we may easily stumble. But the text gives us good cheer, for it tells us of Him that is able to guard us from stumbling.

It is not only necessary for us to be kept, but *it is very gracious on Christ's part to keep us*. Beloved, what if you should have this text fulfilled in you, so that, through a long and trying life, you should so live that when your enemies wanted to find fault with you, they would not know where to begin? Live so that if they look you up and down, they will have to say of you as they said of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God." Oh, if you should go down to the grave faultless—not that we can, any of us, be in ourselves faultless in the sight of God—but if you live such blameless lives that no one shall be able to say evil of you, but shall be compelled to confess that in you the life of Christ has been reflected in your measure, what a privilege it will be! And this is the privilege set before you in the text—that you shall not be stumbled.

What distress you will be saved from if you are guarded from stumbling! A stumbling Christian has to be a sorrowing Christian. When a child of God stumbles, and knows it, he very soon takes to weeping and humbling himself in the Presence of his God. But if you are kept by the Grace of God, you will be saved from many a bitter pang, and helped to go from joy to joy and Grace to Grace.

What a blessing such a person is to other people in the Church of God! Without saying anything against our fellow Christians, we know where our respect and confidence usually go. When we have seen Brothers and Sisters who have been upheld and sustained in trial and temptation, and have not stumbled, we take delight in them! Those of us who are younger and weaker, go and hide, as it were, under the shadow of their wings.

And what a blessing such people are to the world! Those are the true saints who help to spread the Gospel of Christ! A holy life is a missionary enterprise. An unstumbling life is an incentive to others to run along the heavenly road, trusting in the Divine Power to guard *them*, also, from stumbling!

Best of all that I have to say is this, that this privilege is attainable—"Unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling." "Oh!" says one, "if I just get to Heaven, it will satisfy me." Will it? I pray you, do not talk so. Just to get in, like a tempest-tossed boat, water-logged, or like a wreck just towed into the harbor—well, it is a great mercy to get to Heaven anyway—but that is a poor way of getting in! Better would it be to steam into the harbor with a full cargo and plenty of passengers on board, and all the flags flying to the honor of the Great King and Pilot who has guarded you through the storm, that, "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

May it be so with you! Oh, that we may not have to send off the tugs and tow you into the harbor, but that, instead thereof, you may come in with a fleet of little ships behind you, able to say, "Here am I, and the children that You have given me"! This is a privilege worth having, but it cannot be attained except through Him who is able to guard you from stumbling.

III. Now I will lead you on, in the third place, with great brevity, to remember THE POWER WHICH BESTOWS THIS PRIVILEGE.

To be guarded from stumbling throughout a long life, *is not of ourselves*. It is not to be found in our own experience—not even in the means of Grace alone. That same power that made the heavens and the earth, and keeps the earth and heavens in their places, is needed to make a Christian, and to keep him standing before the sons of men.

"Unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling." God has this power. *He has power over all circumstances*. He can so arrange the trials of your life that you shall never be tempted beyond what you are able to bear. He has power, also, over Satan, so that, when he desires to sift you as wheat, the Lord can keep him back. God will not allow him to overcome you.

Best of all, *God has power over our hearts*. He can keep us alive with holy zeal. He can keep us so believing, so loving, so hoping, so watching, so fully obedient that we shall not stumble at His Word, or stumble at anything else.

Jude speaks of "the only wise God," so that, *God's power is joined with wisdom*. He knows your weakness and He can guard you against it. He knows your tempters and He can thrust them aside, or help you to overcome them. It is the wise

God, as well as the strong God, who is able to guard you from stumbling. He knows where the stumbling stones are and where your weakness is—and He can and He will bring you safely through.

Yet once more, the One who guards us from stumbling *is our Savior* as well as the only wise God. It is His business to save you. It is His office to save you—and save you He will! Commit yourself tonight to His guardian care, and walk with him. That is a high favor, that you may not only be kept from falling, but even be guarded from stumbling, to the praise and glory of His Grace.

I have been very brief where I should have liked to enlarge.

IV. I finish with this point, THE GLORY WHICH IS DUE TO CHRIST FOR THIS PRIVILEGE. If we are guarded from stumbling, we may take no credit to ourselves, but we must lay the crown at the feet of Him to whom the power belongs.

If He has kept us from stumbling until now, let us praise Him for the past! Oh, what a mercy to have had this keeping year after year! Notwithstanding many imperfections and follies, which we have had to confess, yet we have been kept from any grievous stumbling that would have dishonored the holy name of Christ! Bless God, tonight, that you have been kept from stumbling, today. I do not know where you have been, but I have no doubt you have been where you might have slipped if you had been left by the Spirit of God! You have been in the shop. You have been in the home. You have been in the street. You have been on the Exchange. You have been among ungodly men. Yes, and even among Christian men, you can soon commit yourself and trip up. If you have been kept, today, do not say, “How good I am!” No, no, no! Say, “Now unto Him who has guarded me from stumbling, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.”

Now, will you begin to praise Him for the future as well? You have not experienced it, yet, but remember that verse which we often sing—

*“And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set!
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”*

Begin to thank the Lord that He will keep you from falling in the future! Bless Him that He will present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy.

And the next time that danger comes to you, praise Him that *He can guard you from stumbling*. Tomorrow morning, perhaps, you have a difficult task before you. You are looking forward, in the course of the week, to something that will be very trying. Well, praise God *now*, that He is able to guard you from stumbling! But oh, what a song we will give Him when we are once over the river! When we climb the celestial hills, when we enter Heaven and find ourselves among the white-robed, blood-washed throng, I wonder which of us will praise Him most? Well, let us not wait till then, but let us begin *here*—let us rehearse the music of the spheres *now*! Let us say, “Now unto Him that is able to guard us from stumbling, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.”

This sermon does not belong to all of you, I am sorry to say. I wish that it did, but remember, dear Hearer, that He who can keep the *saint* from stumbling can bring the *sinner* into the right way! The same Grace that can preserve the child of God from falling into sin can bring you out of sin! And as we have to look wholly to Christ, certainly you must do so. May the Lord lead you to look, tonight, out of *yourself*, your *feelings* and your *works* and trust to the Lord Jesus, who died, but lives again, and lives to save guilty men!

Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life and He will bring them into His way! And He will keep them from stumbling and present them among the rest of His blood-washed, to praise His name forever. The Lord bless this meditation for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
PSALM 91.**

Verse 1.—*He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* It is not every man who dwells there, no, not even every *Christian*. There are some who come to God’s House, but the man mentioned here dwells with the God of the House! There are some who worship in the outer court of the Temple, but, “he

that dwells in the secret place of the Most High” lives in the Holy of Holies—he draws near to the Mercy Seat and stays there! He walks in the Light, as God is in the light. He is not one who is sometimes on and sometimes off, a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home he dwells in the secret place of the Most High. Oh, labor to get to that blessed position! You who know the Lord, pray that you may attain to this high condition of dwelling in the inner shrine, always near God, always overshadowed by those cherubic wings which indicate the Presence of God. If this is your position, you “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” You are not safe in the outer courts. You are not protected from all danger anywhere but within the veil. Let us come boldly there and, when we once enter, let us *dwell* there.

2. *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.* This is a daring utterance, as if the Psalmist would claim for himself the choicest privileges of any child of God. When you hear a glorious doctrine preached, it may be very sweet to others, but the honey lies in the particular application of it to *yourself* . You must, like the bee, go down into the bell of the flower, yourself, and fetch out its nectar. “I will say of the Lord, He is my”—then come three “mys”, as if the Psalmist could grasp the Triune Jehovah—“ *my* refuge, *my* fortress, *my* God: in Him will I trust.” What a grand word that is, “My God”! Can any language be loftier? Can any thought be more profound? Can any comfort be surer?

3. *Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.* If you dwell near to God, you will not be deceived by Satan. In the Light of the Lord you will see light and you will discover the limed twigs and the nets and the traps that are set to catch you—“He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

3. *And from the noisome pestilence.* The pestilence is something that you cannot see. It comes creeping in and fills the air with death before you perceive its approach. But, “He shall deliver you from the noisome pestilence.” There is a pestilence of dangerous and accursed error abroad at this time—but if we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, it cannot affect us—we shall be beyond its power! “Surely,” oh, blessed word! there is no doubt about this great Truth of God, “Surely, He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence.”

4. *He shall cover you with His feathers.* The Psalmist uses a wonderful metaphor when he ascribes “feathers” to God and compares Him to a hen, or some mother bird, under whose wings her young find shelter. Yet the condescension of God is such that He allows us to speak of Him thus—“He shall cover you with His feathers.”

4. *And under His wings shall you trust.* God is to His people a strong defense and a tender defense. “His wings” and “His feathers” suggest both power and softness. God hides not His people in a casing of iron—their shelter is stronger than iron—yet it is soft as the downy wings of a bird for ease and comfort. As the little chicks bury their tiny heads in the feathers of the hen and seem happy, and warm, and comfortable under their mother’s wings, so shall it be with you if you dwell with your God—“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.”

4. *His Truth shall be your shield and buckler.* Twice is he armed who has God’s Truth to be his shield and buckler.

5. *You shall not be afraid for the terror by night.* Nervous as you are, and naturally timid, when you dwell near to God, your fears shall all go to sleep. That is a wonderful promise—“You shall not be afraid.” If it had said, “You shall have no cause for fear,” it would have been a very comforting word, but this is even more cheering! “You shall not be afraid for the terror by night.”

5. *Nor for the arrow that flies by day.* Both night and day you shall be safe. Your God will not leave you in the glare of the sun, nor will He forsake you when the dampness of night dews would put you in peril. We, dear Friends, may have secret enemies, who shoot at us, but we shall not be afraid of the arrow! There may be unseen influences that would ruin us, or cause us dishonor, or distress—but when we dwell with God, we shall not be afraid of them.

6, 7. *Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.* When God takes His people to dwell in nearness to Himself and they have faith in this promise, I make no doubt that, literally, in the time of actual pestilence, they will be preserved! It is not every professing Christian, nor every Believer who attains this height of experience, but only such as believe the promise and fulfill the heavenly condition of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. How could cholera or fever get into the secret place of the Most High? How could any arrows, how could any pestilence, ever be able to reach that secure abode of God? If you dwell there, you are invincible, invulnerable, infinitely secure!

8-10. *Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you.* “There shall no evil befall you.” It may

have the *appearance* of evil, but it shall turn out to your good. There shall be but the *appearance* of evil, not the *reality* of it—“There shall no evil befall you.”

10, 11. *Neither shall any plague come near your dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.* You remember how the devil misapplied this text to Christ. He was quite right in the application, but he was quite wrong in the quotation, for he left out the words, “in all your ways.” God will help us in our ways if we keep in His ways. When we meet with trouble and Providence, we ought to enquire whether we are in God’s way. That famous old Puritan, holy Mr. Dodd, having to cross a river, had to change from one boat into another and, being little used to the water, he fell in, and, when he was pulled out, in his simplicity and wisdom, he said, “I hope that I am in my way.” That was the only question that seemed to trouble him. If I am in my way, then God will keep me. We ought to ask ourselves, “Now, am I in God’s way? Am I really moving, today, and acting, today, as Divine Providence leads me, and as duty calls me?” He who travels on the king’s business, by daylight, along the king’s highway, may be sure of the king’s protection. “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in *all your ways*.” Come here, Gabriel, Michael, and all the rest of you,” says the great King of Kings to the angels around His Throne. And when they come at His call, He says, “Take care of My child. Watch over him, today. He will be in peril—suffer no evil to come near him.”

12. *They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.* What royal protection we have, a guard of angels, who count it their delight and their honor to wait upon the seed-royal of the universe, for such are all the saints of God!

13. *You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.* Strength and mastery may be united—“The young lion and the dragon”—but the child of God shall overcome them. Talk of St. George and the dragon! We ought to think more of the saint and the dragon! It is he that dwells in the secret place of the Most High, who, by God’s help, treads upon the lion and adder and of whom it is written, “The young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet.”

14. *Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him.* Does God take notice of our poor love? Oh, yes, He values the love of His people, for He knows where it came from—it is a part of His own love—the creation of His Grace!

14. *I will set him on high, because he has known My name.* Does God value such feeble and imperfect knowledge of His name as we possess? Yes, and He rewards that knowledge—“I will set him on high.”

15. *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.* Notice, that it is, “He shall,” and, “I will.” The mighty Grace of God “shall” make us pray, and the Almighty God of Grace “will” answer our prayer—“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” How I love these glorious shalls and wills!

15. *I will be with him in trouble.* “Whatever that trouble is, I will be with him in it. If he is dishonored, if he is in poverty, if he is in sickness, if that sickness should drive his best friend away from his bed, still, ‘I will be with him in trouble.’”

15. *I will deliver him, and honor him.* God puts honor upon us, poor dishonorable worms that we are! One old Divine calls a man, “a worm six feet long,” and it is rather a flattering description of him, don’t you think? But God says, “I will deliver him, and honor him.”

16. *With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.* He will live as long as he wants to live. Even if he should have but few years, yet he shall have a long life, for life is to be measured by the life that is in it, not by the length along which it drags. Still, God’s children live to a far longer age than any other people in the world. They are, on the whole, a long-lived race. They who fear God are delivered from the vices which would deprive them of the vigor of life—and the joy and contentment they have in God help them to live longer than others. I have often noticed how long God’s people live. Some of them are speedily taken Home—still, this text is, as a rule, literally fulfilled, “With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation.” He shall see God’s salvation even here! And when he dies, and wakes up in the likeness of his Lord, he will see it to the fullest. May that be the portion of each of us! Amen.

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