
A CAUTION TO THE PRESUMPTUOUS

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It is a singular fact, but nevertheless most certain, that the vices are the counterfeits of virtues. Whenever God sends from the mint of heaven a precious coin of genuine metal, Satan will imitate the impress, and utter a vile production of no value. God gives love; it is his nature and his essence. Satan also fashioneth a thing which he calls love, but it is lust. God bestows courage; and it is a good thing to be able to look one’s fellow in the face, fearless of all men in doing our duty. Satan inspires fool-hardiness, styles it courage, and bids the man rush to the cannon’s mouth for “bubble reputation.” God creates in man holy fear. Satan gives him unbelief, and we often mistake the one for the other. So with the best of virtues, the saving grace of faith, when it comes to its perfection it ripens into confidence, and there is nothing so comfortable and so desirable to the Christian, as the full assurance of faith. Hence, we find Satan, when he sees this good coin, at once takes the metal of the bottomless pit, imitates the heavenly image and superscription of assurance, and palms upon us the vice of presumption.

We are astonished, perhaps, as Calvinistic Christians, to find Paul saying, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;” but we need not be astonished, for though we have a great right to believe that we stand, if we think we stand through the power of God—though we cannot be too confident of the might of the Most High, there is a thing so near akin to true confidence, that unless you use the greatest discernment you cannot tell the dif-

ference. Unholy presumption—it is against that which I am to speak this morning. Let me not be misunderstood. I shall not utter one word against the strongest faith. I wish all Little-Faiths¹ were Strong-Faiths, that all Fearings were made Valiants-for-Truth, and the Ready-to-Halts made Asahel's Nimble-of-Foot, that they might all run in their Master's work. I speak not against strong faith or full assurance; God giveth it to us; it is the holiest, happiest thing that a Christian can have, and there is no state so desirable as that of being able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." It is not against that I speak, but I warn you against that evil thing, a false confidence and presumption which creepeth over a Christian, like the cold death-sleep on the mountain-top, from which, if he is not awakened, as God will see that he shall be, death will be the inevitable consequence. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I shall this morning attempt first, *to find out the character*; secondly, *to show the danger*; and thirdly, *to give the counsel*. The character is, the man who thinks he stands; the danger is, that he may fall; and the counsel is, "let him take heed."

1. The Character of the Presumptuous

My first business shall be to *find out the character* intended by the presumptuous man, the man who thinks he stands. I could find a multitude of such if I might search the wide world o'er. I could find men in business filled with an arrogant hardihood, who, because they have in one speculation been successful will wade far out into the stormy sea of this contending life, risk their all—and lose it too. I might mention others who, presuming upon their health, are spending their years in sin and their lives in

¹ **Little Faith** – this and those following are characters taken from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. A condensed version is available from Chapel Library.

iniquity, because they think their bones iron and their nerves steel, and “all men mortal but themselves.” I might speak of men who will venture into the midst of temptation, confident in their boasted power, exclaiming with self-complacency, “Do you think I am so weak as to sin? Oh! no; I shall stand. Give me the glass; I shall never be a drunkard. Give me the song; you will not find me a midnight reveller. I can drink a little and then I can stop.” Such are presumptuous men. But I am not about to find them there; my business this morning is with God’s church. The fanning must begin with the floor; the winnowing must try the wheat. So we are to winnow the church this morning to discover the presumptuous. We need not go far to find them. There are in every Christian church men who think they stand, men who vaunt themselves in fancied might and power, children of nature finely dressed, but not the living children of the living God; they have not been humbled or broken in spirit, or if they have, they have fostered carnal security until it has grown to a giant and trampled the sweet flower of humility under its foot. They think they stand. I speak now of real Christians, who, notwithstanding, have grown presumptuous, and indulge in a fleshly security. May my Master arouse such, while in preaching I endeavour to go to the core and root of the matter. For a little while I will expatiate upon the frequent causes of presumption in a Christian.

A. *Worldly Prosperity*

And first, a very common cause, is continued *worldly prosperity*. Moab is settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel. Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly; let the weather be propitious to his crops, and the skies smile pleasantly upon his enterprise; let the bands of Orion be loosed for him; let the sweet influence

of the Pleiades descend upon him; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant, as a princely Dives, as a man who is heaping up riches to a large extent, who is always prospering: or, if not wealth, let him enjoy continued health; let him know no sickness; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye, to march through the world, and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips, and his eye be ever sparkling with joy:—the happy, happy man who laughs at care, and cries, “Begone, dull care, I prithee begone from me.” I say the consequence of such a state to a man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be presumption; and he will say, “I stand.” “In my prosperity,” says David, “I said, I shall never be moved.” And we are not much better than David, nor half as good. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity—if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune—if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar, if there were not a few clouds in the sky, some specks in our sunshine—if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure, we should dream “we stand;” and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; stand we might, but like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy. We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank him for our depressions of spirit; we extol his name for the losses of our property; for we feel that had it not so happened to us, had he not chastened us every morning, and vexed us every evening, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial. If it be so with any of you, apply this proverb to your own state, “As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold: so is a man to his praise.”

B. Light Thoughts of Sin

Again, *light thoughts of sin* will engender presumption. When we are first converted, our conscience is so very tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin. I have

known young converts almost afraid to proceed a step, lest they should put their feet in the wrong direction. They will ask advice of their minister, and difficult cases of moral casuistry will they bring before us, such as we hardly know how to answer. They have a holy timidity, a godly fear, lest they should offend against God. But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world. The sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian will grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him and made his blood run cold, does not alarm him in the least. I can speak from my own experience. When first I heard an oath, I stood aghast, and knew not where to hide myself; yet now I can hear an imprecation or blasphemy against God, and though a shudder still runs through my veins, there is not that solemn feeling, that intense anguish, which I felt when first I heard such evil utterances. By degrees we get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming will not notice slight sounds. The men who work in those huge vessels, the hammering of which causes immense noise, cannot at first sleep, for the continual din in their ears; but by-and-by, they, when they are used to it, think nothing of it. So with sin. First, a little sin doth startle us. Soon we say, "Is it not a little one?" like Lot did of Zoar. Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard it as but a little ill; and then you know, there comes an unholy presumption, and we think we stand. "We have not fallen," say we, "we only did such a little thing; we have not gone astray. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We might have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it was consistent." So we palliate sin; we throw a gloss over it, we try to hide it.

Christian, beware! when thou thinkest lightly of sin, then thou hast become presumptuous. Take heed, lest thou

shouldst fall. Sin—a little thing! Is it not a poison! Who knows its deadliness? Sin—a little thing! Do not the little foxes spoil the vines? Sin—a little thing! Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock that wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin—a little thing! It girded *his* head with thorns that now is crowned with glory. Sin—a little thing! It made *him* suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe, till he endured “All that incarnate God could bear, with strength enough, and none to spare.” It is not a little thing, sirs. Could you weigh it in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. But alas! loose thoughts of sin often beget a presumptuous spirit, and we think we stand.

C. *Low Thoughts of the Value of Religion*

A third reason often is, *low thoughts of the value of religion*. We none of us value religion enough. Religious furor, as it is called, is laughed at everywhere; but I do not believe there is such a thing as religious furor at all. If a man could be so enthusiastic as to give his body to be burned at the stake, could he pour out his drops of blood and turn each drop into a life, and then let that life be slaughtered in perpetual martyrdom, he would not love his God too much. Oh, no! when we think that this world is but a narrow space; that time will soon be gone, and we shall be in the forever of eternity; when we consider we must be either in hell or in heaven throughout a never-ending state of immortality, how sirs, can we love too much? how can we set too high a value on the immortal soul? Can we ask too great a price for heaven? Can we think we do too much to serve that God who gave himself for our sins?

Ah! no; and yet my friends, most of us do not sufficiently regard the value of religion. We cannot any of us estimate the soul rightly; we have nothing with which to compare it. Gold is sordid dust; diamonds are but small lumps of congealed air that can be made to melt away. We

have nought with which to compare the soul; therefore we cannot tell its value. It is because we do not know this, that we presume. Doth the miser who loves his gold let it be scattered on the floor that his servant may steal it? Doth he not hide it in some secret place where no eye shall behold it? Day after day, night after night, he counteth out his treasure because he loves it. Doth the mother trust her babe by the river-side? Doth she not in her sleep think of it? and when it is sick, will she leave it to the care of some poor nurse, who may suffer it to die? Oh! no; what we love, we will not wantonly throw away; what we esteem most precious, we will guard with the most anxious care. So, if Christians knew the value of their souls, if they estimated religion at its proper rate, they never would presume; but low thoughts of Christ, low thoughts of God, mean thoughts of our souls' eternal state—these things tend to make us carelessly secure. Take heed, therefore, of low ideas of the gospel, lest ye be overtaken by the Evil One.

D. Ignorance

But again, this presumption often springs from *ignorance of what we are, and where we stand*. Many Christians have not yet learned what they are. It is true, the first teaching of God is to shew us our own state, but we do not know that thoroughly till many years after we have known Jesus Christ. The fountains of the great deep within our hearts are not broken up all at once; the corruption of our soul is not developed in an hour. "Son of man," said the angel of Ezekiel, "I will show thee the abominations of Israel." He then took him in at one door, where he saw abominable things, and stood aghast. "Son of man, I will show thee greater abominations than these;" then he takes him into another chamber, and Ezekiel says, "Surely I have now seen the worst." "No," says the angel, "I will show thee greater things than these."

So, all our life long the Holy Spirit reveals to us the horrid abomination of our hearts. I know there are some

here who do not think anything about it; they think they are good-hearted creatures. Good hearts, have you? Good hearts! Jeremiah had a better heart than you, yet he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" No; the black lesson cannot be learned in a night. God alone knows the evil of the heart; and Young says, "God spares all eyes but his own that awful sight—the vision of a human heart." If we could but see it, we should stand aghast. Well, it is ignorance of this that makes us presume. We say, "I have a good nature, I have a noble disposition; I have none of those hot and angry passions that some have; I can stand secure; I have not that dry, tindery heart that is on fire in a moment; my passions are weakened; my powers for evil are somewhat taken down, and I may stand safely." Ah! ye little know that it is when ye talk like this, that ye presume. O worm of the dust, thou art not yet free from an evil nature, for sin and corruption remain in the heart even of the regenerate; and it is strangely true, though it appears a paradox, as Ralph Erskine said, that a Christian sometimes thinks himself:

*"To good and evil equal bent
And both a devil and a saint."*

There is such corruption in a Christian, that while he is a saint in his life, and justified through Christ, he seems a devil sometimes in imagination, and a demon in the wishes and corruptions of his soul. Take heed, Christian, thou hast need to be upon the watch tower; thou hast a heart of unbelief; therefore watch thou both night and day.

E. Pride

But to finish this delineation of a presumptuous man—*Pride* is the most pregnant cause of presumption. In all its various shapes it is the fountain of carnal security. Sometimes it is *pride of talent*. God has endowed a man with gifts; he is able to stand before the multitude, or to write for the many; he has a discerning mind, he has a judgment, and such like things. Then says he, "As for the

ignorant, those who have no talent, they may fall; my brother ought to take care: but look at me. How am I wrapped in grandeur!" And thus in his self-complacency he thinks he stands. Ah! those are the men that fall. How many that flamed like comets in the sky of the religious world have rushed into space and been quenched in darkness! How many a man who has stood like a prophet before his fellows, and who would exclaim as he wrapped himself in his conceit, "I, only I am alive, I am the only prophet of God;" and yet that only prophet fell; his lamp was quenched, and his light put out in darkness. How many have boasted of their might and dignity, and have said, "I have built this mighty Babylon," but then they thought they stood, and they fell at once. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," with the proudest talents, "take heed lest he fall."

Others have the *pride of grace*. That is a curious fact; but there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith, I shall not fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another man, "I can stand, there is no danger of my going astray; as for my brother over there, he is so cold and slow, he will fall, I dare say." Says another, "I have a most burning hope of heaven, and that hope will triumph; it will purge my soul from sense and sin, as Christ the Lord is pure. I am safe." He who boasts of grace, has little grace to boast of. But there are some who do that, who think their graces can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, else the bed of the brook shall soon be dry, and ye shall see the pebbles at the bottom. If a continuous stream of oil come not to the lamp, though it burn brightly to-day, it shall smoke to-morrow, and noxious will be the scent thereof. Take heed that thou neither gloriest in thy talents nor in thy graces.

Many are worse still; they think they shall not fall because of their *privileges*. "I take the sacrament, I have

been baptized in an orthodox manner, as written in God's word; I attend such and such a ministry; I am well fed; I am fat and flourishing in the courts of my God. If I were one of those starved creatures who hear a false gospel, possibly I might sin; but oh! our minister is the model of perfection; we are constantly fed and made fat; surely we shall stand." Thus in the complacency of their privileges they run down others, exclaiming, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved." Take heed, presumption, take heed. Pride cometh before a fall; and a haughty spirit is the usher of destruction. Take heed; watch thy footsteps; for where pride creepeth in, it is the worm at the root of the gourd, causing it to wither and die. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," because of pride of talent, or grace, or privilege, "take heed lest he fall."

I hope I have touched some here; I trust the lancet has been sharp; I have taken the scalpel, and I hope I have discovered something. O ye presumptuous ones, I speak to you; and I shall do so while next I warn you of your danger.

2. The Danger to the Presumptuous

I shall be more brief on the second point—*the danger*. He who thinks he stands is in danger of a fall. The true Christian cannot possibly suffer a final fall, but he is very much disposed to a foul fall. Though the Christian shall not stumble so as to destroy his life, he may break his limb. Though God has given his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways, yet there is no commission to keep him when he goes astray; and when he is astray he may thrust himself through with many sorrows.

A. Careless amidst Temptation

I must now try and give you the reason why a man who thinks he stands is more exposed to the danger of falling than any other. First, because *such a man in the midst of temptation will be sure to be more or less careless*. Make a man believe he is very strong, and what will he do? The fight is thickening around him; yet he has his

sword in his scabbard. "Oh," saith he, " my arm is nimble and strong; I can draw it out and strike home." So perhaps he lies down in the field, or slothfully sleeps in his tent; "for," saith he, "when I hear enemies approaching, such is my prowess and such my might, that I can mow them down by thousands. Ye sentinels watch the weak; go to the Ready-to-halts and the Fearings, and arouse them. But I am a giant; and let me once get this old Toledo blade in my hand, it will cut through body and soul. Whenever I meet my enemies I shall be more than conqueror." The man is careless in battle. He lifteth up his helmet, as it is said Goliath did, and then a stone pierceth his forehead; he throws away his shield, and then an arrow penetrateth his flesh; he will put his sword into his scabbard, then the enemy smiteth him, and he is ill prepared to resist. The man who thinks he is strong, is off his guard; he is not ready to parry the stroke of the evil one, and then the poignard entereth his soul.

B. Not Careful to Avoid Temptation

Again, *the man who thinks he stands will not be careful to keep out of the way of temptation*, but rather will run into it. I remember seeing a man who was going to a place of worldly amusement—he was a professor of religion—and I called to him, "What doest thou there, Elijah?" "Why do you ask me such a question as that?" said he. I said, "What doest thou here, Elijah? Thou art going there." "Yes," he replied, with some sort of blush, "but I can do that with impunity." "I could not," said I; "if I were there I know I should commit sin. I should not care what people said about it; I always do as I like, so far as I believe it to be right; I leave the *saying* to anybody who likes to talk about me. But it is a place of danger, and I could not go there with impunity."

"Ah!" said he, "I could; I have been before, and I have had some sweet thoughts there. I find it enlarges the intellect. You are narrow-minded; you do not get these good things. It is a rich treat I assure you. I would go if I

were you.” “No,” I said, “it would be dangerous for me: from what I hear, the name of Jesus is profaned there; and there is much said that is altogether contrary to the religion we believe. The persons who attend there are none of the best, and it will surely be said that birds of a feather flock together.” “Ah, well,” he replied, “perhaps you young men had better keep away; I am a strong man, I can go;” and off he went to the place of amusement. That man, sirs, was an apple of Sodom. He was a professor of religion. I guessed there was something rotten at the core from that very fact; and I found it so by experience, for the man was a downright sensualist even then. He wore a mask, he was a hypocrite, and had none of the grace of God in his heart. Presumptuous men will say they can go into sin, they are so full of moral strength; but when a man tells you he is so good, always read his words backwards, and understand him to mean that he is as bad as he can be. The self-confident man is in danger of falling because he will even run into temptation in the confidence that he is strong, and able to make his escape.

C. Miss the Means of Grace

Another reason is, that *these strong men sometimes will not use the means of grace*,² and therefore they fall. There are some persons here, who never attend a place of worship very likely; they do not profess to be religious; but I am sure they would be astonished if I were to tell them, that I know some professedly religious people who are accepted in some churches as being true children of God, who yet make it a habit of stopping away from the house of God, because they conceive they are so advanced that they do not want it. You smile at such a thing as that. They boast such deep experience within; they have a volume of sweet sermons at home, and they will stop and

² **means of grace** – the instruments which God is pleased to use to communicate His grace to men, including the preaching of the Word, corporate worship, prayer, family worship, Bible reading and study, and Christian fellowship.

read them; they need not go to the house of God, for they are fat and flourishing. They conceit themselves that they have received food enough seven years ago to last them the next ten years. They imagine that old food will feed their souls now. These are your presumptuous men. They are not to be found at the Lord's table, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ, in the holy emblems of bread and wine. You do not see them in their closets; you do not find them searching the Scriptures with holy curiosity. They think they stand—they shall never be moved; they fancy that means are intended for weaker Christians; and leaving those means, they fall. They will not have the shoe to put upon the foot, and therefore the flint cutteth them; they will not put on the armour, and therefore the enemy wounds them—sometimes well-nigh unto death. In this deep quagmire of neglect of the means, many a haughty professor has been smothered.

D. God's Spirit Leaves the Proud

Once more, the man who is self-confident runs a fearful hazard, *because God's Spirit always leaves the proud*. The gracious Spirit delights to dwell in the low places. The Holy Dove came to Jordan; we read not that it ever rested on Bashan. The man upon the white horse rode among the myrtle trees, not among the cedars. The myrtle trees grew at the foot of the mountains; the cedars on the summit thereof. God loves humility. He who walks with fear and trembling, fearing lest he should go astray, that man the Spirit loves; but when once pride creeps in, and the man declares, "Now I am in no danger," away goes the dove; it flies to heaven and will have nought to do with him. Proud souls, ye quench the Spirit. Ye arrogant men, ye grieve the Holy Ghost. He leaves every heart where pride dwelleth; that evil spirit of Lucifer he abhors; he will not rest with it; he will not tarry in its company. Here is your greatest danger, ye proud ones—that the Spirit leaves those who deny their entire dependence on him.

3. Counsel to the Presumptuous

The third point is *the counsel*. I have been expounding the text; now I want to enforce it. I would, if my Lord would allow me, speak home to your souls, and so picture the danger of a presumptuous man, that I would make you all cry out to heaven that sooner might you die than presume; that sooner might you be found amongst those who lie prostrate at the foot of Christ, trembling all their lives, than amongst those who think they stand, and therefore fall. Christian men, the counsel of Scripture is—"Take heed."

A. *Because So Many Have Fallen*

First, take heed, because so *many have fallen*. My brother, could I take thee into the wards of that hospital where lie sick and wounded Christians, I could make you tremble. I would show you one, who, by a sin that occupied him but a single moment, is so sore broken, that his life is one continued scene of misery. I could show you another one, a brilliant genius, who served his God with energy, who is now—not a priest of the devil it is true, but almost that—sitting down in despair, because of his sin. I could point you to another person, who once stood in the church, pious and consistent, but who now comes up to the same house of prayer as if he were ashamed of himself, sits in some remote corner, and is no longer treated with the kindness he formerly received, the brethren themselves being suspicious, because he so greatly deceived them, and brought such dishonor upon the cause of Christ. Oh! did ye know the sad pain which those endure who fall. Could ye tell how many have fallen, (and have not perished, it is true,) but still have dragged themselves along, in misery, throughout their entire existence, I am sure ye would take heed.

Come with me to the foot of the mountain of presumption. See there the maimed and writhing forms of many who once soared with Icarian wings in the airy regions of self-confidence; yet there they lie with their

bones broken, and their peace destroyed. There lies one who had immortal life within him; see how full of pain he appears, and he looks a mass of helpless matter. He is alive, it is true, but just alive. Ye know not how some of those enter heaven who are saved, "so as by fire." One man walks to heaven; he keeps consistent; God is with him, and he is happy all his journey through. Another says, "I am strong, I shall not fall." He runs aside to pluck a flower; he sees something which the devil has laid in his way; he is caught first in this gin, and then in that trap; and when he comes near the river, instead of finding before him that stream of nectar of which the dying Christian drinks, he sees fire through which he has to pass, blazing upon the surface of the water. The river is on fire, and as he enters it he is scorched and burned. The hand of God is lifted up saying, "Come on, come on;" but as he dips his foot in the stream, he finds the fire kindling around him, and though the hand clutches him by the hair of the head, and drags him through, he stands upon the shore of heaven, and cries, "I am a monument of divine mercy, for I have been saved so as by fire." Oh! do you want to be saved by fire, Christians? Would ye not rather enter heaven, singing songs of praises? Would ye not glorify him on earth, and then give your last testimony with, "Victory, victory, victory, unto him that loved us," and then shut your eyes on earth, and open them in heaven? If you would do so, presume not. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

B. Because a Fall Damages the Cause of Christ

Once more, my brother, take heed, because *a fall will so much damage the cause of Christ*. Nothing has hurt religion one-half, or one thousandth part, so much as the fall of God's people. Ah! when a true believer sins, how will the world point at him. "That man was a deacon, but he knows how to charge exorbitantly. That man was a professor, but he can cheat as well as his neighbours. That man is a minister, and he lives in sin." Oh! when the

mighty fall—it is rejoice fir tree, for the cedar has fallen—how does the world exult! They chuckle over our sin; they rejoice over our faults; they fly around us, and if they can see one point where we are vulnerable, how will they say, “See these holy people are no better than they should be.” Because there is one hypocrite, men set down all the rest the same. I heard one man say, a little while ago, that he did not believe there was a true Christian living, because he had found out so many hypocrites. I reminded him that there could be no hypocrites if there were no genuine ones. No one would try to forge bank notes if there were no genuine ones. No one would think of passing a bad sovereign if there were no sterling coin. So the fact of their being some hypocrites proves that there are some genuine characters. But let those who are so, take heed; let them always, in their conduct, have the ring of true gold. Let your conversation be such as to become the gospel of Christ, lest by any means the enemy get the advantage over us, and slander the name of Jesus.

And especially is this incumbent upon the members of our own denomination, for it is often said that the doctrines we believe have a tendency to lead us to sin. I have heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love and which we find in the Scriptures, are licentious ones. I do not know who has the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them. I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, who in successive ages were the great exponents of the system of grace; or what will he say of those Puritans, whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing; but now we are looked upon as the heretics, and they the orthodox. *We* have gone back to the old school; *we* can trace our descent from the Apostles. It is that vein of free grace running through the ser-

monising of Baptists, which has saved us as a denomination. Were it not for that, we should not stand where we are. We can run a golden link from hence up to Jesus Christ himself, through a holy succession of mighty fathers, who all held these glorious truths; and we can say of them, where will you find holier and better men in the world? We are not ashamed to say of ourselves, that however much we may be maligned and slandered, ye will not find a people who will live closer to God than those who believe that they are saved not by their works, but by free grace alone. But, oh ! ye believers in free grace, be careful. Our enemies hate the doctrine; and if one falls, "Ah there," say they, "see the tendency of your principles." Nay, we might reply, see what is the tendency of *your doctrine*. The exception in our case proves the rule is true, that after all, our gospel does lead us to holiness. Of all men, those have the most disinterested piety, the sublimest reverence, the most ardent devotion, who believe that they are saved by grace, without works, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Christian take heed, lest by any means Christ should be crucified afresh, and should be put unto an open shame.

And now what more can I say ? Oh ye, my beloved, ye my brethren, think not that ye stand, lest ye should fall. Oh, ye fellow heirs of everlasting life and glory, we are marching along through this weary pilgrimage; and I, whom God hath called to preach to you, would turn affectionately to you little ones, and say, take heed lest ye fall. My brother, stumble not. There lieth the gin, there the snare. I am come to gather the stones out of the road, and take away the stumbling blocks. But what can I do unless, with due care and caution, ye yourselves walk guardedly. Oh, my brethren; be much more in prayer than ever. Spend more time in pious adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven.

Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of him; and when that happy day shall come when he whom you love shall say, "Come up higher," let it be your happiness to hear him say, "Come my beloved, thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, and henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away". On, Christian, with care and caution! On, with holy fear and trembling! On yet, with faith and confidence, for thou shalt not fall. Read the next verse of this very chapter: "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape."

A Final Warning

But I have some here, perhaps, who may never hear my voice again; and I will not let my congregation go, God helping me, without telling them the way of salvation. Sirs, there are some of you who know ye have not believed in Christ. If ye were to die where ye now sit ye have no hope that ye would rise amongst the glorified in bliss. How many are there here who if their hearts could speak, must testify that they are without God, without Christ, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

Oh, let me tell you then, what ye must do to be saved. Does your heart beat high? Do ye grieve over your sins? Do ye repent of your iniquities? Will ye turn unto the living God? If so, this is the way of salvation: "Whosoever believeth and is baptised shall be saved." I cannot reverse my Master's order—he says, "believeth," and then "baptised;" and he tells me that "he that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, my hearers, your works cannot save you. Though I have spoken to Christians, and exhorted them to live in good works, I talk not so to you. I ask ye not to get the flower before ye have the seed. I will not bid you get the roof of your house before ye lay the foundation. Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be

saved. Whosoever here will now cast himself as a guilty worm flat on Jesus—whoever will throw himself into the arms of everlasting love, that man shall be accepted; he shall go from that door justified and forgiven, with his soul as safe as if he were in heaven, without the danger of its ever being lost. All this is through belief in Christ.

Surely ye need no argument. If I thought ye did I would use it. I would stand and weep till ye came to Christ. If I thought I was strong enough to fetch a soul to Jesus, if I thought that moral suasion could win you, I would go round to each of your seats and beg of you in God's name to repent. But since I cannot do that, I have done my duty when I have prophesied to the dry bones. Remember we shall meet again. I boast of neither eloquence nor talent, and I cannot understand why ye come here; I only speak right on, and tell you what I feel; but mark me, when we meet before God's bar, however ill I may have spoken, I shall be able to say, that I said to you, "Believe on the name of Jesus, and ye shall be saved." Why will ye die, Oh house of Israel? Is hell so sweet, is everlasting torment so much to be desired, that therefore ye can let go the glories of heaven, the bliss of eternity? Men, are ye to live for ever? or, are ye to die like brutes? "Live !" say you, Well, then, are you not desirous to live in a state of bliss? Oh, may God grant you grace to turn to him with full purpose of heart! Come, guilty sinner, come! God help you to come, and I shall be well repaid, if but one soul be added to the visible fold of Jesus, through aught I may have said.



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Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was born in Kelvedon, Essex, England, June 19, 1834. Both his father and grandfather being pastors, young Spurgeon was reared in the knowledge and understanding of the Christian gospel; but it was not until a stormy January morning in 1850 that he was converted. In August of the same year, Spurgeon preached his first sermon to a small gathering of farmers.

A year later he was called to pastor a village church; and in 1854 in his nineteenth year was installed as shepherd over the flock of the New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, London, later to become the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In January, 1855, Spurgeon's first sermon was published, a weekly practice which would not cease until 1916, twenty-four years after his death. During his pastorate at London, Spurgeon ministered to a congregation of almost 6,000 people each Sunday, published his sermons weekly, wrote a monthly magazine, and founded a college for pastors, two orphanages, an old-folks home, a colportage society, and several mission stations. Spurgeon continued to preach the gospel until his death in January, 1892. The real secret to his effectiveness was his deep yet very simple trust in his Lord.