

God's Keeping

by Aaron Hills

The sermon emphasizes God's promise to keep us, our responsibility to cooperate with His grace, and the necessity of vigilance against worldly influences.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 2:9, Psalm 91:11, Psalm 121:3, Jeremiah 44:4, Mark 13:33, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 2 Timothy 3:3, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 John 5:21

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Sanctification"

Description

Aaron Hills preaches on the importance of God's keeping power and our responsibility to guard ourselves against backsliding. He emphasizes the need for constant trust, dependence on God, and faith in Jesus to maintain purity and holiness. Hills highlights the duty of watchfulness, comparing it to a lookout sailor on a ship, and stresses the role of conscience in detecting and avoiding sin. He also addresses the necessity of being dead to the world, rejecting worldly influences and embracing a life crucified to worldly desires.

Transcript

"I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved entire . . . faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23 R. V.)

He will keep the feet of his saints" (1 Sam. 2:9).

"He will give his angels charge over thee in all thy ways" (Psa. 91:11).

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber" (Psa. 121:3).

"That good thing that was committed unto thee, guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:47, R.V.).

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 20, R. V.) .

"My little children, keep [R. V. guard] yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

God undertakes and promises to keep us, but He tells us to guard and keep ourselves. What can it mean? Manifestly this: He does not force His keeping grace upon us. He will use divine agencies and even the help of angels; but He will not do it without our hearty co-operation and willing, cheerful consent.

I have been a profoundly interested, and often deeply grieved observer of the spiritual life of those professing holiness in this community for some eight years. It has made me somewhat qualified to speak.

I am compelled to say that there has been a vast deal of backsliding. I certainly have seen very many come to the altar in ten different series of meetings, many in twenty series of meetings; and not a few, I am persuaded, in as many as thirty series of meetings!

Now this is not normal. It is not God's plan! This is not in harmony with what He has said about His keeping power. It certainly does not measure up to our privileges in Christ. I would write a few lines to Stop, if possible, this chronic backsliding. It is too dangerous to be permitted to go on unnoticed and uncorrected.

1. Jesus proposes to guard us from stumbling (R. V.); but our corresponding attitude of soul is constant trust, and deepest dependence upon God. The Lord has made our heart His temple, and purposely comes in to keep it clean and holy; but He does it only by our consent and assistance. There is no compulsion in a life of grace. Always remember that God never does anything to subvert, or set aside, or override your own self-sovereignty.

He made us free moral agents to be masters of ourselves, and arbiters of our own destiny, and He will forever leave us free. God has no slaves in heaven. The home of the blessed is not a slave pen into which people are stampeded as cattle are driven into a corral. Only those are there who choose to be; and it was an ever-repeated and irrevocable choice.

II. Jesus can and will keep us in the blessing only as He gave it to us by our faith. Jesus says, "Sanctified by faith in me." -- Therefore do not be forever consulting your feelings, and keeping your fingers on the pulse of your emotional nature, and your sensibilities . but keep up your devotions and keep on believing. Let it never be forgotten that a state of purity is never dependent on emotions, but on faith in Christ as our sanctification. Emotions and feelings are mere attendants, and depend largely on the temperament, and the flow of animal spirits and the nervous sensibilities. Disease, infirmities, weaknesses, aches and pains, and weather may depress the emotions. St. Peter knew that. He wrote of the incorruptible inheritance, "reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto salvation . . . Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith -- might be found unto praise and glory" (1 Peter 1:4-7, R. V.).

But if you will have ecstasies, and are more concerned about them than about a clean heart, remember that the devil can give ecstasies and tongues, and has done it times without count to vile spiritualistic mediums.

Do not seek for emotions. Let them come as they will; but tell Satan that, feelings or no feelings, by faith in Jesus, you are still under the blood "that cleanseth from all sin."

III. There is the duty of constant watchfulness. In the course of five verses (Mark 13:33-37), Jesus bade His disciples four times to watch. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." No Christian is ever relieved from this necessity of constant watchfulness.

Those of us who have crossed the ocean in a steamship, have always gone to our berths on a dark night with a greater sense of security because we knew that high up in the crow's nest, over the bow of the steamer, was a "look out" sailor. It was his particular business to do two things, viz., to keep constant

watch and report any glimpse of a vessel or an iceberg in the steamer's path, and to signal to the engine room below. So it is in our spiritual life. There are always perils about us. It is the careless souls who are foolhardy and presumptuous, and will not believe that there is any danger, who are the easy victims of Satan's wiles. -- This leads me to observe:

IV. Conscience is that "lookout" sailor aloft over the bow, in the voyage of life. "Some people with sinful infatuation, put conscience at the stern; it may utter its cry of remorse after the sin has been committed, and the craft has struck the peril which stove in the bow. But a conscience that does no more than weep and moan over sins already committed is of little worth. It is the duty of a healthy conscience to detect sin in advance, and to sound the alarm to the will, that has its hand on the helm. The truly righteous man has temptations floating across his way, as really as the ungodly or the backslider has. The difference is that the righteous man's conscience detects the danger ahead, and gives the signal to the will to "steer clear of the temptation." Yea, it reports the danger to God in prayer, and help comes from above.

April 15, 1912, the greatest ship that had ever plowed the waves, 882 feet long, -- the Titanic, was crossing the Atlantic. It had nearly 2,400 lives on board, and was making its maiden trip at record speed. Her commander, Captain Smith, had won a name for care and skill, and was at the summit of renown among English naval officers, and then lost his "patient continuance in well-doing." That star-lit Sunday night he was feasting to intoxication with millionaires -- six of them worth in the aggregate, \$400,000,000. Other members of the crew were stupid from champagne, and the lookout in the crow's nest was thus asleep. Three other ships sent wireless warnings to them, and alarms were rung, but all in vain. With utter infatuation they crowded her spend to the limit, and drove on in a race with death. Death won the race. The ship crashed into an iceberg and tore out its side. The captain saw his own ruin, drew his revolver and shot himself. A survivor says he will never forget, to his dying day, how the sixteen hundred clung to the ship's rail, shrieking and moaning and groaning, as the sinking Titanic carried them down to a needless death.

That is a perfect picture of a neglected and drugged conscience, despising all God's warnings, and waking up in remorse, when it is forever too late.

V. Our religious safety depends on Our being dead to the world. God says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Now we may ask what is meant by "the world" in this wonderful passage? Bishop Gore of England defines it thus: "The world is human society organizing itself apart from God." Bishop Ellicott of England defines the world as: "The sum total of all that is opposed to the spiritual reign of Christ." Enlarging that definition, I define as follows: "Those habits, fashions, customs, laws -- those principles of conduct, ambitions, pleasures and aims of godless people -- which constitute, in the aggregate, that old hag called the world, that is forever opposed to God and Christ and all righteousness." That is the thing which crucified Jesus and still crucifies Him and His cause afresh, and puts Him to an open shame before our eyes continually.

Now what I am saying is this: those who would keep their piety and grow in grace must die out to this whole damning and damnable worldliness. We cannot seek its approbation. We cannot practice the most of its pleasures. We cannot slavishly follow its fashions. We cannot bow to its opinions, or court its favors,

or love its applause. Above all, we cannot adopt its moral principles as our standard of conduct, or imitate its customs, or worship at its idolatrous shrines.

St. Paul said, "By whom [Christ] the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Nobody has a very serious case of religion, who has not thus been crucified to the world and by the world, and dissolved partnership with it forever.

I am free to admit that what I am now saying has special reference to women. Multitudes of professedly Christian women, and altogether too many of them in the ranks of holiness, seem to act as if they were the bond-slaves of fashion, and the fashion magazines were their Bible, the dressmaking shops were their churches, and the dressmakers priestesses to direct their devotions and guide their prayers.

I believe God is trying by the Holiness Movement to produce a generation of women who are dead to the fashionable follies and idiotic fooleries of this hell-bent world. And if you women fail Him, farewell all hopes of a redeemed humanity.

Some worldly, fashionable females in our churches ask, "What harm is there in cards, and dancing and theaters?" Many of these people are not amenable to argument. They are beyond all rational persuasion! They are a thousand times more afraid of not being in the fashion than they are afraid of sin. They have drugged consciences. Worldliness has befogged their brains, and reduced their moral-backbones to the limpness of a cotton string. To seem to be aristocratic, they will have intoxicants on their tables, even though it does engulf their husbands and sons in hopeless ruin. They must patronize the dance, even if it is likely to make their sons drones, and their daughters harlots. "O Fashion! Fashion! what power hast thou to brow-beat holy nature so that she dare not speak to assert her sacred claims against thy imperious sway!"

I am not writing for such people. It would be useless. They are abandoned to the pleasures of Sin. They are strangers to Jesus. They "love the world, and the love of the Father is not in them." But there are others not utterly committed to a career of Christless worldliness. They are toying with these fashionable pleasures which so many church members run after. They are troubled about it because the Spirit of God has not wholly left them; they are still willing to listen to the voice divine. For them I write. To them the Spirit speaks; "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. 44:4).

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