

Conditions of Being Kept

by Charles Finney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of committing the soul to God in well doing, which involves trusting, confiding, and yielding up the soul to God for safe keeping, and understanding that faith without works is dead.

Scripture: Romans 8:28, Hebrews 10:23, James 1:2, 1 Peter 4:19

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Trials and Suffering"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of committing our souls to God amidst trials and suffering, explaining that such afflictions are often part of God's will for our sanctification and ultimate good. He clarifies that true commitment involves active trust and obedience, not merely passive belief, and that God, as a faithful Creator, will keep those who genuinely commit their souls to Him in well doing. Finney warns against common misconceptions about faith and obedience, urging believers to maintain their confidence in God during difficult times, as these trials serve to strengthen their faith and prepare them for eternal glory.

Transcript

TEXT--1 Peter 4:19: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

In this discussion I design to show:

I. IN WHAT SENSE THE TRIALS, TEMPTATIONS, AND SUFFERINGS OF THE SAINTS, IN THIS LIFE, ARE ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY COMMITTING THE SOUL TO HIM.

III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY COMMITTING THE SOUL TO HIM IN WELL DOING.

IV. IF THE SOUL BE THUS COMMITTED TO HIM, IT WILL INEVITABLY BE KEPT.

V. NOTICE SEVERAL MISTAKES INTO WHICH MANY FALL, UPON THIS SUBJECT.

I. In what sense the trials, temptations, and sufferings of the saints, in this life, are according to the will of God.

1. Not in the sense that God has any pleasure in them for their own sake. God does not regard pain or suffering of any kind as a good in itself. He never takes pleasure in the sufferings of any being on their own account.

2. The trials and sufferings of the saints are not to be regarded as according to the will of God, in such a sense that He does not sympathize with the saints in their sufferings; for He really does, with all the kindness of parental feeling.

3. Nor are they to be regarded as according to the will of God, in such a sense, that He does not regard them as evils in themselves; for they doubtless are looked upon by Him as serious evils in themselves.

4. Nor in such a sense, that He does not feel afflicted with their afflictions, as perfectly good parents would feel in view of the afflictions of their children, were all the results of these afflictions present with them as they are with God.

5. Nor in the sense, that He, in all cases, approves the means by which they are afflicted; for He often feels utterly opposed to the means by which his people are afflicted.

6. Nor are these sufferings according to his will in such a sense, that He would not prevent them, if He wisely could. But--

7. They are according to his will in the sense, that under the circumstances, He regards them as the less of two evils. They are evils in themselves; but are regarded by God as a less evil than would result from his interfering to prevent them.

8. They are according to his will in the sense, that He often sees them to be indispensable to the highest good of the saints themselves. The moral tendency of these afflictions is such, as oftentimes to teach his people lessons which in no other way they will learn; and, consequently, are often an indispensable condition of their sanctification and salvation.

9. They are, therefore, regarded by Him as upon the whole, most for his glory, and the highest good of the universe. No thanks to those who are the guilty instruments of afflicting the saints; for they do not mean to glorify God. They are earthly, wicked, and selfish in their intentions; but God often overrules and calls in the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain.

10. They are according to his will in the sense, that upon the whole, under all the circumstances of the case, He prefers they should take place. That is, He prefers it as the less of two evils, and considers it a less evil, under all the circumstances, than for Him to interpose by his omnipotence and prevent it.

11. He views these afflictions, temptations, trials, &c., as that in which, with the results, all present to Him, He rejoices. Or strictly, it should be said--that in the results He rejoices, and not in the means, on their own account, but only as the necessary means of effecting his benevolent ends.

II. What is intended by committing the soul to God.

1. The word rendered commit, in this text, is a form of the same word that is often rendered faith in the New Testament; and in this connection conveys a very correct idea of the real meaning of the term faith, or of the true nature of faith. It means, to trust, confide. It is not a mere emotion of the mind--but is an act of the will; a yielding up, or giving over the soul to God, for safe keeping. It is like the committing a treasure

to any one, to be kept for us.

2. It is like a bride committing herself to her husband, a giving herself away, committing her honor, her all, into his hands, and thus uniting her destiny with his.

3. It is a state, or an abiding trust or confidence, in opposition to a single act of will. It is such a state as keeps the soul at rest or in peace.

III. What is intended by committing the soul to God in WELL DOING.

1. It is the delivering up of the whole being to doing and suffering the whole will of God, joyfully and calmly; leaving results with Him. Observe, the will controls the actions of body and mind. This committing the soul to Him in well doing, is that act of the will by which all the powers of body and mind, so far as they are under the control of the will, are delivered up or consecrated to the service of God, delivered up to do his whole will; calmly and unhesitatingly leaving results entirely with Him.

As an illustration of what is intended, take the case of Abraham, when he was commanded by God to forsake his country and his kindred, for a land that God would show him. Without stopping to be informed as it respected the land, how far off, where it was, or what sort of a country it should be, he instantly obeyed, and went forth at the bidding of God, not knowing whither he went; taking it for granted, as a thing settled beyond all question, that God would guide him aright. He obeyed implicitly, and thus committed his soul to God in well doing; that is, in implicit obedience. So in the case of his being commanded to offer up Isaac, his son of promise, "his only son Isaac, whom he loved." What a wonderful trial of his faith! That this son of promise, of whom it had been said he should be the father of many nations, should be destined to be slain by his own father's hand, previous to his being a father at all, was placing Abraham under circumstances immensely interesting and trying. But behold his confidence; how he committed every thing to God in implicit obedience. He went forth, prepared to render unqualified obedience to God--trusting that if he was slain God was able to raise him again from the dead; from whence also he virtually received him; or as God expresses it, "received him in a figure."

2. It is confidence reposed in God, upon his own conditions. God has informed mankind, that they may trust in Him for safe-keeping, upon conditions of implicit obedience, and not otherwise. He does not allow people to repose confidence in Him, that He will keep and save them, if they disobey Him. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" It is, then, upon his own conditions that the soul is to be committed to Him, and this is the thing the Apostle requires in the text.

3. It is giving yourself up to the promotion of his glory and the good of the universe, with the steadfast confidence, that your soul and interests in his hands are safe.

4. It is thus giving yourself up in implicit obedience, with the fullest assurance, that you need not concern yourself about results.

5. It is thus giving yourself up, with the entire willingness that the results shall be in all respects according to the will of God.

6. It is the actual going right forward in the discharge of every duty, in the exercise of such confidence in God, in respect to results, as to feel no anxiety or carefulness as respects the disposition God will make of your soul.

IV. If the soul be thus committed to God, it will inevitably be kept.

1. It will be kept, because God is a faithful God. He is described in the text as a faithful Creator. There is no reason to distrust Him. He will not, cannot abuse your confidence. He is not only faithful, but infinitely faithful, and will heartily and certainly fulfill all his pledges, and keep that which you commit to Him in well doing.

2. He is able to keep your soul. He is described in the text as the Creator of the soul. If He was able to make it, He is certainly able to keep it.

3. He is willing; certainly, He is infinitely willing to keep it, or He would not have given his Son to die to redeem it. He would not take so much pains to get possession of it. He would not use so many means, with such long-suffering, and exercise such great self-denial as to give the life of his well beloved Son, to redeem the soul from the hands of public justice, and to persuade man to commit his soul to Him, unless He was willing with all his heart to keep it, when committed to Him upon his own conditions.

4. His honor demands that He should keep the soul when thus committed to Him in well doing. Moral beings, from the very constitution of their natures, regard a breach of sacred confidence, or trust, as a most dishonorable and hateful offense, as deserving the severest reprobation. What an infinite dishonor it would be to God, to suffer a soul to be lost which was committed to Him upon his own conditions for safe keeping.

5. He regards every soul thus committed to Him as He does the apple of his eye. He says, he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

6. God regards the soul as worth keeping. He has given an intimation of the light in which He regards the value of the soul, in the Atonement of Christ. O who should know the value of the soul but God, who made it? Who knows what eternity is but God? Who can form an idea of what an immortal soul can suffer or enjoy, but God? Whose eye has beheld, whose heart has pondered, and whose mind has compassed the capabilities of the soul to endure or to enjoy, but God? And shall not God keep a soul--a deathless soul--a soul made in his own image--a soul for whom his Son has died--shall He not keep it when committed to Him upon his own conditions? Shall He carelessly throw it away? Shall He neglect it, and suffer any to pluck it out of his hands? O tell it not in Gath. It cannot be.

7. If thus committed to Him God will keep it, because He knows you will not keep it yourself; but that if it be left with you, it will be lost forever. Nay, He sees that you have lost it already; that you have sold it into perpetual slavery--that it is already bound over, and sentenced to eternal death--that unless it is committed to Him, it must inevitably lie down in everlasting sorrow. How infinitely important, then, that the soul should be instantly committed to Him in well doing.

V. Mistakes into which many fall, upon this subject.

1. Many have an Antinomian faith. They trust that God will keep and save their souls, and yet they have not complied, and do not comply with the only conditions upon which they are at liberty to trust in God. Instead of committing their souls to Him in well doing--instead of implicitly obeying God, they think that Christ's righteousness will answer for Himself and them too; so that they shall be saved on account of Christ's obedience, whether they render a personal obedience or not. This is a horrible delusion. An imputed righteousness in this sense, is one of the grossest blunders, and most shocking errors, the world

has ever fallen into.

2. Others are not expecting to be saved without good works, but are taking a passive attitude, and waiting for God, in some mysterious way, to move upon them and influence them to obey Him. Thus, instead of going forward actually to the exercise of their own agency, they are, as they suppose, trusting in God while professedly waiting for divine influence. Is this committing the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing?

3. Others engage in what they call well doing from mere considerations of duty, without any of that faith that works by love. They have in reality, no faith in Christ. They do not commit the keeping of their souls to him in affectionate confidence, but go about what they call the discharge of duty, impelled by other considerations than those of faith and love. They have no rest, no deep peace of mind in what they call their well-doing. Now, this shows, that they are mere legalists, and know not what that faith is, which is spoken of in this text.

4. Many mistake emotions of assurance that they shall be kept, for faith. An emotion of assurance is wholly an involuntary state of mind. It is by no means to be confounded with faith. Faith is an act of the will, as I have already said, and because it is an act of the will, it is connected with its outward manifestations by a natural necessity. It is impossible that real faith should not produce corresponding outward conduct, as impossible as it is that our bodies should not be influenced by our wills. There may often be high wrought emotions of assurance, without any real faith, and yet nothing is more common, than for persons to confound these two states of mind, and mistake the one for the other, but they are entirely different states of mind. Faith, as I have already said, is an act or choice of the will, a committing or giving up the soul to God in implicit obedience. Every thing therefore, which is called faith, that does not, as a matter of fact, manifest itself in obedience to God, is not the faith of the gospel. It is a mere antinomian faith. It is an emotion and not an act of the will at all.

5. Others mistake a single act of faith for that state of faith which habitually trusts or commits the keeping of the soul to Him in well doing, all the time. Now there is certainly a difference between a first or single act of faith, and a state of confidence. Let the case of a wife illustrate what I mean. Suppose a woman, under circumstances of excitement and being pressed hard by the persuasion of her friends, to consent to become a wife, and by one act to commit herself to the honor, protection, and guidance, of her husband. But, suppose that she should soon fall back, and lose her confidence in him, become distrustful insomuch that she could not trust him out of her sight without fearing he was in company with some other woman or engaged in what he ought not to be, keeping herself in continual trouble, lest he should be guilty of some act of infidelity to her, or be unable or unwilling to support her, and thus she should become full of tossings night and day. But suppose, on the other hand, that she had so fully committed herself as that she could honestly say, from that time forward, that never, for one moment she had distrusted her husband in any respect, or in the least degree, whether at home or abroad. In whatever company, and in whatever circumstances, she had had the most implicit and unshaken confidence in him, insomuch that her soul had been as entirely at rest in respect to him as if she had known it was naturally impossible for him to do wrong, or betray her confidence. Now, it should be remembered that this committing the soul to Him in well doing must not merely be a single act, but a continuous act or state of the will. Unless it be a continued state that holds out to the end, God has not promised to keep the soul.

6. Others again, are attempting to get faith by works. Instead of at once confiding in God, by a simple act of committing all to Him, they go to work, and by laborious efforts, try to force themselves into the exercise of those emotions of assurance which they suppose to constitute faith.

7. Others are speculating about the philosophy of faith to the neglect of the objects of faith. They give up the attention of the mind to a dissecting of their mental exercises, and to the settling of certain philosophical questions, instead of pouring the intense energies of their mind upon those truths that are to be believed. Instead of looking at Christ and attentively considering the truths of his precious gospel, they are turning their attention within themselves, and looking into the darkness of their own minds, for light upon the subject of faith. This is about as wise as if a man should shut up his eyes in the midst of noon-day, and turn in upon an examination of the anatomy and physiology of the eye, with the philosophy of vision, seeking for light.

8. Others still are trying to live by faith without works. They forget that a faith without works is dead, or that it is a mere emotion and not an act of the will, and therefore has no virtue in it. "Show me your faith," says James, "without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works--wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead."

It should always be remembered that faith works. It is an active principle. It is itself an action, an effort of the will, and of course exhibits itself in works. Some, indeed, are endeavoring to live by faith without works, and others by works without faith. And O, how rare a thing is it to find those who have the faith that works by love.

REMARKS.

1. It cannot be too distinctly understood and borne in mind, that all the Christian graces, properly so called, are acts of will, and connected with their outward manifestations, in a corresponding course of action, by a natural necessity. As I have already said, faith is an act of the will, and connected with corresponding works, and works of love, by a natural necessity. Therefore no other faith than that which works, and works by love, is evangelical or saving faith. It is a trusting or committing the soul to Christ in well doing. How infinitely important is it that this be borne in mind.

2. What numerous blunders have been made by theological writers on the subject of faith. Some holding it to be a passive state of mind, thus confounding it with the perception of truth--others have confounded it with emotion, or a full assurance that the gospel or the promises are true--others still have made it voluntary only indirectly and have supposed it to have moral character only because it is indirectly produced by an act of the will, in directing the attention to the examination of the evidence. It seems to have been quite extensively understood to be synonymous with conviction or persuasion of mind that a thing is true. These and similar blunders upon this subject, have led so many Antinomians and heartless professors of religion to settle down upon the supposition that they are Christians, taking it for granted that they can have true faith, true love, and true repentance, and yet that these graces may exist without manifesting themselves in benevolent outward conduct. How infinitely important it is then to understand that repentance, faith, love, are all acts of the will, of choices; and must of necessity manifest themselves in a corresponding outward conduct. The love that constitutes religion is good willing, or benevolence, and not complacency in God or any other being. We are as entirely involuntary in the exercise of the love of complacency toward God, as we are in the exercise of complacency in any other object, that is to us naturally beautiful and lovely. So repentance is an act of the will, and does not consist at all in those emotions of sorrow that are often supposed to be repentance. Repentance, when properly considered, and resolved into its proper elements, is precisely synonymous with regeneration or a change from selfishness to benevolence. Sorrow for sin is a mere consequence, connected with repentance by a natural necessity just as complacency in God is with benevolence and faith. Whoever overlooks,

therefore, in his own experience, or in his account or estimation of his character, the fact that all the Christian graces, properly so called, or all that in which there is true virtue, consist in acts of will, which must of course and of necessity manifest themselves in corresponding outward acts, will totally deceive himself.

3. As it is true that no faith is evangelical except that which works by love, so also it is true, that no works are acceptable but works of faith. Any works not connected with and originating in faith, or any committing of the soul to God in well doing, are only works of law, by which no flesh can be justified.

4. This text is a beautiful description of true religion. It is admirably guarded and beautifully expressed. It sums up the whole of it in the short sentence--"commit the soul to Him in well doing."

5. This is the very direction, amplified, explained and illustrated, that answers the important question, "what shall I do to be saved?"

6. This text says nothing about waiting for mere feeling or emotion. It requires at once an act of will which is directly within our power. If there is any thing in the universe over which a man has control, it is over his own volitions. It is absurd and contradictory to say he cannot will. The thing then to be done--the thing required in the text, is at once to put forth the act of committing the soul to God in well doing.

7. All faith and trust in God that does not work, and work by love, is tempting God. It is trusting Him without complying with his express conditions. It is presumption, and a blasphemous abuse of God. It is the greatest dishonor to God, and that which He supremely resents and abhors, that any one should claim or pretend to trust in Him, without habitually obeying Him.

8. So all works without faith are tempting God; for they are setting aside his conditions, and a wicked attempt to be justified directly or indirectly by works of law, which he has declared to be impossible.

9. The afflictions, temptations and trials of the saints are designed and calculated to strengthen their faith. When they have passed through those scenes and have had much experience of the faithfulness of God, they can speak from experience. The faithfulness of God with them is not a matter of theory, but of certain knowledge.

10. The sharper the trial, the greater the triumph, and the deeper the rest of the soul, when it is over. This is the natural result of learning by experience the great faithfulness of God.

11. But "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

12. God sometimes suffers persons to fall into sin, because they are presumptuous in running into temptation. They pray "Lead us not into temptation," and then rush right into it. And because they do not watch, God suffers them to fall. Nay, He cannot by any possibility prevent their falling, unless they will watch.

13. It is impossible that a faith that does not work, and work by love, should be a saving faith. In other words it is impossible for God to save the soul through the medium of faith that is not holy, or does not consist in an act of will and connected with a corresponding course of life by a natural necessity. If the Christian graces were mere emotions instead of choices they might exist forever without any virtue or holiness in the mind. If faith were a mere antinomian perception of the truths of the gospel, a mere

emotion or felt assurance of being kept or saved which Antinomians have, there would be no tendency to salvation in it, nor would there be any possibility that salvation should be connected with it. All virtue consists in intention or acts of will. And a faith that is not an act of will is a dead faith, a faith connected with damnation and not with salvation.

14. It should always be remembered that whenever you are living in the neglect of duty or in any form of disobedience, your faith is vain, i.e. it is no faith, it is a mere emotion and not an act of will, for if it were an act of will it would be connected with a discharge of all known duty by an act of necessity.

15. One grand reason of keeping the saints for a time in this world is to develop and strengthen their graces, to confirm them in holiness. Holiness is always pure in kind. It is always obedience to God. It may intermit and acquire permanence by the teaching and discipline that confirms and perpetuates faith and all those states of mind and acts of will, of which faith is the condition.

16. In this state of existence the saints are educated for future usefulness. It may be and probably is true, that the saints will hereafter be employed in works of love, under circumstances that will require just that degree of knowledge and strength of virtue which they acquire in passing through the scenes of tumult with which they are surrounded in this life. They are here made familiar with temptation and with the faithfulness of God. And they will doubtless hereafter need this experience, in order that they may act well their part in the labors to which God shall hereafter call them. We may rest assured that our discipline here is not in vain, and that God would not leave his children to pass through such scenes if it could be wisely avoided.

17. The sufferings of the saints in this life are eminently calculated to prepare them for the enjoyments of heaven.

18. It is a great evil and a great sin to cast away your confidence in an hour of trial. You have heard of the patience and confidence of Job. Satan accused him, before the sons of God, of having a selfish religion: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them; and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword: and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and the servants, and hath consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor

charged God foolishly."

Now see the great confidence of this man of God. In an hour of trial and temptation he did not, like many professors of religion now, cast away his shield. But his trial is not yet ended: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; but put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die! But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

How affecting and remarkable it is, that Job's confidence should have been so unwavering under such trials as these. One messenger comes upon the heels of another--and while one is yet speaking another comes, and another, and another, and another--bringing intelligence still more afflicting and overwhelming. He was very rich; but one thing goes after another, till he is left a beggar. Still his children are left to him; but while the intelligence of the destruction of the last remains of his fortune is still in his ears, a messenger comes to inform him of the instantaneous death of all his children. He then stands naked before the Lord, and cries out, "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out of it. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But still his wife is left--his dearest earthly friend, his richest earthly treasure, is still left. She is not only alive, but she has not forsaken him. Her countenance, her support, and her counsel, are still with him. But ah! when Satan but touches his person, then she forsakes him. His three friends come to taunt him. He is accused of being a hypocrite, and his wife, confident of his sincerity, and thinking him abused, advises him to curse God and die. But hear the man of God: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "Although He slay me," says he, "yet will I trust in Him."

Now how infinitely unlike many professors of religion, in the present day, was this conduct of Job. Many professors seem to be like soldiers, who carry their shield when there is no danger; but as soon as they come into danger, where they have occasion to use it, they cast it away and flee; give up their confidence in God, "which hath great recompense of reward," and turn their backs upon God, and shamefully apostatize.

Suppose a man were going to sea, and God should inform him that he would encounter great storms, and go through much tribulation; yet, nevertheless, he should ride them all out in safety, and "not a hair of any man's head should perish." With this promise in his hand, he embarks and sets his feet upon the deck of the ship, and feels that he is as safe as if upon eternal rock. But he is scarcely out of sight of land before a tempest arises. The heavens gather blackness, the blazing lightnings flash around him, and now he is

lifted upon the mountain wave, and anon the ocean yawns as if it would lay bare its very bottom, to receive the plunging and struggling bark. The tempest roars so loud, that the voice of the thunder cannot be heard. The captain, with his trumpet, is obliged to shout at the top of his voice, in every man's ear, to be heard and understood. The elements are conspired against him. The rattling hail, the forked lightning, the deafening roar of the tempest, the mighty wrestlings of the waves, all exhibit around him a scene of terror and consternation, indescribable; but God rides upon the storm, and amid the mighty rollings of the ship, when the daring seamen from the highest yards are rolled and pitched as if to be thrown to a great distance, by the mighty sweepings of the sea; why, if his faith is firm in God, the man can stand upon the deck, and in every rolling and lurching of the ship cry out, "Hold on, for God has spoken, and not a hair of any man's head shall perish. I believe in God. Let the winds blow on, and let the elements conspire against this trembling ship; though every joint shall groan, and every butt should seem about to spring--though sea after sea should make an entire breach over us, from stem to stern; yet, as God is true, the hair of no man's head shall perish." Why, with the promise of God in his hand, he could ride the world around in the midst of the most terrific hurricane, and be as calm as if sitting by his fire at home.

But suppose that, with such a promise as this in his hand, and with the express intimation that he must pass through great storms, and great tribulations, to enter the haven of rest, the man had so little confidence in God, that unless it was fair weather all the time, he was in a state of continual distrust. Every appearance of a storm would make him tremble. He would cast away his confidence, and before the whole ship's crew he would dishonor God, and give up all for lost. O, the shipmen and the passengers would say, what sort of a Christian is this, and what must he think of his God, to have no confidence in the stability of his promise? He must see with his eyes, that there is no danger, or he is in a state of continual distress. O the miserable unbelief, the God dishonoring distrust and casting away of confidence with which the Church of God is cursed. How greatly this grieves the Spirit of the Lord, and how greatly it offends against the generation of God's children. What a stumbling block to the saints, and what ruin it brings upon the world.

Beloved, when you are called to pass through trials, and deep waters of affliction, these are your golden opportunities to honor the blessed God, and exhibit the value and power of your religion. These are the bright spots in your history, in which you have an opportunity to make the deepest impression upon the world. Why, have you never known, that "the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church?"--that their confidence in God, in the midst of the fires of martyrdom, were to the bystanders the overwhelming demonstration of the truth and value of their religion? What, then, do you mean, to cast away your confidence in an hour of trial? Why do you not hold on? Why do you not, then, when you have the opportunity, show yourself a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

1 "I am a soldier of the cross,

A foll'wer of the Lamb;

And shall I fear to own his cause,

Or blush to speak his name?

2 Shall I be carried to the skies,

on flow'ry beds of ease,

While others fought to win the prize,
And sail'd through bloody seas?

3 Are there no foes for me to face,
Must I not stem the flood;

Is this vain world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

4 Sure I must fight, if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord,
To bear the cross, endure the shame,
Supported by thy word.

5 The saints, in all this glorious war,
Shall conquer, tho' they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
With faith's discerning eye." [Watts]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/conditions-of-being-kept/>

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