

# Almost Gone!

by James Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the peril of temptation and the necessity of God's grace for our preservation and deliverance.*

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Gods Preservation"

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## Description

James Smith preaches on the importance of recognizing the dangers of slipping into sin, as seen in Psalm 73:2 where Asaph reflects on his own near fall. Smith emphasizes the need for believers to be vigilant, acknowledging the temptations that match their sinful desires and the power of Satan's persistent attacks. Despite the close calls, God mercifully delivers His people, setting limits on temptations and providing a way of escape. Smith urges humility, dependence on God's strength, and giving glory to God for preservation.

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## Transcript

"But as for me -- my feet were almost gone! My steps had well near slipped!" Psalm 73:2

Asaph appears, in his own mind, to have been going over the history of the Lord's people in general, and of some of them in particular; tracing out the Lord's dealings with them, and marking his peculiar interventions for them. Full of this subject, he commences his Psalm rather abruptly, exclaiming, "Truly God is good to Israel -- even to such as are pure of heart ." Good, incomparably good, had He been to Israel literally, and to all the pure, or true hearted, among them. But His goodness shines even brighter still, in His dealings with His spiritual Israel. How good, how infinitely good . . .

to choose them to eternal life in His beloved Son,

to predestine them to the adoption of children,

to redeem them from death by His precious blood,

to preserve them in the days of their unregeneracy,

to quicken and call them by His Holy Spirit,

to speak to them in His Word,

and to work for them by His providence.

Yes, God has been good, and is good to Israel; even to such as have had their hearts cleansed from guilt -- by the blood of Jesus, and from filth -- by His Spirit and Word. Being pure-hearted, the hands are washed in innocence, pure paths are chosen, pure companions are selected, and pure conversation is enjoyed.

Asaph's attention had also been directed to himself, and while he marked their course, he compared it with his own, and as he reviewed his narrow escapes, and sinful propensities, he exclaimed, "But as for me -- my feet were almost gone! My steps had well near slipped!"

He had been in GREAT DANGER.

Judging by the eye, misled him. He saw the wicked -- healthy, wealthy, and prosperous; while some of the Lord's people -- were sick, poor, and in adversity. Envy arose in his heart, and began powerfully to work. He began to think that it was folly to obey God, and observe His precepts. A spirit of complaining was produced, and he reflected upon the conduct of his God. At length he went to the Sanctuary -- there his mistakes were corrected, his mind was enlightened, and his actual fall prevented. He was almost gone! His steps had nearly slipped! He had only narrowly escaped!

In looking back, how often has this been the case with us. But there are special periods, and some particular spots, which remind us, how near we were to a shameful fall . O this, ALMOST! This, well near! How vividly they bring before us past scenes, and past seasons.

We can remember what danger we were in, from peculiar temptations . Satan studied our constitution , and prepared his temptation accordingly. It perfectly matched the lusts of our flesh, and natural bent of our sinful desires. It so exactly suited , was so calculated to make us fall -- that we were almost gone.

Then, it was so adapted to our circumstances . Satan always observes the circumstances of the Lord's people, when he prepares his traps for them. He has temptations for sickness -- and health, for poverty -- and wealth, for cheerfulness -- and gloom. As every constitution has its suitable temptation -- just so has every circumstance in the believers life. Besides which, Satan plies his temptations with such power and perseverance . How he does this -- we cannot understand; but that he does so -- we cannot doubt. An infernal spirit often acts upon the human spirit. It suggests, it excites, it tempts, and, alas! how often it prevails!

When the temptation to sin, and the opportunity to commit the sin meet -- the conflict is fearful, and the result sometimes shameful!

When the wine sparkled before the eye of Noah -- he was tempted and fell.

When Bathsheba's beauty met the eye of David -- he was tempted and fell.

When the damsel charged Peter -- he was tempted and fell.

And there have been times in our history when solicitation to sin, an inclination for sin, and the opportunity to commit sin -- have met together -- and we were almost gone! If special grace had not been given to us -- we would have surely fallen.

We can remember too our danger when our corruptions have been powerfully stirred up. Satan is allowed to do this sometimes -- and then every evil that lies hidden in the heart begins to show itself! Corruptions

we would be ashamed to mention, and afraid to name -- are found working furiously within us! O what awful thoughts of God then! O what fearful cogitations then! Flood seems to follow flood, billow follows billow; until it is almost impossible to believe that there can be any true grace in our hearts!

The cable strains, the anchor drags, the masts crack, and the sails flap fearfully -- we are tossed with tempests and not comforted. We seem just ready to make shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience. Our feet are almost gone! Our steps are well near slipped! Our resistance is nearly overcome. Like one walking on ice -- every moment we expect to fall prostrate. Like one going down a steep plane, it appears almost impossible to stop. At times, all seems to be over, and disgrace now, with destruction by-and-by, seem certain.

O the scenes of danger we have passed through! O the hair-breadth escapes we have had! There seemed to be but a step, and scarcely that, between us and the awful precipice, the shameful fall! Many, many times, we have been almost gone -- and yet have never fallen yet. What mercy, what rich, free, and undeserved mercy this! But Asaph had not only been in great danger, he had also experienced,

A Merciful Deliverance.

A father's eye was over him! The Lord was observing him. Just so with us. Our God has ever had His eye on us -- and His arm around us! "The eyes of the Lord, run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on the behalf of all those whose hearts are perfect towards Him." O the mercy, to have God's eye watching us; and His ear open to listen to us! With David, we can say, "When I cried: 'My foot slips!' Your mercy, O God, held me up."

The Lord bounds the temptations of His people. So far -- but no farther, may Satan go. He may tempt us -- but he shall not triumph over us; or if he does for a time, the triumphing of this wicked one shall be short.

Our heavenly Father bounds the time, the force, and the number of our temptations. We may think them peculiarly strong, and seem to be encircled by them, and conclude that they must crush us. But no, thus says the Word, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it!"

This has hitherto been the case with us, we were almost gone -- but not quite. Our steps had well near slipped -- but we were preserved from falling. Every saint is in God's own keeping. "I will keep it night and day." These are the Lord's own words, and they are true and faithful. "I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Indeed, the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep. The Lord protects you; the Lord is a shelter right by your side. The sun will not strike you by day or the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all harm; He will protect your life. The Lord will protect your coming and going both now and forever!" Psalms 121

The Lord our God will continue to work for us -- as He has in the past. He works IN us -- by His Holy Spirit; and He works FOR us -- by His special providence. And the inward work of the Spirit, and the outward work of divine providence -- conspire to preserve us from falling. Blessed be God, He watches over us, bounds our temptations, keeps us as the apple of the eye, and works for us. Here is our safety. This is the reason, that though our feet were almost gone, and our steps had well near slipped -- we can say of our enemies, "They are cast down and fallen -- but we are risen and stand upright."

Brethren, thus so dangerously circumstanced -- we had need to take heed; with such corruptions within us, such an enemy without us, and such a slippery path beneath us -- great caution is necessary. Therefore the Apostle exhorts, "Let him that thinks he stands take heed -- lest he fall." "Watch and pray -- lest you enter into temptation," is the caution of our Divine Master also.

We should also feel our dependence . We need a wiser head, and a stronger arm than our own -- to keep us! If the Lord had not been on our side -- long before now, Satan would have surely prevailed against us. The ivy does not more need the oak, the vine does not more need the wall, the infant does not more need the parent's arm -- than we need the powerful support of our gracious God. Our daily prayer should be "Hold me up -- and I shall be safe!"

We should be found in the posture of the spouse, of whom it was inquired, "Who is this, that comes up out of the wilderness, leaning on her beloved ." We should walk humbly. Leaning on another's arm , guided by another's eye , and kept by another's power -- surely humility befits us. The humbler -- the safer. The humble cleave to Jesus, and fear to leave His side.

Leave Him, and like Dinah -- you will find some Shechem too strong for you, and will have to return to your home dishonored and disgraced!

We should give God the glory of our preservation. Our feet were almost gone, and but for His timely intervention -- they would have been quite gone! Where, O where might we have been this day -- but for the Lord's faithful care? He was mindful of us, and He will bless us. We have been kept, we are preserved -- but "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name goes all the glory for Your unfailing love and faithfulness!"

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