

Faith's Standing-Ground

by J.C. Philpot

Faith's Standing-Ground is a sermon that explores the doctrines of grace and their suitability to the wants and woes of a needy sinner.

Topics: "Assurance Of Faith", "Security In Christ"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the assurance of God's love and provision for His children, emphasizing the inheritance and blessings bestowed upon believers through Christ. He highlights the security and certainty of the believer's position in Christ, free from condemnation and filled with the Spirit's guidance and intercession. Philpot encourages believers to walk in faith, knowing that if God is for them, no one and nothing can ultimately stand against them, drawing strength from the sacrificial love of God in giving His Son for their salvation.

Transcript

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"What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:31, 32

In this glorious and noble chapter (Romans 8), the apostle, as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, spreads before us the inheritance of the estates of the heir of heaven. I shall, by way of introduction, therefore, briefly run over some of the ample possessions here assigned to the heir of God and joint heir with Christ, assured as they are with a certainty of the goodness of his title, and a security of his undisturbed and eternal enjoyment of his property.

The first is no condemnation, as being in Christ Jesus.

The second is freedom from the law of sin and death.

The third is the fulfillment of the righteousness of the law in him, as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The fourth is the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

The fifth is the being led by the Spirit.

The sixth is receiving the Spirit of adoption, to cry "Abba, Father."

The seventh, the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.

The eighth is the inward intercession of the Spirit, interceding for him with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The ninth, the knowledge that all things work together for good to those who love God.

And then a whole cluster of beautiful estates, all, as it were, in a ring fence-

being called according to God's purpose;

being foreknown; being predestinated;

being justified; and being glorified;

until he ends the blessed catalogue with no separation from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Heir of God, read your inheritance! Do with this chapter what Abraham did when God commanded him to walk "through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it" (Genesis 13:17); for God has as surely given you all the goodly land of the heavenly Canaan, here traced out by the apostle's pen, as he gave unto Abraham the literal Canaan- that "good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey." (Deut. 8:7, 8.) So do you walk up and down the length and breadth of this glorious chapter, and see and note well the fountains and depths of love and mercy that spring up in it, how fat the wheat, how good the wine, how rich the land in oil, how full the woods of honey. Is it not a land wherein you may eat bread without scarceness, and not lack anything in it which your soul can hunger after?

But having enumerated these ample estates, and given us so full and clear a catalogue of the possessions of the heir of promise, the apostle, as if in a transport of heavenly joy, breaks out with the inquiry, "What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" And then filled, as it were, with a glorious view of the surpassing grace of God in the gift of his dear Son, he puts to himself and to us that decisive, all-satisfying question, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

In laying open the divine truths folded up in these words, I shall, as the Lord may enable, examine,

First, Faith's forcible Inquiry- "What shall we, then, say to these things?"

Secondly, Faith's firm Standing-ground- "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Thirdly, Faith's solid Argument- "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

I. Faith's forcible inquiry- "What shall we, then, say to these things?" You will observe that when the apostle had given us this choice list of heavenly blessings, and especially that glorious cluster, so richly heaped together, like the Pleiades in the sky, of eternal fore-knowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification, he then asks the question, which I have named Faith's forcible Inquiry, "What shall we then say to these things?"

A. May I not well urge the same question upon ourselves? What shall we say to these things, or rather what shall faith in our breast say to them?

1. First, shall we say that they are not true? But can this question be necessary? One would certainly think not, when they are so clearly revealed in every part of the inspired volume; and yet we know that in every age the glorious truths of election, predestination, fore-knowledge, effectual calling, and the certainty of salvation to God's elect people have been not only denied but fought against with bitter, unrelenting enmity. But shall we say that these things are not true because thus denied and opposed, when they shine as with a ray of light, not only through the whole word of God, but especially meet our believing eye in this chapter as if illuminated with the very light of God's countenance beaming upon them? May we not indeed say that they shine forth in it as bright and as glittering as the stars in the midnight sky, so that to read it in faith is like looking up into the very face of heaven all radiant with the heavenly effulgence of a thousand constellations? Blind indeed must those be who can read this chapter and see no beauty or glory in it! And worse than blind must those be who see the truths contained in it, and hate them.

But I hope there are some here present who have seen them as clearly and as plainly as Abraham saw the stars in the sky on that memorable night when the Lord brought him forth abroad and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you be able to number them;" no, have believed in their divine Giver with the same faith as Abraham then "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:5, 6.)

2. But shall we say that though true, they ought to be kept back- that they are truths which may be believed in the closet, but should never be proclaimed in the pulpit, lest they should stumble weak believers, offend many very serious professors of religion, damp the earnestness of the inquiring, or add gloom to the troubled spirit of the depressed children of God? Shall we listen to such objections, viewing these heavenly truths as deep mysteries which should never be examined or searched into, as being among the secret things which belong unto God? Shall we, I say, give ear to such subtle arguments which men have so frequently employed to keep back what they cannot deny, and to throw a veil over that which their heart inwardly abhors?

No! faith cannot act so treacherous a part. On the contrary, faith says that they are revealed in the word of God for the express purpose that they might be believed, and if believed that they might be spoken of, and as if proclaimed upon the house top. Is not this both the faith and the expression of the apostle? "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Cor. 4:13.) What faith, then, inwardly believes the mouth outwardly speaks; for "with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10.) They are then to be proclaimed by all the ambassadors of God as a heavenly message; and surely they are worthy of being borne, as with the voice of cherubim and seraphim, to the very ends of the earth, that they may be sounded far and wide as with the trumpet of God.

3. But are they not dangerous? Will they not lead to presumption? May they not inspire a vain confidence? May they not harden the heart, and make it careless how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling? Yes, they may, unless the Spirit of God reveals them to the soul. They may, if taken by a presumptuous hand; they may, if laid hold of by fingers unsanctified by the Holy Spirit, be made very injurious; as no doubt has been the case in very many instances. But the abuse of a thing does not disprove its use. Are not God's best gifts in providence abused by ungodly men? If then the doctrines of grace are abused to licentiousness, that does not disprove either their truth or their influence, if used rightly. But the question may perhaps be best settled by your own experience, if indeed you have received them into a believing heart under the teaching and testimony of God the Holy Spirit. Have you found them dangerous- you who have received them from the mouth of God, and felt the savor and sweetness of his Spirit bedewing them to your inmost soul? Have they made you presume? Have they inspired vain confidence in your breast? Have they hardened your conscience, made sin less sinful, drawn you into evil, or made you rush, in daring rebellion, upon God's shield? "No," you say, "I have felt them to produce in me just the contrary effects. I have found that, as they were made spirit and life to my soul, they softened my heart, made my conscience tender, gave me a holy reverence of the name of God, and a dread of sinning against him; and, so far as I felt their power, they humbled, melted, and broke me down in love and sorrow at his dear feet." Then, how can we say they are dangerous as tending to presumption, if we have felt anything of their efficacy and power, and know, by experience, that they produce self-distrust, humility, brokenness, and godly fear?

4. But may they not lead to sin? If we believe we are elect, may we not live as we wish, and walk in all manner of ungodliness and evil, as being certain of our salvation, whatever we do or whatever we leave undone? Here, again, we must come to spiritual experience. Does the child of grace find them to have this licentious tendency, when a powerful impression of their truth and blessedness rests upon his soul as with a cloud of grace and glory? When he views a bleeding Lamb upon the cross; when he sees by the eye of faith the bloody sweat falling in big drops from the dear Redeemer's brow in the gloomy garden; when love and mercy unfold their treasures through the groans, sighs, and agonies of the suffering Son of God- for this is the channel through which these mercies come- it is at the foot of the cross these blessings are learned; I ask, when the child of God has a view of these precious truths as sealed by a Savior's blood and witnessed by the Spirit's testimony, does he find that they encourage him to live sinfully, and thus trample upon the blood of the cross, crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame? Do these living truths harden his heart, make sin less hateful, and holiness less desirable? No; on the contrary, every child of grace who has ever felt the presence and power of God in his soul, can truly and feelingly say that these precious truths have a sanctifying influence, a holy tendency, that they draw from sin instead of leading into sin; and that the more he sees and feels of a Savior's dying love, the more he hates sin and the more he hates himself as a sinner.

What then shall we say of, or to these things? We dare not say they are not true; we dare not say they are not to be proclaimed; we dare not say they are dangerous; we dare not say they are licentious. But what shall we say? I have shown the negative side- have I nothing to say on the affirmative? Must we be put wholly upon the defensive? Let us see.

B. We say then that they are blessedly true. But how do we know they are blessedly true? Is it because we see them, read them, study them as written by the pen of the Holy Spirit in God's word? That is one reason I freely admit. There they are revealed as with a ray of light- there they shine in all their own effulgence, beaming forth with a clearness with which no human pen could have invested them. But will

that suffice? Do I want no more no better evidence? I am glad, so far, of that; I highly prize that, and am often obliged to fall back upon it as a firm support against unbelief or infidelity. But will that satisfy me, fully satisfy me? It will not. I want something more strong, more powerful, more convincing, more confirming than that. Then what do I want? I want to know that they are the truths of God in a peculiar way- a very peculiar way, one so peculiar that none can know it but by the power of the Spirit. I want, then, to know that they are the truths of God by one of these three peculiar ways. I call them peculiar ways, because they differ from each other; not in nature but in degree, and thus are so far distinct.

1. The highest, the best, and the most blessed way of knowing them is by the INTERNAL WITNESS of the Spirit to my spirit that they are God's own truths, and that I, even I, have a personal, eternal, and indisputable interest in them. If then the Lord the Spirit graciously speaks them into my heart, and reveals them with power, unction, and savor to my soul, that is God's own express testimony to their reality and blessedness; and this is the highest witness we can have of the truth as it is in Jesus, for it is the Spirit's inward teaching, testimony, and seal; as we read, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16); and, again, "In whom also, after you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." (Ephes. 1:13, 14.)

But is there no other knowledge of the truth but this? Can all rise up into this firm security and full certainty? Do all receive the full witness of the Spirit? Are all favored with the sweet assurance of faith? Do all know the sealing testimony of the Spirit of God? Surely not. There are many who really fear God who cannot and do not rise up into the sweet assurance of faith, nor have the sealing witness of the Spirit in their breast, and yet do know the truth so far as the Lord has shown it them. How then do they know it? Are there two kinds of knowledge? No; not in kind, but there are in degree, as the apostle speaks of their being "differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God which works all in all." (1 Cor. 12:5, 6.) They may know it then by one or both of those two things, which always attend God's truth as made known to the soul by divine power.

2. The first is, that whenever truth comes with divine power into the heart, it LIBERATES. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) Thus there may be here present some that have not received the Spirit as sealing home the word of God with his own heavenly witness upon their breast, who yet may have so far received the love of the truth into their hearts as to experience something of its sweet liberating power. Have you never, at the throne of grace, felt the power of God's truth upon your heart communicating liberty of access, encouraging you to pour out your soul before the Lord with some inward testimony that your prayers were accepted? This was just what Hannah felt when a word from Eli's mouth dropped with power into her heart. It liberated her from her sadness, and gave her a testimony that the God of Israel would grant her the petition which she had asked of him. This gave her rest and peace.

Again, have you never, as you have sat under the sound of the gospel, felt an inward testimony that it was true by the liberty it gave you from your many pressing doubts and fears, your discouragements and hard bondage and guilty apprehensions, under which you for the most part labor? The feeling might not last long, but while it lasted, it was in you a spirit of liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." And though you might not rise up to the full assurance of faith, so as to be filled with all joy and peace in believing, yet, having experienced a measure of the liberating influence of God's truth upon your heart, you could set to your seal that it was the truth, and that you had received the love of it into your soul.

3. But there is another way also whereby we may know these precious truths in vitality and power; and that is, by the SANCTIFYING influence which they produce upon the soul under the anointing of the Holy

Spirit. "Sanctify them through your truth," said our blessed Lord to his heavenly Father, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples; "your word is truth." (John 17:17.) Whenever the word of truth comes home with power to the heart, it carries with it a sanctifying influence. It draws the affections upwards; it fixes the heart upon heavenly things; Jesus is viewed by the eye of faith at the right hand of God, and every tender desire of a loving bosom flows forth toward him as "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one." This view of Christ, as the King in his beauty, has a sanctifying influence upon the soul, communicating holy and heavenly feelings, subduing the power of sin, separating from the world and worldly objects, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Now just see whether you know anything of the power and preciousness of heavenly truth by an experience of it in any of these three different ways- the witness of the Spirit to your spirit in his sealing testimony; or having felt its liberating influence; or knowing its sanctifying effects? Not indeed that these three evidences can ever be separated, but there may be in them different degrees, and as it were stages of divine testimony. But if you can find these three evidences, or any one of them, in your bosom, what shall you say to these things? "Say of them?" you reply- "That they are blessedly true, for I have felt their power in my own breast." Whatever then others may say to them, or of them, that they are false, or should be kept back, or are dangerous, or pernicious, you can stand up before God and man with an honest conscience and undaunted front and testify to their divine reality.

C. But, again, what more shall we say to these things? Why, we shall say of them that they are exceedingly SUITABLE to the wants and woes of a needy sinner; that in this chapter there is everything adapted to the necessities of one truly convinced of his sins and thoroughly sensible of his lost and ruined condition; who is drawn by the power of God to the footstool of mercy, and comes unto the throne of grace that he may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. How suitable to such a guilty, condemned sinner is the declaration, that "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." How suitable to such is the testimony that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes him free from the law of sin and death. How suitable to such that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. How suitable to such that the Spirit helps his infirmities, teaches him how to pray, and himself intercedes for him and in him with groanings which cannot be uttered. How suitable to such that all things work together for good to those who love God, and are called according to his purpose. I do not mean that the poor, convinced sinner can lay hold of these blessings until they are brought into his heart by the power of God; but I am showing you their suitability to his wants and woes; and if his faith cannot rise up into the spiritual enjoyment of them, he can yet believe in their exceeding suitability to his forlorn, miserable condition.

D. But faith goes beyond their suitability when drawn forth into living exercise upon them, and is able in some measure to realize and appropriate them. Faith, then, views them as rich in comfort and filled with sweet consolation. For how consoling it is to a cast-down soul to believe that there is no condemnation for him from a broken law, from the holiness of God, from his tremendous justice and his dreadful indignation, as being in Christ Jesus safe from every storm. What consolation to the poor, broken-hearted child of God, to find and feel that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes him free from that law of sin and death in his carnal mind, which is his constant plague and hourly vexation. How comforting to believe that he is under the guidings and leadings of the blessed Spirit, and thus has an evidence of being a son of God. How full too of consolation to find the Spirit helping his infirmities, and interceding for him with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And is not this, too, replete with consolation to every one who loves God, to believe that all things, however painful or distressing to the flesh, are working together for his good? What consolation also is

there in the belief that he, being called according to God's purpose, has a saving interest in his eternal fore-knowledge, his fixed and immutable predestination, so that nothing can change the purposes of mercy and grace which God has towards him! How blessed too is the thought and sweet assurance that he is justified freely by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and is in a sense already glorified by having received into his bosom a measure of Christ's glory!

E. But, again, faith says, "How GLORIFYING are these divine truths to God!" How they put the crown upon the Mediator's head, to whom alone it rightly belongs, and whose glory fills the heavens. Rightly viewed, every link in this heavenly chain brings glory to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. How glorious in God to set the sinner free from all condemnation, as being in Christ Jesus. How glorious in God to give him the Spirit to help his infirmities and to teach him how to pray. How glorious in God to make all things work together for his good. So might I run through the whole chain from beginning to end and show how the glory of God is reflected, as with a heavenly radiance from every part; but I forbear, and yet cannot but mention the last link which binds the Church of God fast on to the throne of glory; for how glorious it is that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate her from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thus Faith answers the Inquiry by clasping to her bosom these glorious and heavenly truths, and says, "How suitable are they to all my sins and sorrows; how they distill consolation into my burdened spirit; how adapted they are to every season of darkness and distress; how they come down to the groaning of the spirit in the first cry of mercy, and how they soar with the sweetest assurance, as if borne up on eagles' wings to the very gate of heaven!" And if faith can say this, what more can or need faith to say? This, then, is faith's answer to the Inquiry, 'What shall we say to these things?' Faith has spoken, if I have rightly heard and rightly interpreted her voice; and O may that voice find a responsive echo in every believing heart here present.

II. Next we come to faith's firm standing-ground.

Faith has found in these heavenly truths firm ground on which she can plant her foot; for only as faith can stand upon this firm ground can she lift up her mighty voice and send the challenge throughout all creation, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

What words are these! How the apostle here seems to throw the gauntlet down- to hurl defiance against sin, Satan, and the world- to stand with his foot firm upon the ground of God's eternal love, and, in the confidence of faith, undauntedly look in the face every foe and every fear, and boldly say to them all, as if bidding them do their worst, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

A. But the question may arise in many a throbbing breast, "Is God for ME? I know if God is for me, none can be against me. But I know also," the trembling heart adds, "if God is against me, then none can be for me." You speak right. If God is for you, not all the men on earth nor all the fiends of hell can keep your soul out of heaven. And if God is against you, not all the men on earth nor all the absolution of priests can keep your soul out of hell. This, therefore, is the point- the narrow point to be decided in each man's conscience, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" But O, if God is against us, who can be for us? Take both sides; look at each face of the medal. There is a pro and there is a con; there is a victory and there is a defeat; there is a winning the crown and there is a losing it forever. Examine, then, both sides- see on which you stand; and before you lift up your voice and say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" get good ground for your feet, that they may be on the rock and not on the sand. Have some clear testimony that

God is for you; and then you can look a frowning world in the face, hurl defiance at Satan, and appeal to the gospel against the law, and to the blood of sprinkling against an evil conscience. I shall, then, as the Lord may enable, look at both these sides, and show what it is for God to be against you, and for God to be for you; and then you will be able to see how far you can join hand in hand with Faith as she stands upon the vantage-ground of the text, and lift up your voice on high in union with hers, "If God is for us, who can be against us!"

1. Are you in the world? Then God is not for you, for you are not for God. We may lay this down as a broad principle, that those who are for God, God is for them; and that those who are against God, God is against them. That is the broad principle, which is laid down in the unerring word of truth as a rigid criterion, from which there is no deviation. But let me explain myself a little more clearly. By being in the world, I do not mean being engaged in business or in any lawful calling, for we have all, or at least most of us, to earn our daily bread either by the sweat of our brow or the sweat of our brain. We may be in the world, and yet not of the world; for as the apostle speaks, we must needs go out of the world, if we are to have nothing whatever to do with it. But I mean being in the world with our heart and affections so as to love it and feel it to be our very home and element. Does not John say? "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15); and does not James declare in the strongest language what the friendship of the world is? "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4.) If, then, you are a friend of the world, you are an enemy of God; and if you are an enemy of God, you are against God; and certainly, in your present state, God is against you. But what will you do in the day of visitation? how will it be with you on the bed of death? and how will you stand before the tribunal of the Most High in the great and terrible day, if you live and die an enemy of God?

2. Are you living in sin? Are you guilty of ungodly practices secretly or openly? Is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life prevalent, not only in your bosom but in your conduct? Then, certainly God is not for you; for you are against God. For all these things "are not of the Father, but of the world, and the world passes away, and the lust thereof- but he who does the will of God abides forever."

3. Are you dead in trespasses and sins? Has no work of grace ever passed upon your heart? Then you are an enemy and an alien, and that by wicked works; and if an enemy and an alien, God is not for you, for you are not for God. You are in league with God's enemies, for what is such an enemy to God as sin- that evil thing which he hates? If, then, bound hand and foot in carnality and death, you are lying in all the guilt and ruin of the Adam fall, God is against you, and will ever be against you, unless he has some secret purpose of mercy toward you not yet revealed; but in your present state, God is certainly against you; for what friendship or union can there be between a living God and a soul dead in sin?

4. Are you an enemy to God's truth? Are the things I have brought forward this evening hateful to your heart? Have they kindled enmity, dislike, and rebellion in your breast as I brought them forward, and made you almost hate me for sounding them in your ears? How then can you believe that God is for you, if you hate God's truth, and are so bold as actually to deny, which you must do to justify yourself, what is written in the word of God as with a ray of divine light? Are you not manifesting yourself as an enemy of God if you are an enemy to God's truth, and fighting with malice in your breast against his holy word? Then God is against you.

5. Are you displaying any enmity against the people of God, the servants of God, or the ways of God? Then God is against you, for all these things are dear to him as the apple of his eye; and if God is against

you, how can you dream for a moment that he will ever be for you, unless there be a mighty change, so mighty that all these old things shall pass away, and all things become new?

B. But I will leave this part of our subject. It is a part, and a very necessary part, of my ministry that I should urge these things upon the conscience, and thus rightly divide the word of truth and "take forth the precious from the vile," and so be as God's mouth, if perhaps the Lord may apply the warning word with power to some poor sinner's heart. But let me rather come to a more pleasing part of the subject, and show who are on God's side, for whom God is, and who, as thus favored and blessed, can stand upon that firm ground of faith of which I have been already speaking.

Taking, then, the broad line of truth which I have just laid down, we may draw from it this conclusion, that if you are for God, God is for you.

This primary truth being laid down as a broad principle, I have now to work it out in harmony with the Scriptures and the experience of the saints, for otherwise we may fall into some dangerous mistakes. Do not many believe that they are for God both whose principles and practice contradict every part of God's word? The blessed Lord himself told his disciples that the time would come that whoever killed them would think that he did God service. When the Ziphites came to Saul promising to deliver David into the king's hand, he blessed them in the name of the Lord. (1 Sam. 23:21.) And did not his persecuting namesake verily think with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth? (Acts 26:9.)

Thus men's thoughts are no guide and men's zeal no guarantee that they are doing the Lord's work or are for God, for when we come to work the problem out and show it up in all its various bearings, we soon see what room there is for self-deception, religious delusion, and superstitious zeal, none of which stand before the light of truth or the teaching of God in the heart. Let us, then, look at this important matter in the light of the testimony of the word without and of the Spirit within. I may almost use Jehu's words here, when he came as the avenging servant of the Lord, and, lifting up my voice, say, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" Or, to speak in simpler language, "Who among you are for God?" Let me give you some marks by which you may know the state of the case.

1. Has the Lord ever by his own lips given you a testimony that he is for you? But look at the connection of our text- "If God is for us, who can be against us?" You will observe that he is speaking not generally and universally, but of a certain number whom he calls "we" and "us." Now, if you will trace the connection, you will see that by "we" and "us" he means those who love God; those who were foreknown of God in eternal prescience, predestinated by eternal decree, called by awakening grace, justified by the imputation of Christ's obedience, and glorified by receiving of his Spirit. These are the "we" and the "us" for whom God is.

Then look at these things in the light of the testimony as God has here revealed them, and take the following as your first mark and evidence- "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God." To love God is, then, a grand and essential evidence that he is for us. Now look and see whether, in the light of this outward testimony, you can find any evidence in your bosom in the light of the inward testimony that you love God. You say, perhaps, "I hope I do," or "I would be very sorry if I did not;" or "What do you take me for to think that I do not love God?" But this may be only fencing with the question and evading the point of the sword.

Let me then further ask, Was his love ever shed abroad in your heart? Was Jesus ever made precious to your soul? Can you say, with Peter- it may be with a trembling and yet with sincere heart- "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you?" Was his name ever to you like the ointment poured forth? Were your affections ever fixed upon him as the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one? And though this may have been more deeply and powerfully felt years ago, and you may have left your first love, yet have the impressions of his beauty and blessedness been so wrought into the very substance of your soul, that you do from time to time feel the flowing of affection towards him under those gracious revivals with which the Lord may be pleased to favor you? If you can lay your hand upon that evidence, God is for you.

2. But all cannot lay their hand with equal firmness upon this grand distinguishing evidence. Take another, then, in connection with our test- "Called according to God's purpose." Have you any testimony that God has called you by his grace, quickened your soul into divine life, brought you under the curse of a condemning law, given you repentance for your sins, raised up a sigh and a cry in your breast for a sense of his pardoning love, brought you to the footstool of mercy, given you faith to believe in his dear Son, with any sweet hope that he has begun a gracious work upon your heart? Can you look back upon any never-to-be-forgotten period when the Lord, by his special and omnipotent grace, quickened your soul into life divine? for I do believe we can never forget the first sensations of the Spirit of God in his quickening movements upon the soul; when he, to use the figure of Moses, flutters over it as an eagle which stirs up her nest, infusing and communicating a new and heavenly life, as when in creation he moved upon the face of the waters, communicating life and energy to dead chaos.

Surely if we ever felt the mighty hand of the Lord upon us, we can never forget the memorable time when he was first pleased to communicate divine light and life to our dead souls, to pour out upon us the Spirit of grace and of supplications, to separate us from the world, to bring us to his feet with confessions and supplications, opening up and revealing eternal realities with a weight and a power that they entered into our deepest and most inward thoughts and feelings. Can you look back to such a time? I hope I can now, more than thirty-five years ago. Then God is for you; and if God is for you, then you can, as he is pleased to strengthen your faith, look right through that blessed chain with all its heavenly links, and see how he foreknew you before the foundation of the world, and wrote your name in the Book of Life.

3. But so far as you can clearly see your call by grace you can also see your justification, for "whom he called them he also justified," which brings us to another evidence to point out those for whom God is. This is a point which needs some examination, for on it depends your title to heaven. Have you, then, ever seen Christ by the eye of faith as justifying you from all things "from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses?" What are your views and feelings on this important point? Did you ever believe in Christ's righteousness and see it by the eye of faith as the obedience active and passive of the incarnate Son of God? Did you ever receive it as your justifying robe; and casting aside and renouncing your own as filthy rags, did you ever stretch forth the right hand of your faith and bring it down, so to speak, upon you as your covering garment? Did you ever feel the sentence of justification in your bosom, so as to see yourself complete in Christ without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? Then God is for you.

4. Have you ever felt any measure of glorification? for this follows upon justification- "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." But you will perhaps say, "I thought that this was future; that now we are to suffer with Christ that we might hereafter be glorified together." That is true; and yet, in a sense, God glorifies his people even here. Did not the Lord say of his disciples to his heavenly Father? "And the glory which you gave me I have given them;" not "I will give them," but "I have given," already given. Does not Peter also

say? "If you be reproached for the name of Christ happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Pet. 4:14.) Do we not also read? "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Psalm. 84:11); as if they were so connected that they are given together- as has been well said, "Grace is glory begun, and glory is grace finished."

When Christ, then, is revealed to the soul, a measure of his glory descends into the breast, as the apostle beautifully speaks- "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18.) Have you, then, ever felt a measure of that heavenly glory descending into your bosom, as "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?" If you can look back upon any visitation of that nature from God, then you can raise up a blessed testimony that God is for you.

Calling, justification, and glorification are the three grand evidences of the possession of eternal life; and short of these evidences the child of grace can never really rest. He may have his hopes and expectations, be looking out for better days, and sometimes feel almost assured of his eternal safety; but short of a full and clear evidence of his heavenly calling, his full justification, and his eternal glorification, he never can rest satisfied nor feel certain that God is for him.

But now comes faith's blessed Standing-ground- "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Does the apostle mean here that none are against the saints of God? that all men and all things are in their favor? that they sail to heaven with a flowing tide and a prosperous wind, and reach the heavenly shore with scarcely an adverse gale? No; he cannot, he does not mean that; for such a view would contradict the whole testimony of God. But when he puts forth this triumphant challenge, what he means is this- Who can be against them so as to do them any real harm? Who can be against them to pluck them out of God's hand? Who can be against them to defeat the purposes of God, and untie the knot of predestination which has fastened them so firmly, so indissolubly to his eternal throne? Who can be so against them that their calling, their justification, and their glorification should be all disannulled, and that they should perish in their sins? This is the gist of his challenge; not that none are against them, but none so as to succeed in their malicious designs. Let us, then, now run over some of the things which are against them, and yet none of which shall eventually hurt them.

1. The world is against them; but this cannot hurt them, for it is already a beaten foe. "In the world you shall have tribulation- but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.) And we, too, shall overcome it in and by him. "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world- and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4.) If we come out of the world, give ourselves to Christ, and manifest our faith by a godly life, the world will not, cannot be our friend. And why? Because we condemn it. This was the offence of Noah, that, "moved with fear, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world" (Heb.11:7); for every nail which he drove into the ark testified to his separation from and condemnation of it, as being under the wrath of God. If then, like Noah, moved with fear, we are preparing an ark- the ark Christ- to the saving of our soul, we shall thereby condemn the world; and as this is an offence which the world cannot endure, it will rise up in arms against us, and to the utmost of its power, slander, persecute, and, if it could, destroy us. We are not to expect better treatment from it than our Lord and Master. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

2. But are all the professed children of God for us? Why, we know that some of the bitterest enemies we have had to encounter have been those who profess to be on the Lord's side. Professors of religion have always been the deadliest enemies of the children of God. Who were so opposed to the blessed Lord as the Scribes and Pharisees? It was not the people generally, but their religious teachers and leaders who crucified the Lord of glory. And so in every age the religionists of the day have been the hottest and bitterest persecutors of the Church of Christ. Nor is the case altered now. The more the children of God are firm in the truth, the more they enjoy its power, the more they live under its influence, and the more tenderly and conscientiously they walk in godly fear, the more will the professing generation of the day hate them with a deadly hatred.

Let us not think that we can disarm it by a godly life; for the more that we walk in the sweet enjoyment of heavenly truth and let our light shine before men as having been with Jesus, the more will this draw down their hatred and contempt.

3. But what is far harder to bear, the very saints of God sometimes may even be against us; and against us sometimes justly and rightly, sometimes unjustly and wrongly. We may be left in an evil moment to say or do things that may bring the frown of God's saints upon us, and their just frown too. From an inconsistent walk, from unfitting conduct, we must justly incur the displeasure and disapprobation of the saints of God; and thus the very family of God may be justly against us, and would not act faithfully to God or faithfully to their own consciences if they were for us. Religion is no party thing. Its very character, as being "from above," is to be "without partiality and without hypocrisy." We must not expect, therefore, that the saints of God will approve of our bad doings and side with us against the Lord- they have higher claims than our friendship or favor, and can only be on our side as we are on the Lord's side. If our conscience be tender, we shall feel this acutely; and though our flesh may shrink from their reproofs, yet shall we find it in the end a kindness and "an excellent oil, which shall not break our head" (Psalm. 141:5), but rather soften our heart into contrition and confession.

But sometimes the saints are unjustly and wrongly against us. Prejudice, pride, envy, jealousy, groundless suspicion, ill-will, and the wretched enmity of the carnal mind may work in the breast of the saint of God, and vent itself in acts of unkindness or words that deeply cut and wound our spirit. For, as Deer says, "From sinner and from saint, he meets with many a blow." Still, still faith may take up the word, "If God is for us who can be against us?"

4. But again, is not the law of God against us? Does not that require perfect obedience? Does not that curse and condemn not only every ungodly word and action, but even every ungodly thought, for "the thought of foolishness is sin." (Prov. 24:9.) But shall that be so against the saint of God as to condemn him to hell? If our blessed Lord has fulfilled the law, endured the curse, obeyed it in all its demands, and is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes" (Rom. 10:4), what charges can it bring against the saint of God for his eternal condemnation? Can it demand a debt already paid, "First at my bleeding Surety's hands, and then again at mine?"

What is the very first sound of the gospel trumpet which discourses such sweet music all through this chapter? "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus;" and if "no condemnation," the law cannot be heard when it would speak against him in the court of Justice before the Sovereign Majesty of heaven.

5. But is not even his own conscience often against him? I freely and honestly confess that I often have a guilty conscience; and I know that when this is the case it is more against us than anybody in the world. Its inward voice speaks louder than any outward one. Few ministers, in our day at least, have had more evil things said and written against them than myself; and yet none of their hard speeches have troubled, though they might have vexed me, when my own conscience did not add its silent testimony. And the reason is, because when conscience is against me I cannot believe that God is for me. I much admire what the Holy Spirit speaks by the pen of John. He assumes two cases- one where conscience condemns us, and the other where it condemns us not; and he makes a gracious provision for each case- "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John 3:20, 21.)

Now take the first case as applicable to our present point- a condemning conscience. What gracious provision is there for that? "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." His love in the gift of his dear Son; his free pardon of all our sins, though his atoning blood, and full justification of our persons through his righteousness; his acceptance of us in the Beloved; and his irreversible purpose to save- in all these unspeakable mercies "God is greater than our heart," which, through guilt, sinks into doubt and fear; and "he knows all things," so as to cleanse a guilty conscience by the application of atoning blood and pardoning love. And he knows also what are the real desires of our heart towards himself, amid and under all the condemnation of a guilty conscience, and that that still beats true to him beneath it all. The other and happier case where the heart does not condemn I cannot now enter into.

What, then, remains, if neither the world, nor the professor, nor even the saint, nor a broken law, nor a guilty conscience; if none of these singly, nor all of them collectively are or can be against us, who or what remains that we should dread? May we not, if we know anything of these truths by divine teaching and divine testimony, stand with faith upon her own firm standing-ground; and not in bold presumption, but in holy, humble trust and confidence, meekly and quietly say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

As regards my own experience, since I have been called into the field of action to fight the good fight of faith, I have not been much afraid of man. I hope the Lord has, in some measure at least, in my contending earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, set me free from that fear of man which brings a snare. But I frankly confess to one fear- I have often been terribly afraid of God. I hope he has planted in my heart a filial fear of his great name, but, mixed with that, I have often found and felt much slavish fear- that wretched fear of which John truly says that "it has torment;" for I believe it more or less torments all the family of God. But there is also a blessed remedy for this- the love of God which casts it out; not so as never to return, but from its seat of prevailing influence and power. In the sight, then, of all those enemies subdued or silenced, may we not say, "If the Lord be for us, who, who on earth or in hell, can be against us?"

III. But we now come to FAITH'S SOLID ARGUMENT; for faith can argue- not indeed according to the logic of the schools; not according to the system of Aristotle which I learned at Oxford, nor according to the mathematical demonstrations studied at Cambridge, but with that heavenly logic of which Job speaks when he says, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:3, 4.) Here, then, is faith's argument- "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall not he with him also freely give us all things?"

A. Let us see whether we cannot, with God's help and blessing, gather up the substance of faith's convincing argument here. What is its firm basis! The gift of God's own Son. But do observe with me the way in which the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the apostle, expresses this gift, and mark his language- "He who spared not his own Son." I do not wish to dwell upon these words in the spirit of controversy, but in the spirit of truth; yet I cannot help drawing your attention to the striking way in which our blessed Lord is here described; and who, I ask, that reads those words with an impartial eye can deny that the Lord Jesus is spoken of here as God's own Son? Mark the beauty, the force, the exquisite pathos which reaches the very heart in the words "His own Son!" Deny that our blessed Lord is God's own Son; take him with unhallowed hands out of the Father's bosom; say that he is not his own peculiar, as the word literally means, his own proper and only-begotten Son, and where is the force and beauty of the argument? where the tender pathos which drops, as with heaven's dew, into a believing breast, "He who spared not his own Son?"

How this word of grace and truth seems to carry up our believing thoughts into the very courts of bliss before time was, or the dayspring knew its place! How it gives us a view of the Son of God lying in his Father's bosom from the foundation of the world! And how it gives us to see, if I may so speak, the struggle in the bosom of the Father between holding his own Son in his bosom and giving him up. "He who spared not his own Son"- as though, so to speak, there was that in the bosom of God which would have spared him, if he could possibly have done so. Had there been any other way whereby the Church could have been saved, sin pardoned, the law magnified, and God's justice glorified, that Son would have been spared. But there was no other possible way but by giving up his Son; and therefore, sooner than the law should be violated, his attributes infringed, and the Church eternally lost, "He spared not his own Son."

O you cold-hearted, unbelieving creatures- wretches, I may almost call you, who cavil and cavil, dispute and deny the noblest, most sublime mystery of godliness which ever God revealed or man believed, what shall I say unto you? O did you but see and know the beauty and blessedness, grace and glory of the only-begotten of the Father, you would believe, love, and adore him instead of seeking to rob him of his eternal birthright and dearest name. But if God's own testimony cannot convince you, how shall mine? I admit that it is a mystery; but "great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh;" and that Jesus should be God's own Son is no greater mystery than that God should take flesh. This mystery, with all its blessed results and consequences, will take eternity to unfold; but we may just drop a few thoughts upon the subject, moving with reverent spirit, and walking in the footsteps of revelation.

Look at the consequences which the fall introduced into the creation of God. See how it broke in upon his righteous character; how it tarnished, so to speak, the Majesty of heaven in his sovereign supremacy. Is not disobedience to a command, especially if wanton and willful, a casting contempt upon it? When a father bids a child, or a master a servant, do a thing, and the child or servant refuses to obey or does the exact contrary- is not this act of undeniable disobedience cool contempt of, if not a decided insult to lawful authority? Thus Adam's disobedience, of which the guilt and consequences stretch down to us, was an insult to the supreme authority of heaven's Lawgiver. If this were not atoned for, and as it were avenged and remedied, how could the supremacy of God be vindicated?

See, then, the impossibility of man being saved unless justice could be amply satisfied- unless the law could be fully obeyed- unless every perfection of Deity should be thoroughly harmonized. The angels had witnessed the fall of their apostate brethren; they had seen 'wrath without mercy' poured out upon those once bright and glorious spirits, who had become leagued together in the great transgression. Now if fallen men were to be spared, justice disregarded, and the law broken with impunity, what would have been the

thought of those angelic beings who stood when their brethren fell? That God was partial; that he sacrificed his justice to his mercy; that he was overborne with compassion to fallen man, though not to fallen angels, and did not care whether his attributes were sacrificed or not.

To secure, therefore, this indispensable point that none of his eternal attributes should suffer loss, that justice should have its due, and yet that mercy should prevail against judgment, God gave up the Son of his bosom that he might assume our nature into union with his own divine Person, and thus harmonize every perfection of Godhead, fulfill a broken law, bring in a perfect obedience, wash the Church in his own precious blood, and save her into the heights of heaven. To accomplish these wondrous purposes of wisdom and grace, there being no other way to execute them, God spared not his own Son.

B. But something more is intimated in our text as a part also of faith's argument. He "delivered him up for us all." What a world of meaning is contained in that expression "delivered him up;" for when God spared not his own Son, it was not merely that he should come into this lower world or take our nature into union with his own divine Person, which in itself would have been an act of infinite condescension; but it necessarily involved all the consequences which resulted therefrom, and which are intimated by the expression, "delivered him up." For what do the words imply?

1. First, that he should endure the deep humiliation and bitter pangs of the cross. A sacrifice was to be offered, blood to be shed, and he was to be the victim. Think of a tender father delivering with his own hands an only son to death. No less was it for God to deliver his own Son to bear our sins in his own body on the tree.

2. In suffering this, he was also to be delivered to the persecution of ungodly men, to the jeers, taunts, and sarcastic remarks of those who gazed upon him bleeding upon the cross and said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." This, as we find from Psalm 22, was no small part of the Redeemer's sufferings- "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those who see me laugh me to scorn- they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him- let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Psalm 22:6-8.)

3. He was delivered also to endure the temptations of Satan, that arch-fiend, that malignant spirit. I cannot here enlarge; but what a scene does it open to our astonished view that the foul fiend of hell should be permitted to hurl his fiery darts against the breast of God's co-equal Son!

4. But there is something deeper and more wondrous still, what far exceeds all human thought to enter into the sacred mystery- he was to be delivered to endure the tremendous wrath of his Father, the hidings of his face, and that bitter forsaking of the light of his countenance which wrung from his bosom that dolorous cry which shook the very foundations of earth- "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Now when we look at these solemn mysteries by the eye of faith, and see what God the Father delivered up his Son unto, when he spared him not, O what a view it gives us of the eternal, infinite love of God to a guilty race, to give up his Son, thus freely to die for their sins and to save them in himself with an everlasting salvation.

This, then, is faith's argument- If God did all this, what will he deny? He who has given the greater, will he withhold the less? How faith rises up here, and, drawing herself up to her full stature, speaks aloud for all the family of God, and says, "What? did God the Father spare not his own Son? Did he give him up freely to die for our sins? Will he, after this display of his super-abounding grace and infinite mercy, keep back anything from us that is really for our good? Will he not with him also freely give us all things?" What! "all

things?" Yes; all things that shall be for our good and for his glory; all things in providence that shall be for our good while we journey through this valley; all things in grace that shall be for our spiritual profit and consolation. Do we need faith in larger measure? He will give us that. Do we need hope to anchor more strongly within the veil? Will he not give us that also? Do we want to love him more who first loved us? Will he withhold that? Do we need support in affliction, deliverance out of temptation, consolation under the sorrows of life? Will he not freely give us all these things? Will he not be with us upon a dying bed when we shall need his presence most, and give us then and there what shall bear us up in the dark valley? Thus faith, standing upon this elevated ground, may look upon the wide horizon and say, "What is there which God will withhold from us when he has not spared his own Son?"

But it is not always or often that faith can use these arguments. Faith is sometimes very weak and can scarcely lift up her voice to use language like this. Still, faith's argument is the same, though she may not be able to use it with equal force; for the ground is still the same, whether faith be weak or strong, that if God has not spared his Son, but given him up for us all, he surely will freely, liberally, graciously, unreservedly give us all things.

Let us, then, gather up the fragments that nothing be lost; gather together the threads of this discourse, and see how it bears upon our experience and our hopes. The grand thing is to have this testimony sealed upon our breast, whose we are and whom we serve; on whose side we stand, and who is for us. If we can get that clearly settled in our bosom by the work and witness of the Holy Spirit, then everything follows. But while we are held in doubt and fear on whose side we stand and whether God is against us or for us, we cannot stand upon faith's ground, nor can we use faith's argument. How desirable then it is for every saint of God to have some inward testimony that God is for him. And how is this to be gained if not already possessed? By prayer and supplication; by looking to the Lord, wrestling with him, pouring out the heart before him, seeking his face, and begging of him from time to time to make it clear that God the Spirit has begun that sacred work upon the soul which he will never leave nor forsake until he has completed it.

As, then, the child of grace is favored with a sweet evidence that God is his Father and friend, he can take up first Faith's forcible Inquiry, "What shall we then say to these things?" then Faith's firm Standing-ground, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" and then Faith's solid Argument, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

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