

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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STRENGTHENING MEDICINE FOR GOD'S SERVANTS.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”—Joshua i. 5.

No doubt God had spoken to Joshua before. He had been a man of faith for many years, and his faith enabled him to distinguish himself by such simple truthfulness of character and thoroughly faithful obedience to the Lord's will, that he and another were the only two left of the whole generation that came up out of Egypt. “Faithful among the faithless found,” he survived where all else died; standing erect in full vigour, he might have been compared to a lone tree which spreads its verdant branches untouched by the axe which has levelled its fellows with the ground. But now Joshua was about to enter upon a new work: he had become king in Jeshurun instead of Moses, from a servant he had risen to be a ruler, and it now fell to his lot to lead the people across the Jordan, and marshal their forces for the conquest of the promised land. On the threshold of this high enterprise the Lord appears to his servant and says, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” When God's people come into fresh positions they shall have fresh revelations of his love. New dangers will bring new protections; new difficulties, new helps; new discouragements, new comforts; so that we may rejoice in tribulations also, because they are so many newly-opened doors of God's mercy to us. We will be glad of our extremities, because they are divine opportunities. What the Lord said to Joshua was particularly encouraging, and it came precisely when he needed it. Great was his peril, and great was the consolation of that word from the Lord of hosts, “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

We will waste no time in preface, but at once consider the divine promise. “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

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I. Observe here, first, THE SUITABILITY OF THE CONSOLATION WHICH THESE WORDS GAVE TO JOSHUA. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

This must have been very cheering to him *in reference to himself*. He knew Moses, and he must have had a very high esteem for him. He was a great man, one of a thousand; scarcely among all that have been born of woman has there arisen a greater than Moses. Joshua had been his servant, and no doubt considered himself to be very far inferior to that great lawgiver. A sense of his own weakness comes over a man all the more from being associated with a grander mind. If you mingle with your inferiors you are apt to grow vain; but closely associated with superior minds there is a far greater probability that you will become depressed, and may think even less of yourself than humility might require; for humility is, after all, only a right estimate of our own powers. Joshua, therefore, may possibly have been somewhat despondent under a very pressing sense of his own deficiencies; and this cheering assurance would meet his case,—"*I will not fail thee: though thou be less wise, or meek, or courageous than Moses, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*" If God be with our weakness it waxes strong; if he be with our folly it rises into wisdom; if he be with our timidity it gathers courage. It matters not how conscious a man may be of being nothing at all in himself, when he is conscious of the divine presence he even rejoices in his infirmity because the power of God doth rest upon him. If the Lord say unto the weakest man or woman here, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee," no craven thought will cross that ennobled spirit; that word will nerve the trembler with a lion-like courage which no adversary will be able to daunt.

The consolation given to Joshua would be exceedingly suitable *in the presence of his enemies*. He had spied out the land, and he knew it to be inhabited by giant races, men famous both for stature and strength. The sons of Anak were there, and other tribes, described as "great, and many, and tall." He knew that they were a warlike people, and expert in the use of destructive implements of war, such as brought terror upon men, for they had chariots of iron. He knew, too, that their cities were of colossal dimensions,—fortresses whose stones at this very day surprise the traveller, so that he asks what wondrous skill could have lifted those masses of rock into their places. The other spies had said that these Canaanites dwelt in cities that were walled up to heaven; and, though Joshua did not endorse that exaggeration, he was very well aware that the cities to be captured were fortresses of great strength, and the people to be exterminated were men of ferocious courage and great physical energy. Therefore the Lord said, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." What more was needed? Surely, in the presence of God, Anakim become dwarfs, strongholds become as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and chariots of iron are as thistle-down upon the hillside driven before the blast. What is strong against the Most High? What is formidable in opposition to Jehovah? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" They that be with us are more than they that be against us, when once the Lord of hosts is seen in our ranks. "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be

removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Though a host should encamp against us, our heart shall not fear: though war should rise against us, in this will we be confident.

This consolation, too, was *sufficient for all supplies*. Perhaps Joshua knew that the manna was no longer to fall. In the wilderness the supply of heavenly bread was continuous, but when they crossed the Jordan they must quarter on the enemy; and with the myriads of people that were under Joshua's command, the matter of providing for them must have been no trifle. According to some computations nearly three millions of people came up out of Egypt: I scarcely credit the computation, and am inclined to believe that the whole matter of the numbers of the Old Testament is not yet understood, and that a better knowledge of the Hebrew tongue will lead to the discovery that the figures have been frequently misunderstood; but still a very large number of people came with Joshua to the edge of the wilderness, and crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan. Who was to provide for all these hungry bands? Joshua might have said, "Shall all the flocks and the herds be slain for this great multitude, and will the sea yield up her fish, when the manna ceases? How shall these people be fed?" "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" was a supply which would meet all the demands of the commissariat. They might eat to the full, for God would find them food; their clothes might wax old upon them now that the miracle of the wilderness would cease, for new garments would be found for them in the wardrobes of their enemies. When the Lord opens all his granaries none shall lack for bread, and when he unlocks his wardrobes none shall go bare. So that there was no room for anxiety in Joshua's mind. As for himself, if weak, this made him strong; as for his enemies, if they were powerful this promise made him stronger than they; and as for the needs of Israel, if they were great, this promise supplied them all.

Surely this word must often have brought charming consolation to the heart of the son of Nun *when he saw the people failing him*. There was only the venerable Caleb left of all his comrades with whom he had shared the forty years' march through the great and terrible wilderness; Caleb and he were the last two sheaves of the great harvest, and they were both like shocks of corn fully ripe for the garner. Old men grow lonely, and small wonder is it if they do. I have heard them say that they live in a world where they are not known, now that, one by one, all their old friends are gone home, and they are left alone—like the last swallow of autumn when all its fellows have sought a sunnier clime. Yet the Lord says, "I will not forsake thee: I shall not die: I am ever with thee. Thy Friend in heaven will live on as long as thou dost." As for the generation which had sprung up around Joshua, they were very little better than their fathers; they turned back in the day of battle, even the children of Ephraim, when they were armed and carried bows. They were very apt to go aside into the most provoking sin. Joshua had as hard a task with them as Moses had, and it was enough to break the heart of Moses to have to do with them. The Lord seems to bid him put no confidence in them, neither to be discomfited if they should be false and treacherous:—"I will not fail thee: *they* may, but *I* will not. I will not forsake thee. They may

prove cowards and traitors, but I will not desert thee." Oh, what a blessed thing it is in a false and fickle world, where he that eats bread with us lifts up his heel against us, where the favourite counsellor becomes an Ahithophel, and turns his wisdom into crafty hate, to know that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," one who is faithful and gives us sure tokens of a love which many waters cannot quench.

I might thus dwell upon this point, and show that the consolatory promise has as many facets as a well-cut diamond, each one reflecting the light of divine consolation upon the eye of Joshua's faith. But we will come to other matters.

II. Secondly, AT WHAT TIMES MAY WE CONSIDER THIS PROMISE TO BE SPOKEN TO OURSELVES? It is all very well to listen to it, as spoken to Joshua, but, O God, if thou wouldst speak thus to us how consoled would we be! Dost thou ever do so? May *we* be so bold as to believe that thus thou comfortest *us*? Beloved, the whole run of Scripture speaks to the same effect to men of like mind with Joshua. No Scripture is of private interpretation: no text has spent itself upon the person who first received it. God's comforts are like wells, which no one man or set of men can drain dry, however mighty may be their thirst. A well may be opened for Hagar, but that well is never closed, and any other wanderer may drink at it. The fountain of our text first gushed forth to refresh Joshua, but if we are in Joshua's position, and are of his character, we may bring our water-pots and fill them to the brim.

Let me mention when I think we may safely feel that God says to us, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Surely it is when we are *called to do God's work*. Joshua's work was the Lord's work. It was God who had given the country to the people, and who had said, "I will drive out the Canaanite from before thee," and Joshua was God's executioner, the sword in the hand of the Lord for the driving out of the condemned races. He was not entering upon a quixotic engagement of his own choosing and devising; he had not elected himself, and selected his own work, but God had called him to it, put him in the office, and bidden him do it, and therefore he said to him, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Brother, are you serving God? Do you live to win souls? Is it your grand object to be the instrument in God's hand of accomplishing his purposes of grace to the fallen sons of men? Do you know that God has put you where you are, and called you to do the work to which your life is dedicated? Then go on in God's name, for, as surely as he called you to his work, you may be sure that to you also he says, as indeed to all his servants, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." But I hear some of you say, "We are not engaged in work of such a kind that we could precisely call it 'work for God.'" Well, brethren, but are you *engaged in a work which you endeavour to perform to God's glory*? Is your ordinary and common trade one which is lawful—one concerning which you have no doubt as to its honest propriety; and in carrying it on do you follow right principles only? Do you endeavour to glorify God in the shop? Do you make the bells on the horses holiness to the Lord? It would not be possible for all of us to be preachers, for where would be the

hearers? Many a man would be very much out place if he were to leave his ordinary calling, and devote himself to what is so unscripturally called "the ministry." The fact is, the truest religious life is that in which a man follows the ordinary calling of life in the spirit of a Christian. Now, are you so doing? If so, you are as much ministering before God in measuring out yards of calico, or weighing pounds of tea, as Joshua was in slaying Hivites, and Jebusites, and Hittites. You are as much serving God in looking after your own children, and training them up in God's fear, and minding the house, and making your household a church for God, as you would be if you had been called to lead an army to battle for the Lord of hosts. And you may take this promise for yourself, for the path of duty is the path where this promise is to be enjoyed. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, mark you, if you are living for yourself, if you are living for gain, if selfishness be the object of life, or if you are pursuing an unhallowed calling, if there is anything about your mode of business which is contrary to the mind and will of God and sound doctrine, you cannot expect God to aid you in sin, nor will he do it. Neither can you ask him to pander to your lusts, and to assist you in the gratification of your own selfishness. But if you can truly say, "I live to the glory of God, and the ordinary life that I lead I desire to consecrate to his glory entirely," then may you take this promise home to yourself, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

But, mark you, there is another matter. *We must*, if we are to have this promise, *take God into our calculations*. A great many persons go about their supposed lifework without thinking about God. I have heard of one who said everybody had left him, and some one said, "But surely, as a Christian, God has not failed you?" "Oh," said he, "I forgot God." I am afraid there are many who call themselves Christians, and yet forget God in common life. Among all the forces that a man calculates upon when he engages in an enterprise, he should never omit the chief force: but often it is so with us. We enquire, "Am I competent for such a work? I ought to undertake it, but am I competent?" And straightway there is a calculation made of competences. And in these competences there is no item put down, "Item, the promise of a living God. Item, the guidance of the Spirit." These are left out of the calculation. Remember that if you wilfully omit them you cannot expect to enjoy them. You must walk by faith if you are to enjoy the privileges of the faithful. "The just shall live by faith," and if you begin to live by sense, you shall join the weeping and the wailing of those who have gone to broken cisterns, and have found them empty; and your lips shall be parched with thirst, because you have forgotten the fountain of living waters to which you should have gone. Do you, brethren and sisters, habitually take God into your calculations? Do you calculate upon omniscient direction and omnipotent aid? I have heard of a certain captain who had led his troops into a very difficult position, and he knew that on the morrow he should want them all to be full of courage; and so, disguising himself, at nightfall he went round their tents, and listened to their conversations, until he heard one of them say, "Our captain is a very great

warrior, and has won many victories, but he has this time made a mistake ; for see, there are so many thousands of the enemy, and he has only so many infantry, so many cavalry, and so many guns." The soldier made out the account, and was about to sum up the scanty total when the captain, unable to bear it any longer, threw aside the curtain of the tent, and said, "And how many do you count *me* for, sir?"—as much as to say, "I have won so many battles that you ought to know that my skill can multiply battalions by handling them." And so the Lord hears his servants estimating how feeble they are, and how little they can do, and how few are their helpers ; and I think I hear him rebukingly say, "But how many do you count your God for? Is he never to come into your estimate? You talk of providing, and forget the God of providence ; you talk of working, but forget the God who worketh in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure." How often in our enterprises have prudent people plucked us by the sleeve, and said we have gone too far. Could we reckon upon being able to carry out what we had undertaken? No, we could not reckon upon it, except that we believed in God, and with God all things are possible. If it be his work, we may venture far beyond the shallowness of prudence into the great deeps of divine confidence, for God who warrants our faith, will honour it ere long. Oh, Christian, if you can venture, and feel it to be no venture, then may you grasp the promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." When you are on your own feet you may dash against a stone, when you are running in your own strength you may faint ; but "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Now, remember, that we may take this promise when we are engaged in God's work, or when we turn our ordinary business into God's work, and when we do really by faith take God into our calculations ; but *we must also be careful that we walk in God's ways*. Observe that the next verse to the text runs thus, "Be strong, and of a good courage," and then the seventh verse is a singular one, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee : turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

"Be strong and very courageous." What for? To obey! Does it want courage and strength to obey? Why, now-a-days, that man is thought to be courageous who will have no laws of God to bind him ; and he is thought to be strong-minded who ridicules revelation. But let us rest assured that he is truly strong of mind and heart who is content to be thought a fool, and sticks to the good old truth, and keeps the good old way. There are enough now-a-days of "intellectual" preachers ; some of us may be excused from this vaunted intellectualism that we may preach the simple gospel. There are enough who can becloud theology with the chill fogs of "modern thought ;" we are satisfied to let the word speak for itself without misting it with our thinkings. I believe it wants more courage and strength of mind to keep to the old things, than to follow after novel and airy speculations. We must not expect the God of truth to be with us if we go away from God and his truth.

Be careful how you live. To watch every putting down of your foot is a good thing. Be exact and precise as to the divine rule, careless about man's opinion, and even defying it wherein it is error; but dutiful to God's law, bowing before it, yielding your whole nature in cheerful subservience to every command of the Most High. He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely, and to him the promise is, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Begin your life-course with a policy of your own, and you may get through it how you can; be wise in your own conceit, and trust to your own judgment, and the promotion of fools will be your reward; but be simple enough to do God's will only, to leave consequences and to follow truth, and integrity and uprightness will preserve you. Go on doing right at all costs, and the right will repay you all it costs you, and the righteous Lord will be true to his word, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

These, then, I think, are the conditions under which any believing man may take to himself the words of our text.

III. But now, thirdly, let us consider WHAT THIS PROMISE DOES NOT PRECLUDE. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." We must not misunderstand this gracious word, lest we be disappointed when things happen contrary to our expectations.

*This promise does not exclude effort.* A great many mistakes are made about the promises of God. Some think that if God is to be with them they will have nothing to do. Joshua did not find it so. He and his troops had to slay every Amorite, and Hittite, and Hivite that fell in battle. He had to fight, and use his sword-arm just as much as if there had been no God at all. The best and the wisest thing in the world is to work as if it all depended upon you, and then trust in God, knowing that it all depends upon him. He will not fail us, but we are not therefore to fold our arms and sit still. He will not forsake us; we are not, therefore, to go upstairs to bed and expect that our daily bread will drop into our mouths. I have known idle people who have said "Jehovah-Jireh," and sat with their feet over the fender, and their arms folded, and been lazy, and self-indulgent; and generally their presumption has ended in this,—God has provided them rags and jags, and a place in the county gaol before long; the very best provision, methinks, that can be made for idle people, and the sooner they get it the better for society. Oh no, no, no, no, God does not pander to our laziness, and any man who expects to get on in this world with anything that is good, without work, is a fool. Throw your whole soul into the service of God, and then you will get God's blessing if you are resting upon him. Even Mahomet could appreciate this. When one of his followers said, "I will turn my camel loose, and trust in Providence," "No, no," said Mahomet, "Tie him up as tightly as you can, and then trust in Providence." Oliver Cromwell had a common sense view of this truth too. "Trust in God," said he, as they went to battle, "but keep your powder dry." And so must we. I do not believe that God would have his servants act like fools. The best judgment a man has should be employed in the service of God. Common sense is, perhaps, as rare a thing among Christian people as salmon in the Thames. The devil's servants have more wisdom in their generation than the children of

light have, but it ought not so to be. If you want to succeed, use every faculty you have, and put forth all your strength; and if it is a right cause you may then fall back on the promise,—“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

*Neither does this promise preclude occasional disaster.* After Joshua had received this promise he went up to Ai, and suffered a terrible defeat there, because the regulations of the war had been violated. They had defrauded the Lord of a part of the spoil of Jericho, which was hidden in Achan's tent, and this troubled Israel. Yes, and without the violation of any law, the best man in the world must expect in the most successful enterprise that there will be some discouragements. Look at the sea: it is rolling in, it will rise to full tide before long, but every wave that comes up dies upon the shore; and after two or three great waves which seem to capture the shingle there comes a feebler one which sucks back. Very well, but the sea will win, and reach its fulness. So in every good work for God there is a back-drawing wave every now and then. In fact, God often makes his servants go back that they may have all the more room to run and take a huger leap than they could have taken from the place where they stood before. Defeats in the hand of faith are only preparations for victory. If we are beaten for a little, we grind our swords the sharper, and the next time we take more care that our enemies shall know how keen they are. Do not, therefore, let any temporary disappointments dismay you; they are incidental to humanity, and needful parts of our education. Go on. God will certainly test you, but he will not fail you, nor forsake you.

*Nor, again, does this promise preclude frequent tribulations and testings of faith.* In the autobiography of the famous Francké of Halle, who built, and, in the hand of God, provided for, the orphan-house of Halle, he says, “I thought when I committed myself and my work to God by faith, that I had only to pray when I had need, and that the supplies would come; but I found, that I had sometimes to wait and pray for a long time.” The supplies did come, but not at once. The pinch never went so far as absolute want; but there were intervals of severe pressure. There was nothing to spare. Every spoonful of meal had to be scraped from the bottom of the barrel, and every drop of oil that oozed out seemed as if it must be the last; but still it never did come to the last drop, and there was always just a little meal left. Bread shall be given us, but not always in quartern loaves; our water shall be sure, but not always a brook full, it may only come in small cups. God has not promised to take any of you to heaven without trying your faith. He will not fail you, but he will bring you very low. He will not forsake you, but he will test you and prove you. You will frequently need all your faith to keep your spirits up; and unless God enables you to trust without staggering, you will find yourself sorely disquieted at times. Now, are any of you brought to the verge of famine in God's work? It is a state in which I have often been,—thank God, very often,—and I have always been delivered; and, therefore, I can from experience say the Lord is to be trusted, and he will not allow the faithful to be confounded. He has said it, and he will perform it,—“I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”

Dear friends, I would like to say, once more, about this, that *this promise does not preclude our suffering very greatly*, and our dying, and perhaps dying a very sad and terrible death, as men judge. God never left Paul, but I have seen the spot where Paul's head was smitten off by the headsman. The Lord never left Peter, but Peter, like his Master, had to die by crucifixion. The Lord never left the martyrs, but they had to ride to heaven in chariots of fire. The Lord has never left his church, but oftentimes his church has been trodden as straw is trodden for the dunghill; her blood has been scattered over the whole earth, and she has seemed to be utterly destroyed. Still, you know, the story of the church is only another illustration of my text; God has not failed her, nor forsaken her; in the deaths of her saints we read, not defeat, but victory; as they passed away one by one, stars ceasing to shine below, they shone with tenfold brilliance in the upper sky because of the clouds through which they passed before they reached their celestial spheres. Beloved, we may have to groan in a Gethsemane, but God will not fail us: we may have to die on a Golgotha, but he will not forsake us. We shall rise again, and, as our Master was triumphant through death, even so shall we through the greatest suffering and the most terrible defeats rise to his throne.

IV. I must pass on again, and occupy you for a few moments over a fourth point, which is this. WHAT, THEN, DOES THE TEXT MEAN, IF WE MAY HAVE ALL THIS TRIAL HAPPENING TO US? It means to those to whom it belongs, first, *no failure for your work*; secondly, *no desertion for yourself*.

“I will not fail thee.” *Your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* What is it? Is it the great work of preaching the gospel to thousands? God will not fail you in that. I remember how twenty years ago I was preaching the gospel in the simplicity of my heart, and some little stir was made, but the wise men made light of it and said it was all to end in six months' time. We went on, did we not? And by-and-by, when we had still greater crowds listening to us, it was “a temporary excitement, a sort of religious spasm:” it would all end like a mere flash in the pan. I wonder where those prophets are now. If there are any of them here, I hope they feel comfortable in the unfulfilled prophecy, which they can now study with some degree of satisfaction. Thousands on earth and hundreds in heaven can tell what God hath wrought. Is it another kind of work, dear brother, that you are engaged in? A very quiet, unobtrusive, unobserved effort? Well, I should not wonder that, little as it is, somebody or other sneers at it. There is scarcely a David in the world without an Eliab to sneer at him. Press on, brother! Stick to it, plod away, work hard, trust in your God, and your work will not fail. We have heard of a minister who added only one to his church through a long year of very earnest ministry—only one, a sad thing for him; but that one happened to be Robert Moffatt, and he was worth a thousand of most of us. Go on. If you bring but *one* to Christ, who shall estimate the value of the one? Your class is very small just now; God does not seem to be working. Pray about it, get more scholars into the class, and teach better, and even if you should not see immediate success do not believe that it is all a failure. Never was a true

gospel sermon preached yet, with faith and prayer, that was a failure. Since the day when Christ our Master first preached the gospel, unto this day—I dare to say it—there was never a true prayer that failed, nor a true declaration of the gospel made in a right spirit that fell to the ground without prospering according to the pleasure of the Lord. Fire away, brother. Every shot tells somewhere, for in heavenly as well as earthly warfare, “every bullet has its billet.”

And then there shall be *no desertion as to yourself*, for your heavenly Friend has said, “I will not *forsake* thee.” You will not be left alone or without a helper. You are thinking of what you will do in old age. Do not think of that: think of what God will do for you in old age. Oh, but your great need and long illness will wear out your friends, you say. Perhaps you may wear out your friends, but you will not wear out your God, and he can raise up new helpers if the old ones fail. Oh, but your infirmities are many, and will soon crush you down: you cannot live long in such circumstances. Very well, then you will be in heaven; and that is far better. But you dread pining sickness. It may never come; and, suppose it should come, remember what will come with it—“I will make all thy bed in thy sickness.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”—so runs the promise. “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.” “The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of my love shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.” Thou shalt not be a lone one. Thou shalt not wring thy hands in despair, and say, “I am utterly wretched, like the pelican of the wilderness—utterly forsaken like the owl of the desert.” The mighty God of Jacob forsaketh not his own.

V. And so this brings me to the last point, which is this: WHY MAY WE BE QUITE SURE THAT THIS PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED TO US?

I answer, first, we may be quite sure because *it is God's promise*. Did ever any promise of God fall to the ground yet? There be those in the world who are challenging us continually, and saying, “Where is your God?” They deny the efficacy of prayer; they deny the interpositions of Providence. Well, I do not wonder that they do so deny, because the bulk of Christians do not realise either the answer of prayer or the interposition of Providence, for this reason, that they do not live in the light of God's countenance, or live by faith. But the man who walks by faith will tell you that he notices Providence, and never is deficient of a Providence to notice,—that he notices answers to his prayer, and never is without an answer to his prayer. What is a wonder to others becomes a common fact of every-day life to the believer in Christ. Where God has given his word, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee,” let us believe it; for

“His very word of grace is strong  
As that which built the skies;  
The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises.”

Rest ye well assured that if a man be called to do God's work God will not fail him, because *it is not after the manner of the Lord to desert his servants*. David in the dark day of his sin bade Joab place Uriah,

the Hittite, in the forefront of the battle, and leave him there to die by the hand of the children of Ammon. Was it not cruel? It was base and treacherous to the last degree. Can you suspect the Lord of anything so unworthy? God forbid. My soul has known what it is to plead with the Lord my God after this fashion,—“Lord, thou hast placed me in a difficult position, and given me service to perform far beyond my capacity. I never coveted this prominent place, and if thou dost not help me now why hast thou placed me in it?” I have always found such argument to be prevalent with God. He will not push his servants into severe conflicts, and then fail them.

Besides, remember that *should God's servants fail*, if they are really God's servants, *the enemy would exult and boast against the Lord himself*. This was a great point with Joshua in after days. He said, “The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?” If the Lord raises up Luther, and does not help Luther, then it is not Luther that fails; it is God that fails, in the estimation of the world. If the Lord sends a man to bear witness to a truth, and that man's testimony utterly breaks down, then in the estimation of men it is the truth that breaks down, and consequently dishonour is cast upon God and his truth; and he will not have it so. If he uses the weakest instrumentality, he will laugh to scorn his adversaries by it, and they shall never say that the Lord was overcome.

Besides, if God has raised you up, my brother or sister, to accomplish a purpose by you, *do you think he will be defeated?* Were ever any of his designs frustrated? I have heard preachers talk about God being defeated by the free will of man, and disappointed by man's depravity, and I do not know what. But such a God is no God of mine. My God is one who has his will, and will have it; who, when he designs a thing, accomplishes it; he is a God whose omnipotence none can resist, concerning whom it may be said, “Who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” The mighty God of Jacob puts his hand to a design, and carries it through as surely as he begins; the weakness of the instrument in his hand does not hinder him, nor the opposition of his enemies deter him. Only believe in him, and weak as you are, you shall perform wonders, and in your feebleness the strength of God shall be glorified.

Besides, my brethren, if we trust God, and live for God, *he loves us much too well to leave us*. It is not as though we were aliens, and strangers, and foreigners—mercenary troops whom the prince who hires them leaves to be cut in pieces: no, we are his own dear children. God sees his own self in all his servants. He sees in them the members of the body of his dear Son. The very least among them is dear to him as the apple of his eye, and beloved as his own soul. It is not to be imagined that he will ever put a load upon his own children's shoulders without giving them strength to bear the burden, or send them to labours for which he will not give them adequate resources. Oh, rest in the Lord, ye faithful. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,” for he will appear unto your rescue. Has he not said, “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”?

As I have thus been bringing forth marrow and fatness, from the word, I have been thinking of some of you, poor souls, who cannot eat thereof, and have no share in it. I am glad to see you here, especially on Thursday night, for it is not every unconverted person that will come to these week-night services. You must have a hungering after these good things, or you would not be here in such numbers. I hope your mouths are watering after the good things of the covenant. I hope, as you see the promises of God on the table, and see how rich they are, you will say to yourself, "Would God I had a share in them!" Well, poor soul, if God gives you an appetite, I can only say, the food is free to you. If thou wouldst have God to be thy helper—if thou wouldst indeed be saved by Christ—come and welcome, for thou art the soul that he desires to bless. If you have half a wish towards God, he has a longing towards you. If you desire him, you have not the start of him; depend upon it, he has long before desired you. Come you to him, rest in him, accept the atonement which his Son has presented, begin the life of faith in real earnest, and you shall find that what I have said is all true, only it falls short of the full truth, for you will say, like the Queen of Sheba when she had seen Solomon's glory, "The half hath not been told me." Blessed be the Lord for ever, who has taught my poor heart to believe in himself, and to live upon unseen realities, and rest in a faithful God! There is no peace or joy like it, or worthy to be mentioned in the same day. God grant it to each one of you, beloved, for his name's sake. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxiii.

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HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—34 (Vers. I.), 742, 745.