

THE SAFETY OF THE SAINTS

A SERMON

by Mister JAMES WELLS

Volume 13 Number 638

“Which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved,” Psalm 66:9

THIS Psalm commences with a prophetic exhortation: “Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands.” Implying that all parts of the earth, or a people out of all parts, shall be brought to know the Lord, and that they will go progressively on, until all other things by degrees sink into entire silence, and nothing will be left as the theme of the people but God himself. He, in his love, in his perfections and counsels, will become our “all and in all,” in thought, in feeling, in word, in prospect, in possession, and enjoyment. And surely there is a great propriety in this; for all that we have that is good, we are indebted to the Lord; and therefore, if his name is not to be honored, whose name is to be honored? If he is not to be praised, who is to be praised? If he is not to be spoken highly of, what is to be spoken highly of? There is a most glorious propriety in other things sinking into silence, and the name and fame of the great Redeemer rising, until everything else is swallowed up. “God shall be all in all,” and our souls one with him, happy by him, and glorying in the wonders of his love for ever and ever. For he “holds our soul in life and suffers not our feet to be moved.”

Now in these words we notice, first, *the life*; secondly, *the preservation*; and thirdly, *the fixation*, he “suffers not our feet to be moved.”

1. First, the life. He “holds our soul in life.” This we know is true in a general sense; but we wish this evening to attend to it in a special sense; and that life of which we wish to speak is spiritual life.

First, then, this life is a life of *purity*, in opposition to a life of sin. A man’s life, apart from the love of God, apart from the cleansing blood and righteousness of Christ, apart from the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, apart from the grace and truth of God, is an ungodly life, an impure life. I do not say that it must be an ungodly life in a moral sense; but in the strict, spiritual, special sense, it must, apart from these things, be an ungodly life. And therefore, when we are spoken of apart from these things, it is said of us, that “there is none righteous, no, not one;” “there is none that does good, no, not one;” that we are “all gone out of the way;” that we are “together become unprofitable.” Here, then, you see we must have the love of God; and having the everlasting love of God, we are by this love brought out of enmity into love to God. By the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ we are brought out of a state of ignorance of God to know him. By the quickening power of the Holy Ghost sin in its multifarious forms and operations is brought to light; and we are brought to feel that it is an awful thing to be reckoned by the Almighty among the unclean, that it is an awful thing to be under the dark side of that scripture wherein it is written, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” The Lord makes it, then,

a matter of concern with the soul where he reckons us. No matter where we may reckon ourselves, or where men may reckon us, the question comes where he will reckon us. For “the Lord shall count when he writes up the people that this man was born there,” and shall make an everlasting distinction between the clean and the unclean; and if we are found among the clean, we must be found in the everlasting love of God; if we are found among the clean, we must be found in the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ; if we are found among the clean, we must be found under the leadings of the Holy Spirit, receiving the Lord’s eternal truth; and being brought thus to receive God in his holiness, our hearts become “established unblameable in holiness before God.”

Now in what way can our hearts become “established unblameable in holiness before God”? Why, in the first place, the Lord will never blame us for fixing our affections upon him; we are justified in this. He will never blame us for receiving the great truth of eternal election; we are justified in this. He will never blame us for receiving the dear Redeemer in his dignity, advocating his purity and perfection; we are justified in this. He will never blame us for confessing that without him we can do nothing; he will never blame us for any longings after the holy and ever-blessed Spirit; he will never blame us in acknowledging before him that sin can do nothing but make us miserable, and ultimately destroy us, while salvation is that after which our souls thirst. In these works, we are justified; and “our hearts become established unblameable in holiness before God.” And this is the only way in which a man’s heart can be “established unblameable in holiness before God.” For if I stand opposed to his everlasting love, I shall come under blame; if I die opposed to his sovereignty in the election of his people, I shall come under blame; if I stand opposed to that great redemption wrought by the Redeemer, I shall come under blame, and be reckoned among the unclean; if I die in a state of antipathy to the truth of God, I shall come under blame, and be reckoned among the unclean. Here, then, you have at once before you a striking contrast between God’s estimation of things and the world’s estimation of things; for the Lord’s people in all ages have been blamed by the world for receiving the truth and abiding thereby, and the same people in all ages have been justified before God in so doing. The world has condemned them for the same things which the Lord justified them by. Rahab, no doubt, if she had been tried by the people of Canaan, would have been condemned for receiving the spies; but God justified her in receiving them, because in so doing she acknowledged the truth of God, and received the truth of God, for she said, “I know that the Lord has given you the land,” I know that there is “no enchantment against Jacob,” I know that there is “no divination against Israel,” I know that there is no successful war against Israel’s God, I know the matter is settled. Therefore, she received the spies, and was justified in so doing. And in this way, it is that we are justified and become unblameable, coming out of a life of sin against God into a life of purity with him.

I cannot find words sufficient to express some of the views I have sometimes relative to the two states: the awful disgrace, the dreadful degradation of living and dying in sin; and, on the other hand, the unspeakable honor, the glory, the blessedness of living in the purity of God’s eternal truth, dying in all the sacredness of his dear name, rising in his glorious image, and to all eternity “giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,” rejoicing that our God is “glorious in holiness,” that he is “fearful in praises” and continually “doing wonders.” God our Father overcame our sin in his counsels; the Redeemer overcame our sin in his mediation; the Holy Spirit overcomes our sin in his operations; we are brought into union with Christ, and by these things we overcome sin, and are finally “more than conquerors” through the love wherewith he has loved us.

So then, instead of its being a life of sin, it is a life of purity; and “he holds our soul” in this life of purity.

2. Again: it is also a life of *plenty*, in opposition to a life of poverty. We are brought into oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ; and certainly, our God can never become poor. He always has infinite resources at hand. And in this life which the saints have lived, all their needs have always been supplied while they were in this world, so far as to answer every purpose of mercy concerning them; all their needs have always been supplied in a dying hour, so far as was necessary they should be supplied; and their need will be supplied to all eternity. And therefore, it is a life of plenty. “With the Lord is plenteous redemption;” he is “plenteous in mercy,” “abundant in goodness and therefore it is a life of plenty. And the plenteousness of this life certainly makes the eternity of it very desirable; indeed, there is not anything in this life which does not make the life itself, together with the eternity of it, very desirable. It is a life in which we have Jehovah in all his glorious perfections, in his infinite and everlasting fulness. It is not a life of poverty; it is a life of plenty. But the life of the flesh is, after all, a poor life, a life of poverty, and having nothing in it of which it will not soon be deprived: while in this everlasting life there is plenty. Therefore, it is said that “the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine.”

3. In the next place it is a life of *godly exercise*, or exercise unto godliness. And here again, what a difference! And the children of God feel it. You know what ungodly exercise is, and you know what godly exercise is. You know when the flesh is in exercise, whether it is in a way of covetousness, whether it is in a way of unbelief, ingratitude, peevishness, or in whatever way that is ungodly in exercise: “the flesh lusting against the spirit.” Yet mighty as are the exercises of ungodliness by our fallen nature, they cannot neutralize the exercises of godliness. For the Lord will sometimes bring home a cutting reproof, he will sometimes give us a little reviving, so that we cannot let the Book of life pass through the world without feeling some degree of concern as to whether our names are there; we cannot let the chariot of salvation pass through the world without having some reason to believe we are taken up into the chariot, and hear the Lord say, “Is your heart right? if it is, come up with me into the chariot,” and replying, “Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.” We cannot be content for apostles and prophets to be “yet speaking, though dead,” and for us to pass through this world. without partaking of some of the things they minister. We cannot be content that our lives should close without heaven being opened. We cannot be content that the sun of life should go down without the Sun of righteousness arising unto us. We cannot be content to trust ourselves in the river of Jordan, without having reason to believe that the great High Priest is there to part the waters hither and thither, so that we may go over and take possession of the promised land.

So then, notwithstanding our sinfulness, here is a glorious sanctification; notwithstanding our poverty, here is glorious fulness in Christ Jesus; and notwithstanding all the ungodly exercises of our nature, here is more or less an exercise of godliness kept up; for though the Savior endured bondage, yet it could not hinder him from exercising his power, in all respects needed for the accomplishing of his work in this world. But who will long for this life of purity? None but those who are sick of a life of sin. Who will long for this life of plenty? None but those who know their poverty; and therefore “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” And who will long for the exercises of prayer, the exercises of faith, the exercises of affection, the exercises of hope, the exercises of godly fear, meditation, and all these things? Why, those who

are sick and tired of what they well understand from those words, that “the wicked” (and our own wicked nature) “are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,”

4. In the next place it is a life of *pleasing discovery*. There is always something pleasing to be discovered. When the flood was about to come, I cannot say how long it was after Noah had heard of the flood, that he heard of the ark; they seem to be together, reading it in the Bible; there may be some secret connected with it; but be that as it may, the ark to Noah was something new, and when the whole world was to be swept away, and this new plan (for such a thing had never been heard of before) was discovered to him, it was something very pleasing to him. And when the Lord first discovered to us the way by which we should escape, “the wrath to come,” was not that something very pleasing? When he brought home the word with power, and assured us that though the flood descended, and the winds blew, yet through the terrible storm we should be safe, sheltered in the Rock of eternal ages, there was something very pleasing, while in all these things he was saying, “Let the inhabitants of the rock sing.” When the Israelites were in bondage and saw no way of escape, and when God brought plague after plague upon the Egyptians, and sheltered them by the paschal lamb, God’s way of delivering them was something new, and it was very pleasing to them; and when they came to the Red Sea, and discovered the way in which God would deliver them, namely, by interposing and dividing the waters, it was a very pleasing discovery; and when they were come into the wilderness, and saw the manna which was to support them while everything was barrenness around, the discovery was very pleasing; and when they were perishing from thirst, and the Lord caused the water to gush out of the rock, the discovery was very pleasing. Now all these are only so many types of those pleasing discoveries which the Lord makes to his people in showing unto them that notwithstanding their sins, he loves them; that notwithstanding their sins, he has chosen them; that notwithstanding their sins, he has saved them; that notwithstanding their sins, he will abide by them, he will bring them to everlasting glory. He will destroy all their sins, and they shall be no longer sinners, but saints of the Most High God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. And what the pleasurable discovery will be in a dying hour, and when we enter another world, we must die to know. And at the last great rising day, what wonders will be discovered! and what wonders, when we enter the wide-spread regions of an eternal world! Well might the Psalmist say, “Open you my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

Men, reasoning, thinking men are mightily pleased with the wonderful discoveries which the human mind has made in the laws of nature. And we say not a word against them; we rather applaud them. Yet after all, we can set no discovery in competition with those which the eternal God makes to his people concerning himself, concerning his kingdom, concerning their destiny. And therefore, there is something beyond everything else in the words of the Savior. “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;” and the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Call upon me, and I will show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” Jonah, when he was in the whale’s belly, it is true, discovered something not very pleasing then; but when he came safe out of that scene upon the dry land, and discovered the power of God in preserving him, that must have been very pleasing; and therefore, he said, “I will sacrifice unto you with the voice of thanksgiving; salvation is of the Lord.” The poor disciples were very much alarmed when they found they had to feed so many with a few loaves and small fishes; but when the Lord discovered his power to augment, it was a very pleasing discovery. When they had been toiling all night and had caught nothing, and the Master came and told them to “cast the net on the right side,” and it

was so full that they filled the ship, it was a very pleasing discovery. And when Paul and Silas, after a hard day's labor, and perhaps being half starved, cruel stripes laid upon them, heavily ironed, and bound down in a dirty, nasty prison, found the Lord: discover himself to them there, they rose above all their miseries and their sufferings, and sung praises to the God of Israel. No doubt they found it a very pleasing discovery.

“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”

Instances, indeed, are innumerable, had I time to enlarge upon them, of the blessedness of discovering these things. When the disciples were going to Emmaus, and the dear Redeemer commenced at Moses and went through the Old Testament and gave a sort of running commentary and pointed out to them that the whole business of the Old Testament was to set forth the glory of Christ, with which are identified our present security and eternal glory, it was to them a very pleasing discovery; and their hearts “burned within them.”

So, then it is a life of discovery. What does the minister look to the Lord for in secret? Why, for the Lord to discover wondrous things out of his law. And what says the Psalmist? “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” For we do not know all yet. And therefore, the dear Lord in one place says, “I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” Now recollect, the word, as Jesus Christ used it, is not man's “many,” but God's; and what is God's “many”? Who can number God's “many”? “I have many things to say unto you;” and bless his dear name, he will be sure to say all those, things to us by and by. Ay, that he will; he will keep nothing back: for the Lord's people are said to be let into the mysteries of his everlasting kingdom.

I must not enlarge; but you see the nature of this life. It is a life of purity, in opposition to a life of sin; which is the best of the two speaks for itself, does it not? It is a life of divine plenty, in opposition to a life of creature destitution; and which is the better of the two? It is a life of godly exercise, or exercise towards God and in godly things. It is a life of pleasing and glorious discovery. It is true, that connected with the pleasing discovery, there will be unpleasing discovery, for the Lord generally goes on showing to us more and more of what we are, and as the creature is more and more discovered, he is more and more low; but still, the glories of eternity are more and more delighted in.

This is a glorious life. I do not wonder at the Scripture passing over the circumstance of death, in one sense, as a matter hardly worth notice. The Savior, alluding to it, says, “He that believes in me shall never die.” The mere event of the body dying is but the transition of the soul from its present contracted to a future developed state of dignity and glory. If there are those that are lovers of mind, this is the way in which mind shall be eternally developing, in a degree infinitely surpassing all that we experience. Sir Isaac Newton's mind was the mind of a mere infant, compared with the mind of one who has safely reached his home, and is made acquainted with the wonders of eternity.

2. Now we notice, secondly, *the preservation*. He “holds our soul in life.”

And you will see how this will apply to the four ideas we have adverted to. It is a life of purity; he “holds our soul” in Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus is our sanctification. It is a life of plenty; he “holds our soul” in Christ Jesus, and “in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” It is a life of godly exercise; he “holds our soul” in Christ Jesus, and in him “we live and move and have our being.” It is a life of pleasing discovery; he “holds our soul” in Christ Jesus, and “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face” or person “of Jesus Christ.” And as we go on, this purity (Christ being our sanctification) will shine increasingly bright; the plenty we have in him will shine forth more and more; the exercise unto godliness will be more and more desired; the discovery will be more looked for. Yes, as I just now hinted, instances are almost innumerable of pleasurable discovery. You and I know, some of us, a little of the sweet discovery that good old Simeon had: “Now, Lord, let you your servant depart in peace according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation and now I can depart in peace.”

“Lord, at your temple we appear,
As happy Simeon came,
And hope to meet our Savior here;
Oh! make our joys the same.”

We “love his appearing.” So, then, he “holds our soul” in Christ Jesus.

Now God does not hold his people by time things, but by eternal things. If he held his people by time things, there might be a letting go; but he holds his people by eternal things. He holds them by his eternal love; he holds them by his eternal choice; he holds them by his eternal covenant; he holds them by his eternal power; he holds them by his eternal decrees; he holds them by his eternal righteousness; he holds them by his eternal salvation; he holds them by his eternal independence; he holds them by his eternal wisdom; he holds them by his eternal sameness or immutability. It is by these eternal things that he holds them. He takes hold of us by these eternal things; and we are brought to receive the Lord here. And therefore, not a time God, but “the eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” And so “he holds our soul in life.” Can we get out of purity, and be reckoned among the unclean? No; for “Jehovah changes not; therefore we are not consumed.” Can we get out of plenty, and sink into everlasting poverty? No; for the Lord has determined that we shall be rich. Can we get out of godliness? Yes, when the creature is stronger than the Creator; and not before. Can we turn away from the glories of Jesus, and say we do not want to see any more of those glories? No; for if we look elsewhere, behold dimness, and darkness, and anguish, and sorrow, and desolation, and trouble, and everything appalling; but when we are enabled to look unto the Lord, “our faces are not ashamed,” and we can enter a little into the meaning of the apostle when he says, “We all, 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.” Such a look as this, does our hearts good. Why, when Moses had been looking for a little while upon the glories of the Lord, his face so shone, that when he came down from the mount the people could not look him in the face; when we lose our mortal life, we have eternal life to come in its stead.

Yes, it is a glorious life; and therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, “for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.” You remember how the devil presented to the Savior all the kingdoms of this world, to tempt him, viewing him as God-man; and he in his mind compared the kingdoms of this

world, with his own eternal glory in the everlasting salvation of his people. Why, all the kingdoms of this world would amount hardly to a glow-worm compared to the sun in the firmament. So that the temptation must be paltry; and if the devil discovered his mistake (which he partly did), he must think, What a fool have I been, to present such a temptation to One who was “King of kings and Lord of lords,” and whose glories outshine all creation! So that these were all paltry to him, Ay, and he will make them paltry to his people, by discovering “an eternal weight of glory.” He “holds our soul in life.”

Let us look a little further into this matter. He “holds.” The Lord’s people are said to be in his hands, and “none shall pluck them out of his hands;” here is one expression of their safety. They are said to be in his bosom. And you will recollect the beautiful train of thought we have upon this subject. It is said of Lazarus that he was in Abraham’s bosom; then, in whose bosom was Abraham? Why, in the bosom of Christ, for he “gathers the lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom.” Therefore, for me to be in Abraham’s bosom with Lazarus, is to be in the secrets that Abraham was in; namely, this pure life, this life of plenty, this exercise of godliness, these pleasing discoveries. So, then, Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham; Abraham was in the bosom of the Son, namely, Christ; and Christ, the Son of God, is in the bosom of the Father; and that brings us up to the secrets of the eternal God. He “holds our soul” in his bosom. And then we are said to dwell in his presence; and “in his presence is fulness of joy, at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

3. Now, lastly, *the fixation*. “He suffers not our feet to be moved that is, not finally. I cannot now enlarge upon intermediate circumstances.

Now how is it our feet cannot be moved finally? Why, because we have, in salvation matters, “a covenant ordered in all things and sure.” Wherever there is not such a covenant, there will be a giving way. The angels that fell were not included in the “covenant ordered in all things and sure,” else they could not have fallen. Adam and Eve, in their primeval state, as they stood, were not included in the “covenant ordered in all things and sure;” therefore they fell. The Jewish nation was under a covenant, but not a covenant “ordered in all things and sure,” or it would not have been scattered. If the thrones of human monarchs were included in “a covenant ordered in all things and sure,” not one of them would ever have fallen; the world would stand for ever then. “But” say you, “the angels are not included.” Yes, they are they are not included as the people of God, but they are called “elect angels.” They owe their eternal safety to the sovereignty of God, making choice of them; and the reason why they cannot be moved is because there is, “a covenant ordered in all things and sure.” So then, it is not too much for me to say that God Almighty, the eternal God himself (I do not speak figuratively, I speak literally), has pledged his own being for the safety of his people. He could swear by no greater, and therefore he swore by himself; and their eternal prevalence, preeminence, and glory, are as sure as the being of God himself. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath;” and “because he could swear by no greater he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless you.”

Time will not allow me to show that many of the Lord’s people may be moved partially, but not finally. Just a few words upon it: “He suffers not our feet to be moved” conveys three ideas.

First, pilgrimage. We are walking in a certain path; and if ever turned aside from that path, what is the promise? Paul says, "I press forward," "and if in anything you be otherwise minded" to step aside to the right hand or to the left, "God shall reveal even this unto you." Ay, and he will show it to you with the rod too, and make you feel it, and make you acknowledge that "the way of transgressors is hard," and "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "He will not suffer our feet to be moved." No, bless his dear name, "He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

"Our feet shall travel all the length
Of the celestial road,
And march with courage in his strength,
To see our Father, God."

Then, secondly, it supposes conflict. The Lord has set our feet upon the borders of the promised land; and the devil, and sin, and the flesh, and the world are come nigh to beat us back, and to say, "You shall not have an inch of this land; you have too much of election about you already, too much of predestination, too much of a covenant ordered in all things and sure, too much of particular redemption, and we will reproach you, we will revile you, we will do all we can to beat you back." But it is of no use; we keep firm hold. We have the two-edged sword in our hand, and the breastplate of righteousness to cover us, "iron and brass" upon our shoes, and the helmet of salvation upon our head; and the devil may work; the Lord will stand by us, and having done all we shall stand, and not give one inch of ground we have gained. "He will not suffer our feet to be moved," but enable us to stand fast upon the borders of our land. We confess we are come only just to the borders, and there remains very much land to be possessed; but we do not want to go back, we want to go forward, and from the summit of the mountains to look over the country, for we shall ascend by and by the hill of the Lord. "He will not suffer our feet to be moved." David steps forth: "Oh!" says Goliath, "I will soon move your feet." Ay, but they moved the right way, and gained the victory.

The other idea is righteousness. "He will not suffer our feet to be moved" from the path; and so, in righteousness. There is the accuser of the brethren, the devil: "a liar from the beginning." I have heard of a person getting hold of the sermon that some church minister was going to read, and he took the word "liar" out, and put "lawyer" in: the devil was "a lawyer from the beginning." Be that as it may, he certainly is very apt at accusing, and he is called "the accuser of the brethren and he is very ready with his law-suits and brings in a great many indictments. But then the dear Redeemer, the great Advocate, can speak well; and he pleads our cause, and so we still have a place in the presence of the King. The devil accuses us before the King and would cast us out; but the King's Son interposes for us and silences the accuser, and so we dwell still in the King's presence, and shall go no more out. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me."

How kind is the Savior, how great is his love,
To come and redeem me, and take me above,
Where love everlasting and joy shall abound,
And I with my Jesus shall always be found!

No more shall I hunger, for Jesus is there,
Tis he that will feed me and make me his care;
There I shall be fed with the love of his heart,
And dwell with my Jesus, no more to depart.

Of thirst, no more shall I grieve or complain,
For Jesus is there, as the Lamb that was slain,
To lead me to waters of kindness and love,
To drink and be living with Jesus above.

Sickness and sorrow, it shall not be known;
For Jesus, the Lamb in the midst of the throne
Shall shine in his glory, and health shall display,
And sorrow and sighing shall quite flee away.

No more like a stranger my soul shall appear,
But I with my Jesus shall dwell without fear;
Shall lean on his bosom, and to him shall sing
The high praise of his grace that did first take me in.

But ah! I am yet in the desert below,
Where I tribulation and sorrow must know;
But then my Redeemer has been here before,
And calls me his person and work to adore.

His sorrows were great, and his grief was unknown,
But now he's the Lamb in the midst of the throne,
And still he remembers my soul in distress,
And visits me too in the strength of his grace.

Am I in prison, he visits me there,
And says I'm his love, without spot and all fair;
Though deeply in debt, yet nothing I owe;
This truth from my Jesus I'm favored to know.

Soon shall I reach my Savior's sweet home,
Through much tribulation to heaven must come;
There I shall adore the great worth of his blood,
That pardoned my sins and brought me to God.

Till then I would rest in the arms of his grace,
For Jesus will keep me till I see his face;
Till then I would speak of his glory below,
Till I see my Redeemer, and more of him know.

JAMES WELLS