



# The Doctrine of Saints' Perseverance



**Part One**

**A. W. Pink**



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### **1. Introduction**

### **2. Its Importance**

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In previous volumes we have expounded at some length (though not in this precise order) the great truths of Divine Election or Predestination unto salvation; the Atonement or perfect Satisfaction which Christ rendered unto the Law on behalf of His people; fallen man's total impotency unto good; the miracle of Regeneration, whereby the elect (who are born into this world dead in trespasses and sins) are quickened into newness of life; Justification by faith, whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the Law, the righteousness of Christ being reckoned to his account; the believer's Sanctification, whereby he is set apart unto God, constituted a temple of the Holy Spirit, delivered from the reigning power of sin, and made meet for Heaven. It is therefore fitting that we should now take up the complementary and completing truth of the final perseverance of the saints, or the absolute certainty of their entrance into the Inheritance purchased for them by Christ and unto which they have been begotten by the Spirit.

This blessed subject has been an occasion for fierce strife in the theological world, and nowhere is the breach between Calvinists and Arminians more apparent than in their diverse views of this doctrine. The former regard it as the very salt of the covenant, as one of the principal mercies purchased by the redemption of Christ, as one of the richest jewels which adorns the Gospel's crown, as one of the choicest cordials for the reviving of fainting saints, as one of the greatest incentives to practical holiness. But with the latter it is the very reverse. Arminians regard this doctrine as an invention of the Devil, as highly dishonouring to God, as a poisoning of the Gospel fountain, as giving license to self-

indulgence and being subversive of all real piety. In this instance it is impossible to seek a golden mean between two extremes, for one party must be extremely right and the other extremely wrong.

While we have no doubt whatever in which of those two camps the truth is to be found, yet we are far from allowing that Calvinists have always presented this doctrine in its Scriptural proportions; yea it is our firm conviction that during the last two or three generations especially it has been dealt with by many novices in such a manner as to do far more evil than good. Large numbers of men have contended for the “Security of the Saints” in such a crude and lopsided way that not a few godly souls were stumbled, and in their revolt against such extremism supposed their only safeguard was to reject the whole subject in toto. Such a course was wrong: if some amateur would-be-bakers turn out uneatable loaves, that is no reason why I should henceforth decline all bread—I should be the loser if I acted so radically.

We have no sympathy whatever with the bald and unqualified declaration “Once saved always saved.” In a publication issued by a widely-known “Bible Institute” appears the following. “I went to the death cell of that condemned man in \_\_\_\_ prison a few days ago. I went to tell him of a pardon from my King. I had no right to offer him a pardon from the state . . . but I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary’s cross, offering eternal redemption from the penalty of sin, so that he could be justified before the ‘Judge of all the earth’ in the court of heaven, for all the endless ages. Thank God! I found that man clear on the plan of salvation, for years ago under the ministry of \_\_\_\_ he had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour. But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost his fellowship with his Lord, not his salvation. And the result was a life of sin. It took an awful experience to turn him from his self-willed way; but as I talked with him in his prison cell, I was convinced that he was born again and repentant for his crime.”

While it lies entirely outside our province to form any judgment as to the eternal destiny of that murderer, yet a few comments on the preacher’s account of the above incident seem to be called for. What impression is likely to be made on the mind of the average

light-headed professor by the reading of such a case? What effect is it calculated to produce upon those church members who are walking arm in arm with the world? First, we are told that this murderer was “clear on the plan of salvation:” so also is the Devil, but what does such mental knowledge avail him! Next it is said that years before this condemned man “had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour” under the ministry of a certain well-known “Revivalist.” But before any soul can receive Christ as Saviour, he must first throw down the weapons of his rebellion, repent of his sins, and surrender to Christ as Lord.

The Saviour is the Holy One of God, who saves His people “*from* their sins” (Matt. 1:2 1) and not in their sins: who saves them from the love and dominion of their sins. How different was the preaching of Spurgeon from that of the cheapjack “evangelists” who have followed him. Said he, “Go not to God and ask for mercy with sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt and with the declaration of his rebellion on his breast? Surely he would deserve double doom for thus mocking his monarch while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife has forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask his pardon leaning on the arm of her paramour? Yet so it is with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God and yet harbouring and indulging your lusts. . . cast away your sin or He cannot hear you. If you lift up unholy hands with a lie in your right hand, prayer is worthless on your lips” (C. H. Spurgeon, 1860).

Returning to the above incident. This preacher declares of the man in the condemned cell, “But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost his *fellowship* with his Lord, not his *salvation*, and the result was a life of sin.” Such a statement is a flat contradiction in terms. Salvation and sin are opposites. “*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). Divine salvation is a supernatural work which produces supernatural effects. It is a miracle of grace which causes the wilderness to blossom as the

rose. It is known by its fruits. It is a lie to call a tree good if it bears evil fruit. Justification is evidenced by sanctification. The new birth is made manifest by a new life. Where one makes a profession of being saved and then follows it with “a life of sin” it is a case of “the dog turning again to his vomit and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:22).

Before dismissing this case a word should be said upon the preacher’s statement “I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary’s cross” which occurs, be it noted, at the beginning of the narrative. Surely the first thing to press upon a murderer would be the awfulness of his condition: to remind him that he had not only grievously wronged a fellow-creature, but had sinned against the Holy One; to faithfully set before him the solemn fact that in a few days he would have to appear before the Divine Judge. Then he could speak of the amazing grace of God which had provided a Saviour for sinners, even the very chief of sinners, and that He is freely offered to all by the Gospel, on the terms of repentance and faith. But the Scriptures nowhere warrant us to tell any indifferent, impenitent sinner that Christ “took *his* place on the cross:” the substitutionary work of Christ is a truth for the comfort of believers and not a sop for unbelievers. O the ignorance and confusion now obtaining in Christendom.

In the New Testament the salvation of God is presented under three tenses: past, present and future. As a work “*begun*” (Phil. 1:6), but not completed in a moment of time. “*Who hath saved us*” (2 Tim. 1:9), “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12), “*now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*” (Rom. 13:11). These verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect. First, God saves from the pleasure of sin, causing the heart to loathe what it formerly loved. That which is displeasing to God is made bitter to the soul, and sin becomes its greatest grief and burden. Next, faith is communicated by the Spirit and the penitent sinner is enabled to believe the Gospel, and thereby he is saved from the penalty of sin. Then it is he enters upon the Christian life, wherein he is called upon to “*fight the*

*good fight of faith,*” for there are enemies both within and without which seek to bring about his destruction.

For that “fight” God has provided adequate armour (Eph. 6:11), which the Christian is bidden to take unto himself. For that fight he is furnished with effective weapons, but these he must make good use of. For that fight spiritual strength is available (2 Tim. 2:1), yet it has to be diligently and trustfully sought. It is in this fight, a lifelong process, a conflict in which no furloughs are granted, the Christian is *being saved* from the *power* of sin. In it he receives many wounds, but he betakes himself to the great Physician for healing. In it he is often cast down, but by grace he is enabled to rise again. Finally, he shall be saved from the presence of sin, for at death the believer is for ever rid of his evil nature.

Now it is that third aspect of salvation which concerns us in this present series of articles, namely, the believer’s perseverance: his perseverance in the fight of faith. The doctrine which is to be before us relates to the Christian’s being saved from the power of indwelling sin during the interval which elapses between his being saved from its penalty and the moment when he will be saved from its presence. Between his being saved from Hell and his actual entrance into Heaven he needs saving from himself, saving from this evil world in which he is still left, saving from the devil who as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour. The journey from Egypt to Canaan lies not for the most part through green pastures and by the still waters but across an arid desert with all its trials and testings, and few who left that House of Bondage reached the Land of milk and honey: the great majority fell in the wilderness through their unbelief—types of numerous professors who begin well but fail to endure unto the end. There are multitudes in Christendom to-day deluded with the idea that a mere historical faith in the Gospel ensures their reaching Heaven: who verily suppose they have “received Christ as their personal Saviour” simply because they believe that He died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all those who repudiate their own righteousness and trust in Him. They imagine that if under the influence of religious emotion and the pressing appeals of an evangelist, and assured that “John 3:16 means what it says,” they

were persuaded to “become Christians,” that therefore all is now well with them: that having obtained a ticket for Glory they may, like passengers on a train, relax and go to sleep, confident that in due time they shall arrive at their desired destination. By such deceptions Satan chloroforms myriads into Hell. So widespread is this deadly delusion that one who undertakes to expose its sophistry is certain to be regarded by many as a heretic.

The Christian life commences amid the throes of the new birth, under acute travail of soul. When the Spirit of God begins His work in the heart conscience is convicted, the terrors of the Law are felt, the wrath of a sin-hating God becomes real. As the requirements of Divine holiness begin to be apprehended the soul, so long accustomed to having its own way, “kicks against the pricks,” and only in the day of God’s power is it “*made willing*” (Psa. 110:3) to take the yoke of Christ upon it. And then it is that the young believer, conscious of the plague of his own heart, fearful of his own weakness and instability, aware of the enmity of the Devil against him, anxiously cries out, How shall I be able to keep from drowning in such a world as this? what provision has God made that I shall not perish on my way to everlasting bliss? The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad; but unless He *continues* to exert His sovereign power on my behalf, I shall be lost.

Moreover, as the young Christian holds on his way he observes how many of those who took up a Christian profession walk no more in the paths of righteousness, having returned to the world. This stumbles him and makes him ask, Shall I also make shipwreck of the faith? Ah, none stand more sure and safe than those who feel they cannot stand, whose cry is “*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe*” (Psa. 119:117). “*Happy is the man who feareth always*” (Prov. 28:14). Happy the soul who is possessed of that holy fear which drives him to the Lord, keeps him vile in his own eyes and causes him to ever depend upon the promise and grace of a faithful God, which makes him rejoice with trembling, and tremble with hope.

In the case which we have just supposed—and it is one which is true to life—we discover an additional reason for taking up the

present subject. It is necessary that the young and fearing Christian should be further strengthened in the faith, that he should be informed the good Shepherd does not leave His lambs undefended in the midst of wolves, that full provision is made for their safety. Yet it is at this stage especially that heavenly wisdom is needed by the instructor if he is to be of real help. On the one hand he must be careful not to cast pearls before swine, and on the other he must not be deterred from giving to the children of God their rightful and needful Bread. If he must be on his guard against ministering unlawful comfort to carnal professors, he must also see to it that legitimate comforts and cordials are not withheld from saints with feeble knees and whose hands hang down because of their discouragements.

Each of the dangers we have alluded to will be avoided by due attention unto the terms of our theme and an amplification thereof. It is the final perseverance of the saints we shall write about, the enduring of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and not those who have been whitewashed by self-reformation. It is the final perseverance of saints along the Narrow Way, along the paths of righteousness. It is their perseverance in the fight of faith and the performance of obedience. The Word of God nowhere teaches that once a man is born again he may give free rein to the lusts of the flesh and be as worldly as he pleases, yet still be sure of getting to Heaven. Instead, Scripture says, and the words are addressed to believers, *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die”* (Rom. 8:13). No, if a man is born again he will desire, purpose and endeavour to live as becometh a child of God.

There has been some deliberation in our mind as to which is the better title for this doctrine: the preservation or the perseverance of the saints. At first sight the former seems preferable, as being more honouring to God, throwing the emphasis on His keeping power. Yet further reflection will show that such preferableness is more seeming than real. We prefer the latter because rightly understood it includes the former, while at the same time pressing the believer’s responsibility. Moreover, we believe, it to be more in accord with the general tenor of Scripture. The saints are *“kept by the power of God through faith”* (1 Pet. 1:5). He does not deal with



them as unaccountable automatons, but as moral agents, just as their natural life is maintained through their use of means and by their avoidance of that which is inimical to their wellbeing, so it is with the maintenance and preservation of their spiritual lives.

God preserves His people in this world through their perseverance—their use of means and avoidance of what is destructive. We do not mean for a moment that the everlasting purpose of the Most High is made contingent on the actions of the creature. The saints' perseverance is a Divine gift, as truly as is health and strength of body. The two sides of this truth, the Divine and the human, are brought together in "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:12, 13): it is God who works in the believer both the desire and performance in using the means, so that all ground for boasting is removed from him. When God begins His work of grace in a soul the heart then turns to Him in penitence and faith, and as He continues that work the soul is kept in the exercise of its graces. As we seek to unfold this theme our emphasis will change from time to time according as we have before us those who repudiate it and those who pervert it—when we shall treat of the Divine foundations on which it rests or the safeguards by which it is protected. O for wisdom to steer clear of both Arminianism and Antinomianism.

## **2. Its Importance**

The theme of this present series of articles is far more than a theological dogma or sectarian tenet: it is an essential portion of that Faith once for all delivered to the saints, concerning which we are exhorted to "contend earnestly." In it is displayed, respectively, the honour and glory of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and therefore they who repudiate this truth cast a most horrible aspersion upon the character of the triune Jehovah. The final perseverance of the saints is one of the grand and distinctive blessings proclaimed by the Gospel, being an integral part of salvation itself, and therefore any outcry against this doctrine is an attack upon the very foundations of the believer's comfort and assurance. How can I go on my way rejoicing if there be doubts in

my mind whether God will continue to deal graciously with me and complete that work which He has begun in my soul? How can I sincerely thank God for having delivered me from the wrath to come if it is quite possible I may yet be cast into Hell?

Above we have said that the honour and glory of Jehovah is bound up in the final perseverance of the saints: let us now proceed to amplify that assertion. God the Father predestinated His people *“to be conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom. 8:29), which conformity is not fully wrought in any of them in this life, but awaits the day of Christ’s appearing (1 John 3:2). Now is the Father’s eternal purpose placed in jeopardy by the human will? is its fulfilment contingent upon human conduct? or, having ordained the end will He not also make infallibly effectual all means to that end? That predestination is founded upon His love: *“I have loved thee (says the Father to each of His elect) with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee”* (Jer. 31:3). Nor is there any variation in His love, for God is not fickle like us: *“I am the Lord, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”* (Mal. 3:6). Were it possible for one of God’s elect to totally apostatize and finally perish it would mean the Father had purposed something which He failed to effect and that His love was thwarted.

Consider God the Son in His mediatorial character. The elect were committed unto Him as a trust by the Father: said He *“Thine they were and Thou gayest them Me”* (John 17:6). In the covenant of redemption Christ offered to act as their Surety and to serve as their Shepherd. This involved the most stupendous task which the history of the universe records: the Son’s becoming incarnate, magnifying the Divine Law by rendering to it perfect obedience, pouring out His soul unto death as a sacrifice to Divine justice, overcoming death and the grave, and ultimately presenting *“faultless”* before God (Jude 24) the whole of His redeemed. As the good Shepherd He died for His sheep, and as the great Shepherd it is His office to preserve them from this present evil world. If He failed in this task, if any of His sheep were lost, where would be His faithfulness to His engagement? where would be the efficacy of His atonement? how could He triumphantly exclaim at

the end "*Behold I and the children which God hath given Me*" (Heb. 2:13)?

The person of the Holy Spirit is equally concerned in this vital matter. It is not sufficiently realized by the saints that they are as definitely indebted to the third Person of the Godhead as truly as they are to the first and second Persons. The Father ordained their salvation, the Son in His mediatorial character purchased it, and the Spirit "applies" and effectuates it. It is the blessed Spirit's work to make good the Father's purpose and the Son's atonement: "*He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3:5). Said Christ to His disciples "*I will not leave you orphans (though I leave this world): I will come to you*" (John 14:18). That promise given on the eve of His death was made good in the gift of the Spirit "*But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, the same shall teach you all things*" (John 14:26). Christ's redeemed were thus entrusted to the love and care of the Spirit, and should any of them be lost where would be the Spirit's sufficiency? where His power? where His faithfulness?

This, then, is no trivial doctrine we are now concerned with, for the most momentous considerations are inseparably connected with it. We are satisfied it is because of their failure to realize this that so many professing Christians perceive not the seriousness of their assenting to the opposing dogma of the total apostasy of saints. If they understood more clearly *what was involved* in affirming that some who were truly born again fell from grace, continued in a course of sin, died impenitent and were eternally lost, they would be slower to set their seal unto that which carried such horrible implications. Nor may we regard it as a matter of indifference where such grave consequences are concerned. For any of the elect to perish would necessarily entail a *defeated Father*, who was balked of the realization of His purpose: a *disappointed Son*, who would never see the full travail of His soul and be satisfied; and a *disgraced Spirit*, who had failed to preserve those entrusted to His care. From such awful errors may we be delivered.

The importance of this truth further appears from the prominent

place which is accorded it in the Holy Scriptures. Whether we turn to the Old Testament or the New it makes no difference; whether we consult the Psalms or the Prophets, the Gospels or the Epistles, we find it occupies a conspicuous position. If we cited every reference we should have to transcribe literally hundreds of verses. Instead, we will quote only a few of the lesser known ones. Here is one from the Pentateuch: *“He loved the people, all His saints are in Thy hand”* (Deut. 33:3). One from the Historical books: *“He will keep the feet of His saints”* (1 Sam. 2:8). One from Job: *“When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold”* (23:10). One from the Psalms: *“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me”* (138:8). One from the Proverbs: *“The root of the righteous shall not be moved”* (12:3 contrast Matt. 13:2 1). One from the Prophets: *“I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me”* (Jer. 32:40). These are fair samples of the Divine promises throughout the Old Testament.

Observe the place given to this truth in the teaching of Christ. *“Upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matt. 16:18). *“False Christ’s and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if possible, even the elect”* (Mark 14:22)—it is not possible for Satan to fatally deceive any of the elect. *“Whosoever cometh to Me and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock”* (Luke 6:47-48). *“This is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing”* (John 6:39). The writings of the apostles are full of it. *“For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Rom. 5:10). *“Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him”* (James 2:5). *“Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation”* (1 Pet. 1:5). *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us”* (1 John 2:19). *“Now unto*

*Him that is able to keep you from falling” (Jude 24).*

The tremendous importance of this doctrine is further evidenced by the fact that it involves the very integrity of the Scriptures. There is no mistaking their teaching on this subject: the passages quoted above make it unmistakably plain that every section of them affirms the security of the saints. He then who declares the saints are insecure so long as they remain in this evil world, who insists that they may be eternally lost, yea that some of them—like king Saul and Judas—have perished, repudiates the reliability of Holy Writ and signifies that the Divine promises are worthless. O my reader, weigh this well: the very veracity of the Lord God is concerned therein. He has promised to keep the feet of His saints, to deliver them from evil, to preserve them unto His heavenly kingdom, and *“God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? (Num. 23:19).*

Elisha Coles the Puritan used a forcible argument from the less to the greater, the substance of which shall here be given. Since the Lord made good His word in things of a lower consideration, how much more will He in the eternal salvation of His people. If certain persons were destined by Him to eminent service in this world, notwithstanding the greatest of difficulties and natural impossibilities which stood in the way to obstruct it, how much more certain is the accomplishment of His purpose concerning those vessels of mercy which He has ordained for heavenly glory! God promised Abraham that his seed should have the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7). Years passed and when little short of a century his wife was still barren, but a miracle was wrought and Isaac was born. Isaac married and for twenty years his wife remained childless, when in answer to prayer the Lord gave her conception (25:21). They had two children but the Lord rejected the elder, and the younger to whom the promise belonged was in daily danger of being killed by Esau (27:41), and to save his life he fled to Padanaram.

While in Padanaram Laban dealt harshly with him, and when he decided to return home his father-in-law followed him with evil

intentions, but the Lord interposed and warned him in a dream (Gen. 31:23, 24). But no sooner had Jacob escaped from Laban than Esau comes against him with four hundred men, determined to revenge his old grudge (32:6), but the Lord melted his heart in a moment and caused him to receive Jacob with affection. When Simeon and Levi so highly provoked the Canaanites there appeared to be every prospect that Jacob and his family would be exterminated (34:25), but the Lord caused such a terror to fall on them that they touched not a single one (35:5). When a seven years famine came on the land, threatening to consume them, by a strange providence the Lord provided for them in Egypt. There, later, Pharaoh sought their destruction; but in vain. By His mighty power Jehovah brought them forth from the house of bondage, opened a way through the Red Sea, conducted them across the wilderness and brought them into Canaan. Shall He do less for the spiritual seed of Abraham to whom He has promised the heavenly Canaan for an everlasting heritage?

Joseph was one whom the Lord would honour, and in several dreams intimated he should be exalted to a position of dignity and pre-eminence (Gen. 37). Because of that his brethren hated him, determined to frustrate those predictions and slay him (verse 18). And how shall Joseph escape? for they are ten to one and he the least. In due course they cast him into a pit, where it seemed likely he must perish; but in the good providence of God some Midianites passed that way ere any wild beast had found him. He is delivered into their hands and they bring him to Egypt and sell him to the captain of Pharaoh's guard—a man not at all likely to show kindness to him. But the Lord is pleased to give him favour in his master's eyes (39:3, 4), yet if Joseph's hopes now rose how quickly were they disappointed. Through the lies of his mistress he was cast into prison, where he spent not a few days but many years. What prospect now of preferment? Nevertheless the counsel of the Lord was made good and he became lord over Egypt!

God promised the kingdom of Israel unto David and while yet a youth he was anointed to it (1 Sam. 16:13). What! notwithstanding all interveniences? Yes, for the Lord had said it and shall He not do it! Therefore if Saul cast a javelin at him, unsuspected, to nail him

to the wall, a sharpness of eye and agility of body shall be given him to discern and avoid it (18:11). If he determined evil against him, Jonathan is moved to inform him (19:7). If he send messengers to Naioth to arrest him, they shall forget their errand and fall a prophesying (20:24). If he be in a city that will betray him, and no friend there to acquaint him of his peril, the Lord Himself is his intelligencer and sends him out (23:12). If Saul's army encompasses him about and no way to escape is left, the Philistines invade his land and the king turns away to meet them (verses 26, 27). Though there were not on earth to deliver "*He* (said David) *shall send from heaven and save me*" (Psa. 57:3). Shortly after Saul was slain and David came to the throne!

"And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel; and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (1 Kings 13:1, 2). Most remarkable was this prophecy. The kingdom of Judah had been despised and deserted by the ten tribes, yet a day will come when the house of David should so recover its power that a member of it would demolish that altar. Nothing seems more contingent and arbitrary than the giving of names to persons, yet here the name of this man is foretold centuries before his birth, and in due time he was called Josiah. During the interval of three hundred and fifty years between this prediction and its fulfilment (2 Kings 23:15, 16) things transpired which made dead against its accomplishment. Athaliah determined to destroy all the royal seed of David, but Joash is stolen from the rest and preserved (2 Kings 11:2). Hezekiah falls sick unto death, but fifteen years is added to his life rather than Manasseh, who must be Josiah's grandfather, should be unborn (20:6, 21).

"Paul was a chosen vessel, appointed to preach Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15) and at last to bear witness of Him at Rome (23:11). This must be done although bonds, imprisonment and death itself do attend him in every place. If, therefore they lie in

wait for him at Damascus and watch the gates night and day to kill him, he shall be let down by the wall in a basket and so escape them (Acts 9:24, 25). If all Jerusalem be in an uproar to kill him the chief captain shall come in with an army and rescue him (21:31, 32) though no friend to Paul nor to his cause. If more than forty men had bound themselves with an oath that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him, his kinsmen shall hear of it, and by his means the chief captain shall be his friend again and grant him a sufficient convoy (23:14-23) . . . not his being once stoned, nor his thrice suffering shipwreck, nor anything else, shall make void the purpose of God for bearing witness of Christ at Rome” (Elisha Coles).

Now my reader, why, think you, are such instances as the above recorded in the sacred Scriptures? Is it not for our instruction and consolation? Is it not to assure us that the promises of God are unimpeachable, that His counsel shall stand, that once the word has gone forth from His mouth all earth and hell combined is powerless to negative it? If the Lord was so exact in carrying out His word in these lesser things, which related only to time and earth, executing His purpose despite all outward oppositions, working miracles in order to accomplish His pleasure, how much more will He be punctilious in securing the eternal welfare of those whom He has appointed to Heavenly glory! If He bore His people of old “*upon eagles wings*” (Exod. 19:17), above the reach of danger, if He kept them as “*the apple of His eye*” (Deut. 32:10)—with all possible care and tenderness—till He brought them to Himself, think you that He will now do less for any for whom Christ died!

One of the outstanding glories of the Gospel is its promise of eternal security to all who truly believe it. The Gospel presents no third-rate Physician who is competent to treat only the milder cases, but One who heals “*all manner of sickness*” who is capable of curing the most desperate cases. It proclaims no feeble Redeemer, but One who is “*mighty to save:*” though the world, the flesh and the Devil, combine against Him, He cannot be frustrated. He who triumphed over the grave cannot be thwarted by any febleness or fickleness in His people. “*He is able* (which would



not be true if their unwillingness could balk Him) *to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him*” (Heb. 7:25). Those whom He pardons He preserves. Therefore each one who trusts in Him, though conscious of his own weakness and wickedness, may confidently exclaim “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

The importance of this truth appears clearly if we suppose the opposite. Assume that those who flee to Christ for refuge should finally end in the regions of woe: then what? Why, to what purpose would be the proclamation of a Gospel which announced “so-great salvation” only for its participants to be eventually disappointed? —it would be no better than a beautiful mirage seen by parched travellers in the desert: presenting to their view a life-giving stream, only to mock those who sought it. Why, to what purpose did Christ offer Himself as a sacrifice to God if His blood avails not for those who trust in it? Why, to what purpose is the Holy Spirit given to God’s children if He is unable to subdue the flesh in them and overcome their proclivities to wander? To what purpose is the Divine gift of faith if it fails its possessor in the ultimate outcome? If the final perseverance of the saints be a delusion, then one must close his Bible and sit down in despair.

The first of seven booklets.

