

Faith in Perfection

A Sermon

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“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”—[Psalm 138:8](#).

I HAVE SELECTED THIS TEXT, or, rather, it has been given to me to furnish a motto for the whole year to all the believing family of God now present. It was brought under my notice from the fact that I have a very dear friend, a venerable minister of the Church of England, and an earnest lover of the truth as it is in Jesus, who always sends me, at the beginning of the year, or a day or two previously, a little envelope sealed up, that I am not to open till New Year’s day, containing a printed text of Scripture, which he desires to be preserved during the remainder of the year, to act as a staff whereon we may rest through the pilgrimage of the next twelve months. When I opened my envelope I found this text, and it charmed me. It contains in itself the very essence of the grace of God. It reads like music to the soul, and is like a bottle of water in the desert to the thirsty lip. Let me read it again, and remember it, and dwell upon it, and digest it during all the year. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.”

In the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, “me,” in the text, cannot be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its bowels a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves, and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” Now, have you a concern *in* and a concern *about* heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time; that the mansions of heaven are more worthy your consideration than the dwelling-places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of the butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things, and afterwards you must

have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of Holy Scripture for you to appropriate these precious things to yourselves. Can we then, each of us put our hand upon our heart and say, without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite—can we say honestly, as in the sight of God; “I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity! I may not have assurance, but I have concern. If I cannot say, I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I cannot say, I know that my Redeemer liveth, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Well soul, if thou hast a concern about the things of God, this is thy promise, and let not Master Clip-promise take it away from thee; suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness; it is all thine, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth thee.”

Another question is suggested by the second clause, “Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever.” Have we then tasted of God’s mercy? Have you and I gone to the throne of grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus; and do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief’s petition, and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? and have we gone to our house justified by God’s mercy? Remember, O man! if thou hast never received God’s pardoning mercy and his forgiving grace, this text is a divine enclosure, into which thou hast no right to intrude; this is a banquet, of which thou hast no right to eat; this is a secret place, into which thou hast no right to enter. We must first taste God’s mercy and, having tasted that, we may believe that he will perfect that which concerneth us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart, lest you should be misled, by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak, into the foul delusion, that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, “Forsake not the works of thine own hands.” Have you then a religion which is the work of God’s hands? Many men have a religion which is their own work, there is nothing supernatural about it; human nature began it, human nature has carried it on, and as far they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force enough in it to spout a fountain into paradise, and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to heaven. You may practice morality, and I beseech you do so; you may attend to ceremonies and you have a right to do so, and must do so; you may endeavour to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ; and you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost. That man’s religion which is born on earth, and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh! beloved, except a man be born again, or *from above*, as the original has it, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh

and cannot enter heaven; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and is, therefore, capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance, which God reserves for spiritual men. Have I then the work of God in my heart? am I sure it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian, and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on, and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having began the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended, and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full.

Let each hearer, then, pause and put these three questions to himself,—Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God’s work? They are solemn questions; answer them! and if ye can even humbly say “Yes,” then come ye to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here. First, *the believer’s confidence*,—“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” Secondly, *the ground of that confidence*,—“Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever;” and thirdly, *the result and outgrowth of his confidence expressed in the prayer*,—“Forsake not the works of thine own hands.”

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER’S CONFIDENCE,—“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.” I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer, and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way.

“The Lord.” Well then the Psalmist’s confidence was a divine confidence. He did not say, “I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me;” “my faith is so strong that I shall not fail;” “my love is so warm that it will never grow cold;” “my resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it;”—no, his dependance was on the Lord—“*The Lord* will perfect that which concerneth me.” And O Christian, if thou hast any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the rock of ages, thy confidence is worse than a dream; it shall deceive thee, pierce thee, wound thee, and cast thee down to thine own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord’s works. Sure I am the Lord began the good work in our souls, he has carried it on, and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness, which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there be one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there be one contingency—one “if,” or “though,” or “but,” about my soul’s salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence, the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, he will do it all. My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord *will* do. “*The Lord* will perfect that which concerneth me.” “Oh,” says unbelief, “you will never be able to purify yourself from sin. Look at

the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that away: look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you, you will surely be lured aside and led astray.” Ah! yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honour, fit for the Master’s use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but as a little lamb; and if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might indeed lie down and die. Yet if I be clay, he is my potter, and he will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel; and if I be a lamb he is my shepherd, and he carrieth the lambs in his bosom—he wardeth off the wolf, he smiteth the destroyer, and he bringeth every sheep into the fold upon the hilltop of glory. The Lord, then, is the Christian’s divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. “Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me.”

Take the next word, “*will*.” So the Psalmist’s confidence was a confidence for the future; it is not only what the Lord does, but what the Lord will do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him; and I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God, so far as they can see him, and no farther. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table, and the drink is in the cup, but would they believe God if the table were bare, and the cup were empty? No; they have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat; but if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting. The Psalmist’s faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. The “Lord will,” says he, the “Lord will.” He looks on all through his life, and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing he will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand star-gazing into the future, and trembling, because we think we see divers portents, and strange sights, which portend some future trouble. O child of God! leave the future to thy God. O leave everything that is to come in the hand of him to whom the future is already present, and who knows beforehand everything that shalt befall thee. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future; snatch from the altar-fires of to-day a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that *He* who is to-day thy sun, shall be thy sun for ever—even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon thee; and he who is to-day thy shield shall be thy shield for evermore; and even in the thickest part of the battle he shall catch the dart, and thou shalt stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word “*will*” once again. There is a little more in it; it does not say the “Lord may,” it does not say, “I hope he will; I trust he will,” but it says he will; “The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me.” A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the sweet privilege of full assurance, and in talking with a godly Christian I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great truth that God would ne’er forsake

his people, nor leave his work undone. I was at once child, I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper, and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take his word simply as it stands, and believe it and ask no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection, than he had about his existence. He says, “the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me.” There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know *shall* happen,

“He *shall* present my soul,
Unblemish’d and complete,
Before the glory of his face,
With joys divinely great.”

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall stand, and his promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise maker, but he never was a promise breaker: he is a promise-keeping God, and his people shall prove it so. Come then, ye that are always hoping amidst trembling, and fear, but are never confident, for once take that doubting note out of your mouth, and say assuredly “the Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth me.” If I be really his child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect; if I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see his face with joy; and let whatever foes obstruct, I *shall* conquer through the Lamb’s redeeming blood. He “*will* perfect that which concerneth me.” I like to hear God’s people speak diffidently of themselves, but confidently of their God. Doubts are the greatest of sins, and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal, and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them, and speak confidently where God’s word is confident.

Now, take the next word, “The Lord *will perfect*.” That is a large word. Our Wesleyan brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect; and if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honoured and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant; and what is more, if any of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master. I have had a perfect master ever since I first knew the Lord, and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an under-master, while the great Supreme must ever be chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me,

and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, "I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house; I think I should be hardly able to get into your room." How is that? "Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would not be room for me." He did not like that; so I broke another joke or two upon his head; whereupon he went into a perfect furor. "Well friend," I said to him, "I think I am as perfect as you after all; for perfect men get angry?" He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry; at any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out. I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad; and I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites; that is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he cannot, unless he is the most impudent of imposters, talk about his being perfect. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head; if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars for ever—if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection. But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky; and yet, I feel sure, that to every believer future perfection is an absolute certainty. The day shall come, beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good; when he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out; when he shall make us not only tolerable, and bearable, and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in his sight. That day however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord, and are glorified together with Christ in heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? "The Lord will make me perfect." He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope, and every grace. He will perfect his purposes; he will perfect his promises; he will perfect my body, and perfect my soul. "He will *perfect* that which concerneth me."

And now there is the word "*that*"—"that which"—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Very indefinite, it seems; but how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! "Whatever concerns me," says he, "the Lord will perfect." Once pardon of sin concerned me; *that* he has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me; *that* he perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me; *that* he will perfect. One day, deliverance was my fear; now it is support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, "*that*" embraces all, be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. "The Lord will perfect that which *concerneth* me." Alas, beloved, we cannot say we have any good thing without having concern for it. I

suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other, our doubts always go before God's mercies; whereas we ought to believe, and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now. But though that faith be tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it surmounts even its own doubts, and cries, "The Lord will perfect even this." Have you learnt this lesson aright—being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a storm, and the mountain-waves are rolling, but down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were digged; where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph. Beloved, it is so with the Christian's heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles; but in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear, and he can say confidently, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

But I hasten to dwell upon the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth *me*." Here is the loudest note of all; this is the handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright—"that which concerneth *me*." Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all his saints; 'tis sweeter still to know that "he will perfect *me*." It is blessed to believe that all God's people shall persevere; but the essence of delight is to feel that *I* shall persevere through him. Many persons are contented with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community; they have joined a Christian church, and they think they shall be saved in the lump—in the mass; but give me a personal religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt be full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I be thirsty? Unless I drink myself, what are all these? If I be poor and in rags, ye do but mock me if ye tell me that Potosi's mines are full of treasure? You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda's diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, "It is my own," then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own, and this promise even if it were smaller would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could not see my right to it personally myself. But now, by bumble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in his merits, trusting in his death, I come to the text, and say throughout this year, and every year, "The Lord *will* perfect that which concerneth *me*"—unworthy *me*. Lost and ruined *me*. He will yet save *me*; and

"I, among the blood-wash'd throng,
Shall wave the palm, and wear the crown,
And shout loud victory."

This, then, is the believer's confidence. May God grant you the same!

II. The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this—"Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever." The believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Because of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No; he believes he shall be perfected because of God's mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the cross, and when we have climbed over so high, is it not at the cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart's content till at his cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honours down. My sins I laid there, and aught else that he has given me I would lay there too. Ye began there and your watchword is the cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the cross. And ye have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood, and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the theme of our song here; and mercy enduring for ever must be the subject of the sonnets of paradise. None other can be fit sinners; nay, and none other can be fit, grateful saints.

Come then, beloved, let us just look at this ground of our confidence, and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants when they are going to cross a bridge are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, "I am an elephant, and I must see whether it will bear me." Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of your sins. Now, I say, here is God's mercy. Ah! this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led the Lord to bring you and me into the covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like infidels; some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because he has said, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy."

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,

Or give the Creator delight?"

'Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if he chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy always is the same, he always will choose me, and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect. We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires, and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same.

The sole cause then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God, and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man; he does not save you because of anything in yourself, but because he will do as he pleases, and because he loves to act mercifully: that is his only reason. Oh! my God, if thou lovedst me when I had not any faith, thou wilt not cast me away because my faith is weak now. If thou lovedst me when I had all my sin about me, thou wilt not leave off loving me now thou hast pardoned me. If thou lovedst me when I was in my rags, and beggary, and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me; at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost, will love me, lost though I be even now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build we derive this inference, that if the base cannot move, the pyramid will not. "The mercy of God endureth for ever: the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me."

Note the very words of the text: "Thy mercy, O Lord." David brings his confidence into the court of Divine inspection, in order that it may there be proved. He says, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." It is very well for you and I to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God, and there, feeling his presence, actually present our confidence before him, and ask him to try it. There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God's tribunal; he puts it in the scales of infinite justice, and waits the decision. "Thy mercy, O Lord." Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady—

"The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do,
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view."

Can you come into God's presence and say this, or, to quote Hart's words, can you say
"Great God I'm clean,
Through Jesu's blood I'm clean."

He that can say that is blessed indeed; the Lord *shall* perfect that which concerneth him.

Ah, what if God's mercy towards men should change? Blessed be his name it cannot; it endureth for ever. But what if he should remove his mercy from one man to another? That also he will never do; it endureth for ever. But suppose we should sin so much that God's mercy should give way? It cannot give way; it endureth all the weight of sin; it endureth for ever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in him? That cannot be; we cannot sin longer than for ever—his mercy cannot be tried longer, and even if it could be tried for ever it would endure for ever. All the weight of my trouble, all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief—all these the everlasting arches of divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall

rock; the stone never shall be crumbled; it never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because his mercy endureth for ever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of his hands.

And now I come to the third and last point, and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.

III. The third particular is—THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER’S CONFIDENCE—it leads him to prayer. Out upon those men who have a confidence that helps them to live without prayer. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, and said unto me, Thou art one of God’s elect, an thou mayest live in sin, and do whatever thou pleatest, I will save thee at last.” Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas! there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered, if it be not begotten. There are some ministers—I trust they hardly know what they are about—who by leaving out the doctrine of man’s responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ. Hear then, ye seed of the presumptuous, and ye that bear the whore’s forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord hath not chosen you, neither has he cast your name into his lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously, trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah! soul; election hath nought to do with thee. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be thy lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Dost thou live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man’s damnation is just, but thine shall be emphatically so. What! dost thou dare to palm thyself off as a child of God when thou art a brat of hell? Dost thou claim that thou art a heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on thy very forehead? What! when thou art like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, dost thou dare still to claim a lot in the inheritance of the saints in light? Away with thy confidence; “Hail shall sweep away thy refuge of lies.” The true-born child of God has a spot that is not like thy spot; he is of a different mould and make from thee. Thou art a deceiver—not the legitimate child of God.

Mark, my friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not lead us to give up prayer, but leads us to prayer. “The Lord will perfect me.” Am I, therefore to say, “He will do it, and I will not pray?” No, because he will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such shallow minds that they cannot perceive how God’s determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, “Now, sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing.” He knows he is a fool when he says it; or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, “If the Lord intends to feed me, he will feed me, and I will go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, he will give me a harvest, and I shall not sow any wheat, and I shall not plough.” Suppose another were

to say, "If the Lord intends to keep me warm to-day, he will do it; so I will not put on my coat." Suppose a man should say, again, "If the Lord intends me to go to bed to-night, I shall go to bed; and, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like." You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to action. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, "I know that I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight;" no, he said, "I know that I shall conquer; therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God, and at 'em!" So with you; if you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, begin with prayer; trust the promise, and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.

And now, note this prayer,—*"Forsake not the works of thine own hands."* The prayer is full of confession; it must be that, or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses, that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him, and this is a truth, brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation; do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in communion as if he were to forsake us in temptation. When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, "Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here." When you are down on the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, "Lord, save me now," but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? for he still wants to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of hell, and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let him but withdraw the salt of his grace, and the proudest believer must be cast into the depths of hell, and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh! let this always make us cry aloud, "Forsake us not, O God."

There is yet another confession in the text—the Psalmist's confession that all he has he has from God. *"Forsake not the works of thine own hands."* I will not however dwell upon it, but urge you who are believers, to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. Let this be a new year's-day prayer. *"Forsake not the work of thine hands. Father, forsake not thy little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not thy lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great husbandman, forsake not thy little plant, lest the frost should nip it, and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now, and when I am old and grey headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse God. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against him. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my faith degenerate into presumption, and so I perish by mine own hand."* Cry

out to God, that he would not forsake you in your business, in your family; that he would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of this year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers, and having fulfilled his promise.

I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me. There has been a work done in this place, and God has blessed the congregation; but the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to make the churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new chapel, we must build something else; we must always have something in hand. If I have preached the Gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet; and when I have preached it there, I must solicit longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries, and act as a missionary throughout the nations. I am confident that God will perfect that which concerneth me; I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that he would not forsake the work of his own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labour of love is not mine, but God's. I have done nothing, except as the instrument; he has done it all. Oh, my dear friends, you that love me, as a brother in Christ, and as your pastor in the church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that he would not forsake his work; but that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God's Spirit may blow the sparks across the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to heaven, shall be accepted as whole burnt offering before the throne of God Most High.

"May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause his face to shine upon you and lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace," and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, shall be glory for ever!