

Commendation for the Steadfast

A Sermon

(No. 1814)

Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

‘I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.’ [Revelation 3:8,10.](#)

THIS is a message to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, and it is full of instruction to churches and ministers at this present time ‘He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.’ The Philadelphian church was not great, but it was good: it was not powerful, but it was faithful. The Spirit says, ‘Thou hast a little strength.’ Every band of believers has some strength: weak as we are in ourselves, the very fact of our possessing faith proves that we have a portion of strength. Still that strength is a matter of degrees and certain churches have a little strength’but only a little. I suppose that the Philadelphian church had but little strength in the following respects:’the number of its members would be small, and it had therefore but little strength for undertaking any extensive enterprise which would call for numerous bands of workers. The brethren needed all their strength concentrated on their home work, for they were few, and the miss of one or two from home evangelization and edification would be greatly felt. A church may have a very short muster-roll, and yet it may be very dear to God, who thinks more of quality than of quantity, more of obedience than of numbers. They had also little strength in the direction of talent. They were not like that famous church at Corinth, where everybody could teach everybody, but where nobody cared to learn of any one. They had but small ability to speak with tongues, or work miracles, or teach the word; but they adhered faithfully to what they had been taught by the apostles of the Lord: they were not brilliant, but they were sound. Churches with few men of learning or eloquence in them may yet be greatly approved of the Lord, who cares more for grace than learning, more for faith than talent. In all probability they were, like most of the churches of that day, possessed of very little pecuniary strength. They could do but little where money would be required. They were a company of poor people with no man of means among them; and there are many such churches that are peculiarly precious to the heart of God, who cares nothing for gold, and everything for sincerity. Possibly they were little, too, in those things which go side by side with grace: I mean in knowledge, and in power to utter what they knew. This was a pity; but as it was their misfortune and not

their fault, they were not blamed for it. The Lord does not blame us for having little strength, but for having little love, little faith, little zeal, little consecration.

The Philadelphian saints, like the limpet, which has but little strength, stuck firmly to the rock, and they are commended for it. They had little strength, but they kept God's word, and they did not deny his name. Possibly if they had felt stronger they might have presumptuously quitted the word of the Lord for the opinions of men, as the Galatians did, and then they would have lost their reward. May every church of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it have little strength or much, be concerned to be steadfast in the faith'loyal to King Jesus'firm in the truths which Christ has taught us by the Holy Ghost.

But, dear friends, as this expression was used to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, whom I suppose to be the minister of the church, I do not feel that I shall be doing any violence to the text if I take it in reference to each individual; and I have no doubt that there will be individual Christians present at this time who, though they have but little strength, have kept God's word. If so, they will receive a reward for it, according to the grace of God. They have been firm and steadfast in their confession of the faith once delivered unto the saints, and the Lord who gave them the grace to be so will give them yet more grace as the recompense of their fidelity. We will speak upon the text to-night with a view to that, and we shall notice, first, that there is *a word of praise*: God praises this faithful messenger of the church. Secondly, he gives him *a word of prospect*. He says, 'I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word.' And then, thirdly, we shall speak upon *a word of promise* which is in the text in the tenth verse: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.' Oh that my words might call out some faithful ones in these evil days. We need pillars in the house of our God. Where are they to be found?

I. First I would remind you that our text has in it A WORD OF PRAISE.

I do not think that we should be so slow as we sometimes are in praising one another. There is a general theory abroad that it is quite right and proper to point out to a brother all his imperfections, for it will be a salutary medicine to him, and prevent his being too happy in this vale of tears. Is it supposed that we shall cheer him on to do better by always finding fault with him? If so, some people ought to be very good by this time, for they have had candid friends in plenty. Find fault with a brother and he will be kept from growing too proud; and he will, no doubt, go forward blessing you very much for your kind consideration in promoting his humility. Remember also that it is so much to the increase of brotherly love to have a clear eye to see the imperfections of our friends. Does anyone in his senses think so? I should suppose that after having given a sufficient trial to that manner of procedure, it would be quite as well at times to try another, and to rejoice in everything which we see of grace in our brethren, and sometimes to thank God in their hearing for what we per-

ceive in them that we are sure is the fruit of the Spirit. If they are what they should be, they will not think so much of our little praises as to be unduly exalted thereby; but they will be sometimes so encouraged as to be nerved to higher and nobler things. If a man deserves my commendation, I am only paying a debt when I give it to him, and it is dishonest to withhold it under the pretence that he would not use the payment rightly. Men who deserve praise can bear it, and some of them even need it. I should not wonder that the kindly words of God's people may be but a rehearsal of that 'Well done, good and faithful servant' which will one day sound in their ears; and be a useful rehearsal, too, helping them on their weary way. Good men have many conflicts, let us minister to their comfort. At any rate, the great Head of the church did not think it unwise to say to the church at Philadelphia that he thought well of it because it had kept his word. Let us give honour to whom honour is due, and encourage those who are aiming to do right.

What had these Philadelphian believers done that they should be praised? What they did was this: they kept the word of God: 'Thou hast kept my word, and thou hast not denied my name.' What does this mean?

Does it not mean, first, that *they had received the word of God*; for if they had not heard it and held it they could not have kept it. It was theirs, they heard it and had no wish to hear anything else. It was theirs, they read it and searched it and made it their own. They hoarded up divine knowledge in their memories, preserved it in their affections, used it in their experience, and practised it in their lives. They were not ashamed of revealed truth, but, on the contrary, they took it for their possession, their heritage, their treasure, their all. I trust that many of us can say that the doctrines of grace are our jewels, our estate, yes, our very life. God has put us in trust with the gospel, and we will sooner part with all that we have than be false to our trust. It is no small privilege so to be taught of the Holy Ghost as to have a taste for the gospel, a deep attachment to the truths of the covenant.

Next, we may be sure that *they loved the word of God*. They had an intense delight in it. They appreciated it: they fed upon it. They stored it up as bees store away honey, and they were as ready to defend it as bees are to guard their stores. They meditated upon it; they sought to understand it; they took delight in everything which came from the mouth of God. Men do not keep things which they consider to be value-less: if men in our day had a higher opinion of the truth they would be more valiant for it. People are always ready to part with that for which they have no esteem, and for this very reason many are quite willing to give up the Bible to critics and philosophers, those footpads and burglars of faith. But he that keeps God's word, we may be sure, is deeply in love with it. Oh, dear child of God, you may be very little in Israel; but if you love the word of God there is something about you in which God takes delight. He sees you at your Bible-reading, he marks you in your endeavours to get at the meaning of his word, he notes you when you sit down and meditate upon his divine thoughts, and he takes pleasure in your eagerness to know what the will of the

Lord is. He says, 'I know thy works'; and though you may be one of little influence and little ability, yet he is pleased with you because you are pleased with his word.

More, however, is meant than simply loving the word, though that is no small thing. It means that *they believed it*, believed it most thoroughly, and so kept it. I am afraid that there are great truths in God's word which we do not intelligently believe, but take for granted. We say, 'Yes, yes; these doctrines are in the Creed;' and we put them up on the top shelf, and by that very act we lay them aside and do not heartily believe in them for ourselves. We grow very vexed if anybody denies them; but if there is no controversy over them we forget them. Is this wise? We call our opponents heterodox, and our zeal for orthodoxy comes to the front; and yet, after all, it may be that we have never exercised a personal faith about those doctrines, so as to think them out for ourselves. It is a grand thing to work your passage to a truth, to mine your way to the golden ore by digging and clearing. True believers may be likened to those mites in the cheese which eat their way into it, and penetrate into the centre by feeding upon all that lies in their way as they advance. We eat our way into the word of God, we live upon what we learn, tunnelling through the truth with receptive minds. The truth is too great for us ever to absorb it all, but daily and hourly we live upon it. We so believe it, as to treat it as a matter of fact, valuable for everyday use; this is the surest way to keep in, even to the end. Now, dear child of God, as I have said before, you may have but very little strength, you may often be tempted and tried, and cast down; but if you believe the word, there is more for the pleasing of God in a childlike faith than there is in the most glittering profession or in the most showy deeds. Faith is the Koh-i-noor among jewels,' the queen of the virtues. Believe you God's word, and you have wrought a god-like work. Believe it when others contradict it, and you are a conqueror over them all. Believe it when circumstances seem to make it questionable; believe it when your own heart fails you; believe it when your sin and corruption rise within you like a fountain of foul waters: thus shall you give glory to the God of truth. Still hold on to the promise made to you in the word of God, and to the manifestation of God which is seen in Christ Jesus, and you will be doing your God the honour which he deserves at your hands, and he will say, 'I know thy works; for thou hast a little strength, but thou hast kept my word.'

Furthermore, in addition to the inner possession and the hearty belief of the truth, we must be *ready to adhere to it at all times*. That, perhaps, is the central thought here, 'Thou hast kept my word.' Why, there are great folk among us that never care to believe according to God's word at all. They have thought out what they believe; their theology is made out of their own substance, as spiders spin their webs out of their own bowels. But, surely, in everything which concerns the doctrines of our most holy faith, we must make reference to a 'Thus, saith the Lord.' It is not what I think; it is not what some greater man may think; it is not what may be the consensus of all the enlightened minds of the period; the decision lies with what the Lord has spoken. God's thoughts are as high above ours as the heavens

are above the earth; dare we drag them down and sit in judgment on them? If the thought of the age happens to be right, well and good; but it is not upon temporary opinion that we rest. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. What is taught in Holy Scripture is sure truth to us, and every other statement must bow to it. Chillingworth said what ought to be true, though I am afraid that it is not 'The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants.' I should like to see a few more of such Protestants. Many say that we ought to keep 'abreast of the times,' whatever that may mean; and that there is a certain 'spirit of the age,' to which we should be subject. This to me is treason against sovereign truth. I know of one only spirit to whom I desire to be subject, and that is the Spirit of all the ages, who never changes. By his teaching we are not only nineteen centuries behind the present age, but we come in at the back of all the ages of human history. If we have but little strength, we mean to let the times and the spirits go where they like, we shall keep to the Holy Spirit and to his eternal teachings. Supposing that we have not such big heads as some have, and cannot excogitate or multiply sophisms and inventions as they do, it will be no small thing to be commended at the last, in these terms 'Thou hast a little strength, but thou hast kept my word.' Brother, cling to God's word; cling to infallible and immutable revelation! Whatever novelty comes up, keep to the word of Jesus! Whatever discovery may be made by the wise men of the age, let Christ be wisdom unto you. Regard the new teachers no more than you would the wise men of Gotham, for those who oppose themselves to God's word are fools. Let them cry 'Lo here, or lo there,' but believe them not. Here is your anchorage. The Book is our ultimatum.

'Within this sacred volume lies
The mystery of mysteries;
Happiest they of human race
To whom our God hath given grace
To read, to mark, to think, to pray,
To know the right, to learn the way;
But better they had ne'er been born
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.'

That which is not in Holy Scripture is not to be received as matter of faith in the Christian church; but that which is there is to be received and held with that stern steadfastness, that incorruptible faith, which no more changes than the unchanging truth which it has grasped. Woe be to the man who is first a Calvinist, then an Arminian, then a Palagian, then a Unitarian; never finding rest for the sole of his foot; keeping nothing because he has nothing to keep. This Philadelphian church had won the commendation, 'Thou hast kept my word.' Dear hearer, see that you win it too.

And no doubt also it was intended in this sense that *they had obeyed the word of God*. 'Thou hast a little strength:' there are very few of you, but you have been observant of all

precepts and ordinances. Some think it a great thing to be members of a popular sect, but when the great curtain rolls up, and all things are seen as they are, and not as they seem, do you not think that that church will be most commended which was truest to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in everything? Christian chivalry should make you feel it better to be a member of a church of six doing the Lord's work conscientiously than to be a member of a church of six millions which has turned aside from it. I could not be in communion with a church whose chief guide and authority is another book than God's word, and whose acknowledged Head is other than the Lord Jesus Christ. I had sooner stand alone than yield with a crowd to an Act of Parliament which was passed to dictate to me the form in which I may worship God. There shall come a day when it will be found that the minorities have generally saved both the world and the church. A straggling few may reckon themselves to be the majority when they stand alone *with* God, for HE counts for more than all the myriads of the earth put together. The faithful, staunch, God-fearing men that would not budge an inch, or change a letter, or shape a syllable, to please all the kings and princes of the earth, shall be found to praise and honour in the day of the Lord's appearing. These are the men that Christ shall stoop from his throne to honour: they that have trifled with his word shall be lightly esteemed: they that have wilfully broken one of the least of his commandments, and have taught men so, shall be least in the kingdom of heaven. Blessed and happy shall he be who followeth the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Blessed shall he be who only wanted to know the Lord's will that he might do it unquestioningly, caring nothing what the will of other people might be in the matter.

I shall put it home to you, dear friends, again. You may have but little strength, but *do you keep God's word?* You may never become more numerous, or more influential; but do let it be true of you, that you have kept God's word. Be students of God's word and adherents of it. Take no notice of anything I say if it cannot be supported by the word of divine truth. Take equally little notice of what any man says, be he orator, thinker, bishop, or whatever he may be. There is no value in all the brass counters which circulate among the many; they are current with the world, but the Kingdom of God does not know them. The words of men are trifling in value; it takes a mass of them to come to the value of a farthing; but any one word of the Lord is worth a mint of gold. If a doctrine be of God, if it has come out of the loving lips of the Lord Jesus, hold it fast, as for dear life. Let men call you bigot, but never mind, hold you on with all your might, and your Lord will smile upon you.

Thus have I explained what the Philadelphians did. They did it under great disadvantages, but that only helped to increase the weight of praise measured out to them. They had little talent, but they kept God's word. Oh, that men who have ten talents would not be so anxious to be original in their teaching! Oh, that they would cease to display their own thought, their own cleverness, and individuality. If you have little talent, it is a pity you have not more; but still it is for your praise if you quit yourselves like men, and stand fast in the faith. It

may be, you have little strength of mind; but I hope even then grace enables you to be firm for truth. In other things you may be easily persuaded, and readily talked over; but be you doubly stanch in the things of God. There make your mark, and put your foot down. Let it be seen that you do not go to be stirred in those vital points, till your friends say of you, 'Oh, you can twist William anywhere, but not in his religion. On that point he is a regular Puritan; there is no moving him.' May it always be so; even if you have but little strength, see to it that you keep Christ's word.

Possibly you have not much strength as to influence: your sphere may be very narrow, and your power in it very slight. That does not matter; but it does matter that you be faithful to your Lord. If you have kept God's word you may be wielding an influence far beyond what you imagine. Good men in the dark days of Popery found out the truth, but they only lived, perhaps, in some quiet village, or shut up in a monastery, and the most they could do was to write down what they knew and so keep it. We have met with instances where they wrote out part of the word of God, and hid it away in a wall; and afterwards, when the wall was pulled down, the priceless record was discovered and used. Truth does not die through being buried. Some taught the gospel very quietly in their own family circle, and so kept it. Some would get a few copies of the New Testament, and go about and sell them in their baskets; and so they kept the truth. Those men of old time whose influence upon their own age seemed so little, nevertheless prepared the way for those braver spirits who, by-and-by, shone forth like the stars of the morning. Hold fast God's word and never mind what comes of it for the moment; God's seed may not grow in a day, but it will grow. If you only influence one child, who can tell what that child may be? If you only help to strengthen one solitary Christian woman, who knows what may come to pass by her means? We see the telegraph wires, but we do not see what messages they may carry. The ropes hang down in our belfry, but the glorious chime is aloft. We cannot see the big bells, but it is ours to pull the ropes that are near our hand, and do what God bids us to do, and music will come of it somewhere. Above all, if we have but little strength of any kind, let us keep God's word.

Now, why should God's word be kept in this way? What is there to praise about keeping God's word? I answer, because *it is a holy thing* to treasure up God's word. I have gone into the churches on the Continent, and I have seen gold and silver plate in the sacristy, understood to be worth one or two or three millions of money. These were said to be the treasures of the church. Why, these are the treasures of men, and they shall pass away. The solid truth of revelation, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, a divine experience given to you by that Holy Ghost—all this is the treasure of the church, and you are doing a holy thing when you guard it against every adversary. To this purpose are saints sent into the world to keep this treasure of the church against all adversaries. Truth is the jewel for which all believers must be ready to die. Solomon made shields of gold, which were borne before the king when he went into the house of the Lord; but Rehoboam took away the shields of gold, and put shields of brass

in their place. It is to be feared many are doing the same at this moment. Let us bear our protest: the gold is good enough for us. Do not throw away the best for the sake of getting something that may be newer, but that must be far inferior. I hold one single sentence out of God's word to be of more certainty, and of more power, than all the discoveries of all the learned men of all the ages.

I might have seen the Alexandrian library burned without losing a night's rest, for the mass of its contents must have been mere rubbish; but were there one single verse of the New Testament which it were possible to blot out from human memory and record, one might be willing to lay down his life to save the glorious sentence. The mind of man sends forth pure water and impure, and it is hard to discern between the two; but from the heart of God there wells up, undiluted and unmingled, a stream of living truth which is more for man's benefit than all else out of heaven. Warriors guard kings, and crowns, and thrones; but the living truth of the living God is infinitely more worthy of our watch. Oh for ten thousand valiant men to stand about the bed of the truth, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. Therefore, as it is a holy thing, a heavenly thing, a priceless thing, keep you God's word.

Besides, *it is a wise thing*, for you that have but little strength, to keep God's word. The feeble you are the more closely should you keep to the Scriptures. Remember what Solomon says, 'The conies are a feeble folk,' but he puts them down as wise people, for they have their habitation in the rocks. If a disputer can once get you away from the Bible, he can swallow you alive; but if you will keep to Scripture, and handle this weapon, 'It is written; it is written,' the disputer may be the arch-fiend himself, but he cannot possibly get the victory over you. Your wisdom is not to try to gain keenness of mind that you may emulate the critic, but to lay hold upon God's word, and cling to it, for therein shall be your safety and your victory.

Again, dear friends, we ought to hold fast to the truth of God, because, if we have little strength, *it is there that we shall get more strength*. We shall never grow stronger by leaving the eternal word. Nay, but as we cling to God in feebleness, the divine strength of the word is infused into our souls. Besides, God's word is a supporting thing, and he who quits it leaves his chief helper. He that receives it shall live, but without it there is no spiritual life. Therefore let us hold it. If men would take away from us certain dainties which are sweet but which are not needful, we might be content to let them spoil us of such superfluities; but if they come to take away bread and water from the poor and needy, then we cannot have it. For this we must stand up and fight to the death. The word that cometh out of Christ's mouth is the daily manna of our heavenly life, and it behoves every Christian, however feeble or however strong, to keep the word of God with all his might against all comers, since it is his life. I am at this pass, I can sooner die than yield the gospel. I may be a fool, and an old-fashioned bigot, but I am not a turncoat, and I cannot quit the word of

the Lord. If I must be the last of the Puritans, I will not be ashamed of it. My Lord will revive his buried truth as sure as he is God: the present madness will cease with its own short hour.

So much, then, with regard to this word of praise.

II. I will not be long on the next point, while I just remind you that there is A WORD OF PROSPECT: 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word.'

It seems to me to mean just this, 'You have been faithful; therefore I will use you. You have been steadfast; therefore I will employ you.' For a considerable period of human life, it may be, God does not give to all of us a field of usefulness, but he provides a field of trial. There are some to whom he early opens the gate of usefulness, because he sees in them a spirit that will bear the temptation of success; but in many other cases it is questionable whether they could bear promotion, and therefore the Lord permits them to be tried in different ways until he sees that they are found faithful, and then he puts them into his service, and gives them an opportunity of bearing witness for him. Now, dear friend, perhaps hitherto you have been perfectly satisfied with holding the truth with all your might, and being faithful to it in private and in your own daily life. I want to suggest to you that if you have done this for some time the era has now arrived when you may go forward to somewhat more. There are opportunities before you now which were not there before: these are placed before *you* especially because you have been tried, and have been proved faithful. If you will now begin to talk to others about that which you love so well, you will be astonished to find how gladly they will receive it from you. You have been a receiver yourself until now, and that is well and good; but, now that you have become filled, overflow to others, and let them receive of your joy. 'How do I know that they will accept it?' say you. I know it from this fact that, as a general rule, the man that keeps God's word has an open door before him. If you have been vacillating and shift and tricky, and have believed everything and nothing, nobody will take any particular notice of what you say, except it be to shut the door against your uncertain prattle. But when they have observed how you stand to the truth, how solid, and how steadfast you are, they will give over disputing with you, and come to inquire what your views really are. People do not care about knocking their heads against brick walls, or fighting against pillars of iron; and when they see that you are firm and unmoved, they will say, 'We must let him have his own way.' When a man begins his Christian life in a kind of dubious, half-hearted way, his friends do not know whether he is really going to carry it out or not: at any rate, as he endeavours to avoid all persecution, they do not know what to think of him, and they feel encouraged to treat him as one who can be pressed and squeezed at pleasure. If there is a secret entrance to heaven he prefers it; he means to go round about and climb over the wall somewhere, or sneak in at the back gate. This poor creature has no power or influence; he is rather ridiculous than useful. Nobody ever respects him. Nobody cares a button about him. The devil himself does not trouble him much, for he knows that

he will do no harm to his kingdom, let him talk as he likes. But the man who says, 'I am going straight for glory, and if anybody is in my way so much the worse for him, for I am bound to take the right road;' such a man will find a pretty clear track. Mr. Moody would say, 'Make a bee line for heaven.' A bee knows the nearest way. and keeps to it with all its force. Let me hear each one of you say, 'I am not going to take any corners, or twists, or windabouts; but, straight away, what God bids me to do I am going to do; what he bids me believe I am going to believe; and if there is anything to be suffered for it, all right. I have added it all up, and I count the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.' This is the right kind of resolution. God help you to keep to it. Before you, my brother, the Lord God has set an open door. Go ahead! Do not be afraid. People will be willing to hear what you have to say, and, what is more, people will be converted by what you say, for God has set before you this open door, and no man can shut it. It is amazingly easy to go through a door when it is wide open, and it will be very easy to you'much easier than you think, now that you have been schooled by God's Spirit into steadfastness of character, just to say in God's name, dependent upon God's strength, what he has taught you. You will bring many to Christ, because you yourself abide in Christ.

Come, brother, you did not reckon that such usefulness would ever fall to your lot; did you? Cheer up, and get to work. Wake up to holy energy. In the Sunday-school there are little children that you will be the means of bringing to Christ if you take a class; and out at the street corners there are folks that you will turn to the Saviour if you have but the courage to stand up and preach. Out in the villages, or in the crowded city hearts await you. I say not this of you all, but only of confirmed and faithful ones. If you feel, 'I never can give up the Bible; I never can forsake the truths that I have learnt from it: they are stamped on my heart, they are cut into the very centre of my soul,' then you are the man who may safely go forth to publish the truth. There is an open door before you which no man can shut. Gird up your loins and enter it. Rush to the front. Victory lies before you. God means to use you. You are a vessel fit for the Master's use, and there never was a vessel fit for his use that he did not use one day or other. The hour needs its man quite as much as the man needs the hour. Take time by the forelock and honour your God. The Lord help you to keep his word, and then to go in for public testimony.

III. Our last point was to be A WORD OF PROMISE; for, according to the tenth verse, it is written, 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.' Those who keep God's word, shall themselves be kept from temptation. The Lord returns into his servants' bosoms that which they render to him: he gives keeping for keeping.

Now, I shall speak for myself and for you, and I know that we can bear witness that this promise is true. One says to me, 'Are you not perplexed about the prevalence of modern thought'the new phase of divinity that has come up of late, and the general progress that is

being made towards a new theology? Does it not trouble you?' Not a bit. Modern ideas do not affect me in the slightest. If all men that live or ever shall live should throw up the old Calvinism, there remains one that will hold it, for this reason that he could not hold any other. I must be crushed out of existence before my convictions of the truth of the doctrines of grace in the old-fashioned form can ever be taken from me. I am miserable, wretched, lost if the doctrines of grace be not true. I am joyous, glad, strong, happy if these doctrines be true. I cannot give them up, therefore; and especially because as I read, and the more I read, I perceive these things to be written in the word of God, and therefore I must hold them.

In this church we feel very little of the temptation which tries all the world: very seldom are any of our friends unsettled in their minds, or tormented with these hornets of heresy. 'Alas,' said one minister to me, 'I see some of my best people becoming sceptical; are you not worried by seeing the thoughtful ones drifting off into new views?' 'No, not at all.' 'Why not?' 'Because the grace of God keeps our people to their moorings. They know what they believe and they have no desire to change' If a man does not believe the doctrines of grace, he comes to hear me once, and he says, 'I am not going there any more.' He talks to some of you, and you are so dogmatic, and firmly rooted, he calls you pig-headed, and says it is no use arguing with such bigots; and so he goes to argue somewhere else. This is exactly as we would have it. When a bushel is full of wheat the good corn keeps the chaff out of the measure. This is the Lord's way of delivering those who keep his word: thus he shuts them away from the temptation that comes upon others. He seems to say, 'Dear child, since you will not go beyond my written word, you shall not be tempted to go beyond it. I will cause the enemies of the truth to leave you alone. You shall be offensive to them, or they to you, and you shall soon part company.' Remember how Mr. Bunyan pictures it. When Talkative came up to gossip with Christian and Hopeful, he chattered away upon all sorts of topics, and they were wearied with him. To get rid of him, Christian said to Hopeful, 'Now we will talk a little about experimental godliness and when they began to speak about what they had tasted and handled of divine truth, Mr. Chatterbox dropped behind. He did not like spiritual conversation, neither do any of the breed. The holy pilgrims were not so rude as to tell him to go; they only talked about heavenly things, which he did not understand, and he went of his own accord. I believe that result is sure to follow holy conversation and sound preaching. Keep to the truth, and the modern school will give you a wide berth. But if any of you try the double-shuffle in religion the plan of trying to believe a little of everything and not much of anything if you try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, you will be tempted to deadly error, and it will serve you right. In the temptation you will fall, for indeed you are fallen already. Keep the word of God, and the word of God will keep you. You will be shielded from half the temptations that fret and worry professors if you take your place and keep it against all comers.

Or perhaps the text may mean that if the temptation shall come you shall be preserved from it. The deliberately-formed conviction that the word of God is the standard of our faith, and the unwavering habit of referring everything to it and standing and falling by it, may not deliver us from every error, but they will save us from that which is the nurse and matrix of every error—that is, the habit of trusting to our own understanding, or relying upon the understandings of our fellow-men. I value more a solid confidence in the word of God than even the knowledge that comes out of it; for that faith is a saving habit, a sanctifying habit, in every way a strengthening and confirming and preserving habit. May God grant to us that whatever form of temptation may come upon the face of the earth, we may stand fast for his truth, so that none of us may perish like Judas, the son of perdition.

All this I have spoken to the people of God, but I am not ignorant that there are some here who do not know God’s word, nor love it. They have never embraced it, and to them no blessing can come through it. But why should you not receive it? Does it not strike you as being reasonable that, if God has spoken, his creatures ought to believe what he has spoken—that after he has laid down the law there should remain no room for questioning?

‘This is the judge that ends the strife,
When wit and reason fail.’

Come you, then, and search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ and let it not be said that you will not come unto him that you might have life. As God bears testimony in his word to his own dear Son, believe that testimony; accept the Saviour whom he has given, and find immediate salvation: find it to-night. Go out of the place saying, ‘I believe it.’ ‘He that believeth hath everlasting life,’ for ‘this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ I warrant you if you get faith into your soul, and the word becomes your joy and comfort, you will never let it go. You will sing as we did just now, and as I sang very heartily’

‘Let all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art
I’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.’
So may God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON’John 17.

HYMNS FROM ‘OUR OWN HYMN BOOK’669, 667, 486.