

What Saith the Scripture?

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Condensed from: A Caution to the Presumptuous

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

—1 Corinthians 10:12

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...God creates in man holy fear. Satan gives him unbelief, and we often mistake the one for the other. So with the best of virtues, the saving grace of faith, when it comes to its perfection it ripens into confidence, and there is nothing so comfortable and so desirable to the Christian, as the full assurance of faith. Hence, we find Satan, when he sees this good coin, at once takes the metal of the bottomless pit, imitates the heavenly image and superscription of assurance, and palms upon us the vice of presumption.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" but we need not be astonished, for **though we have a great right to believe that we stand, if we think we stand through the power of God—** though we cannot be **too** confident of the might of the Most High, **there is a thing so near akin to true confidence, that unless you use the greatest discernment you cannot tell the difference.** **Unholy presumption—** it is against that which I am to speak this morning... I speak not against strong faith or full assurance; God giveth it to us; it is the holiest, happiest thing that a Christian can have, and there is no state so desirable as that of being able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." It is not against that I speak, **but I warn you against that evil thing, a false confidence and presumption which creepeth over a Christian, like the cold death-sleep on the mountain-top, from which, if he is not awakened, as God will see that he shall be, death will be the inevitable consequence.** "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

...My first business shall be to **FIND OUT THE CHARACTER** intended by the presumptuous man, the man who thinks he stands... my business this morning is with God's church. The fanning must begin with the floor; the winnowing must try the wheat. So we are to winnow the church this morning to discover the presumptuous. We need not go far to find them. There are in every Christian church. **...they have not been humbled or broken in spirit, or if they have, they have fostered carnal security until it has grown to a giant and trampled the sweet flower of humility under its foot. They think they stand. I speak now of real Christians, who, notwithstanding, have grown presumptuous, and indulge in a fleshly security. May my Master arouse such, while in preaching I endeavour to go to the core and root of the matter.**

...Again, *light thoughts of sin will engender presumption. When we are first converted, our conscience is so very tender, that we are afraid of the slightest sin.* I have known young converts almost afraid to proceed a step, lest they should put their feet in the wrong direction. They will ask advice of their minister, and difficult cases of moral casuistry will they bring before us, such as we hardly know how to answer. **They have a holy timidity, a godly fear, lest they should offend against God.** But alas! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world. The sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. **It is sadly true, that even a Christian will grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him and made his blood run cold, does not alarm him in the least...** First, a little sin doth startle us. Soon we say, "Is it not a little one?" like Lot did of Zoar. Then there comes another, larger, and then another, **until by degrees we begin to regard it as but a little ill; and then you know, there comes an unholy presumption, and we think we stand.** "We have not fallen," say we, "we only did such a little thing; we have not gone astray. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We might have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it was consistent." So we palliate sin; we throw a gloss over it, we try to hide it. Christian, beware! when thou thinkest lightly of sin, then thou hast become presumptuous. Take heed, lest thou shouldst fall. Sin— a little thing! Is it not a poison! Who knows its deadliness? Sin— a little thing! Do not the little foxes spoil the vines? Sin— a little thing! Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock that wrecks a navy? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks? Will not continual droppings wear away stones? Sin— a little thing! It girded *his* head with thorns that now is crowned with glory. Sin— a little thing! It made *him* suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe, till he endured "All that incarnate God could bear, with strength enough, and none to spare." It is not a little thing, sirs. Could you weigh it in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor the least appearance of evil. But alas! loose thoughts of sin often beget a presumptuous spirit, and we think we stand...

We none of us value religion enough. Religious furor, as it is called, is laughed at everywhere; but I do not believe there is such a thing as religious furor at all. If a man could be so enthusiastic as to give his body to be burned at the stake, could he pour out his drops of blood and turn each drop into a life, and then let that life be slaughtered in perpetual martyrdom, he would not love his God too much. **Oh, no! when we think that this world is but a narrow space; that time will soon be gone, and we shall be in the for-ever of eternity; when we consider we must be either in hell or in heaven throughout a never- ending state of immortality, how sirs, can we love too much? how can we set too high a value on the immortal soul? Can we ask too great a price for heaven? Can we think we do too much to serve that God who gave himself for our sins? Ah! no; and yet my friends, most of us do not sufficiently regard the value of religion. We cannot any of us estimate the soul rightly; we have nothing with which to compare it.** Gold is sordid dust; diamonds are but small lumps of congealed air that can be made to melt away. We have nought with which to compare the soul; therefore we cannot tell its value. It is because we do not know this, that we presume. Doth the miser who loves his gold let it be scattered on the floor that his servant may steal it? Doth he not hide it in some secret place where no eye shall behold it? Day after day, night after night, he counteth out his treasure because he loves it. Doth the mother trust her babe by the riverside? Doth she not in her sleep think of it? and when it is sick, will she leave it to the care of some poor nurse, who may suffer it to die? Oh! no; **what we love, we will not wantonly throw away; what we esteem most precious, we will guard with the most anxious care. So, if Christians knew the value of their**

souls, if they estimated religion at its proper rate, they never would presume; but low thoughts of Christ, low thoughts of God, mean thoughts of our souls' eternal state—these things tend to make us carelessly secure. Take heed, therefore, of low ideas of the gospel, lest ye be overtaken by the evil one...

But to finish this delineation of a presumptuous *man*—***Pride is the most pregnant cause of presumption. In all its various shapes it is the fountain of carnal security. Sometimes it is pride of talent. God has endowed a man with gifts; he is able to stand before the multitude, or to write for the many; he has a discerning mind, he has a judgment, and such like things...*** And thus in his self-complacency he thinks he stands. Ah! those are the men that fall. How many that flamed like comets in the sky of the religious world have rushed into space and been quenched in darkness! **...his lamp was quenched**, and his light put out in darkness... "Let him that thinketh he standeth," with the proudest talents, "take heed lest he fall."

Others have the *pride of grace*. That is a curious fact; but there is such a thing as being proud of grace... He who boasts of grace, has little grace to boast of. But there are some who do that, who think their graces can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, else the bed of the brook shall soon be dry, and ye shall see the pebbles at the bottom. **If a continuous stream of oil come not to the lamp, though it burn brightly to-day, it shall smoke to-morrow, and noxious will be the scent thereof.** Take heed that thou neither gloriest in thy talents nor in thy graces... **Pride cometh before a fall; and a haughty spirit is the usher of destruction.** Take heed; watch thy footsteps; for where pride creepeth in, it is the worm at the root of the gourd, causing it to wither and die. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," because of pride of talent, or grace, or privilege, "take heed lest he fall."

I hope I have touched some here; I trust the lancet has been sharp; I have taken the scalpel, and I hope I have discovered something. O ye presumptuous ones, **I speak to you...**

...Though God has given his angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways, yet **there is no commission to keep him when he goes astray; and when he is astray he may thrust himself through with many sorrows...**

Ye know not how some of those enter heaven who are saved, "so as by fire." One man walks to heaven; he keeps consistent; God is with him, and he is happy all his journey through. Another says, "I am strong, I shall not fall." He runs aside to pluck a flower; he sees something which the devil has laid in his way; he is caught first in this gin, and then in that trap; and when he comes near the river, instead of finding before him that stream of nectar of which the dying Christian drinks, he sees fire through which he has to pass, blazing upon the surface of the water. The river is on fire, and as he enters it he is scorched and burned. The hand of God is lifted up saying, "Come on, come on;" but as he dips his foot in the stream, he finds the fire kindling around him, and though the hand clutches him by the hair of the head, and drags him through, he stands upon the shore of heaven, and cries, "I am a monument of divine mercy, for I have been saved so as by fire." **Oh ! do you want to be saved by fire, Christians? Would ye no rather enter heaven, singing songs of praises? Would ye not glorify him on earth, and then give your last testimony with, "Victory, victory, victory, unto him that loved us;" then shut your eyes on earth, and open them in heaven? If you would do so,**

presume not. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Once more, my brother, take heed, because a fall will so much damage the cause of Christ. Nothing has hurt religion one-half, or one thousandth part, so much as the fall of God's people. Ah ! when a true believer sins, how will the world point at him. "That man was a deacon, but he knows how to charge exorbitantly. That man was a professor, but he can cheat as well as his neighbours. That man is a minister, and he lives in sin." Oh ! when the mighty fall—it is rejoice fir tree, for the cedar has fallen—how does the world exult ! They chuckle over our sin; they rejoice over our faults; they fly around us, and **if they can see one point where we are vulnerable, how will they say, "See these holy people are no better than they should be." Because there is one hypocrite, men set down all the rest the same... take heed; let them always, in their conduct, have the ring of true gold. Let your conversation be such as to become the gospel of Christ, lest by any means the enemy get the advantage over us, and slander the name of Jesus...**

And now what more can I say ? Oh ye, my beloved, ye my brethren, think not that ye stand, lest ye should fall. Oh ye fellow heirs of everlasting life and glory, we are marching along through this weary pilgrimage; and I, whom God hath called to preach to you, would turn affectionately to you little ones, and say, take heed lest ye fall. My brother, stumble not. There lieth the gin, there the snare. I am come to gather the stones out of the road, and take away the stumbling blocks. **But what can I do unless, with due care and caution, ye yourselves walk guardedly.** Oh, my brethren; be much more in prayer than ever. Spend more time in pious adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of him; **and when that happy day shall come when he whom you love shall say, "Come up higher," let it be your happiness to hear him say, "Come my beloved, thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, and henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away".** On, Christian, with care and caution ! On, with holy fear and trembling ! On yet, with faith and confidence, for thou shalt not fall. Read the next verse of this very chapter: "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, **also make a way to escape...**

Sirs, there are some of you who know ye have not believed in Christ... Surely ye need no argument. If I thought ye did I would use it. I would stand and weep till ye came to Christ. If I thought I was strong enough to fetch a soul to Jesus, **if I thought that moral suasion could win you, I would go round to each of your seats and beg of you in God's name to repent.** But since I cannot do that, I have done my duty when I have prophesied to the dry bones. Remember we shall meet again. I boast of neither eloquence nor talent, and I cannot understand why ye come here; I only speak right on, and tell you what I feel; but mark me, when we meet before God's bar, however ill I may have spoken, I shall be able to say, that I said to you, "Believe on the name of Jesus, and ye shall be saved." Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Is hell so sweet, is everlasting torment so much to be desired, that therefore ye can let go the glories of heaven, the bliss of eternity? **Men, are ye to live for ever? or, are ye to die like brutes? "Live!" say you, Well, then, are you not desirous to live in a state of bliss? Oh, may God grant you grace to turn to him with full purpose of heart! Come, guilty sinner, come! God help you to come,** and I shall be well repaid, if but one soul be added to the visible fold of Jesus, through

ought I may have said.

What Saith the Scripture? An Exhortation of Love

There is great joy in fellowship. But if you have not given a full clearing in the matter of sin, fellowship is broken. "In all things ye have [not] approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:11). Your testimony should be of one who has accepted **all** of the blame, who makes **no** excuses, and has a broken and contrite heart, as described by the LORD, i.e.,

- "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and **trembleth** at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2).
- "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast **humbled** thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD" (2 Kings 22:19).
- "The sacrifices of God are **a broken spirit**: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).
- "He healeth the **broken in heart**, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).
- "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4).
- "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6).

The Apostle Paul's description of True Repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

- Therefore, "Repent... do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).
- "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8).
- "Of how much **sorer** punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the BLOOD of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

- "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20).
- "Confess your faults one to another" (James 5:16).
- "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3).

You can't lose salvation-- but while you abide in sin, how do you **know** you ever were saved? "The Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). But "the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32) can be quenched (literally, extinguished) and then cease His "witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God".

- "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And **hereby we know** that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24).
- "**Quench** not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
- "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are **manifest**, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:7-10).
- "And hereby we do **know** that we know Him, **if** we keep His Commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is **not** in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby **know** we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5).
- "And being made perfect, He became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that **obey** Him" (Hebrews 5:9).
- "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous (literally, burdensome)" (1 John 5:3).

It is Love that binds. It is Love that restores.

- "Rebuke a Wise Man, And He Will Love Thee" (Proverbs 9:8)
- "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).
- "persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" (Hebrews 6:9).
- "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6).

Come clean before Him, and before those you've offended. Prove to yourself, and others, that you are

a Christian. Act like Christ.

- "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Peter 1:15).
- "And every man that hath this Hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).
- "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8).
- "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).
- "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:9-10).
- "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (Philippians 2:16).
- "Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

What Saith the Scripture?

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit"

(Psalm. 34:18).