

HOLD FAST YOUR SHIELD

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A SERMON
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“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.”
Hebrews 10:35. (NKJV)

THE early Christians had to suffer for their faith. They were exposed to great ridicule and enmity. They were, indeed, the byword, the laughingstock, and the derision of all mankind. There are still to be seen in Rome, in the praetorian guardroom, caricatures of Christians and of their Lord. I dare not mention what they are, but they are so insulting to everything which we hold dear that they remain as lasting evidence that Christians were counted as the offscouring of all things for the sake of Jesus, their crucified Savior. Nor did it end in ridicule. They were deprived of their goods. Ruinous fines were exacted from them. They were driven from city to city and not thought worthy to dwell among the sons of men. They were made a spectacle to all men, both in their lives and deaths. Very frequently they were not put to death as other condemned persons were, but their execution was attended with circumstances of cruelty and scorn which made it still harder to bear. They were daubed with pitch and set up in the gardens of Nero to be burned alive to light that tyrant's debaucheries, or taken to the amphitheater, there to fight with beasts and to be torn in pieces. Everything that could be invented that was at once degrading and cruel, their persecutors devised for them. Malice exhausted its ingenuity upon believers in Christ. Yet there was never a braver race of men. “Men,” did I say? Why, the women were as brave as their brothers. The name of such women as Blandina will remain in everlasting recollection. Set in a hot iron chair, tormented with whips, or tossed upon the horns of bulls, such heroines showed no cowardice. The tenderness of their sex only increased the glory of the courage with which they adhered to their Master under unutterable torments. The despised sect wearied out a long succession of Roman emperors. Those despots passed edict upon edict, each one more ferocious than its predecessor, in order to exterminate the followers of the Nazarene. But the more they persecuted them, the more they multiplied. And instead of hiding themselves, they came boldly to the courts of the magistrates, confessing Christ and defying death.

Never was the victory of patience more complete than in the early church. The anvil broke the hammer by bearing all the blows that the hammer could place upon it. The patience of the saints was stronger than the cruelty of tyrants. Christ, then, the immortal Christ, was stronger than all the pangs of death and they triumphed though they were slain. Truly did the apostle say, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” The secret reason for the triumph of Christians in those circumstances was *their confidence in Christ*. Brethren and sisters, we are not subjected to the same persecution and it will not do for us to wrap ourselves about with the garments of our ancestors and say that Christians are this and that, as though we were to be honored without enduring trial. Yet remember, there are still conflicts for you. If you are real Christians, you will have to endure the trial of cruel mockeries. In some cases, family ties are the source of far greater sorrow than comfort. Truly is it written, “A man's foes shall be they of his own household.” The coming of the gospel into a man's heart has often rendered him the object of hatred to those who loved him before. In his own house and in society abroad, the Christian working man has, at this day, to run the gauntlet much more severely than some suppose. And in almost every sphere of life, the genuine Christian meets with the “cold shoulder” and the sneer—and sometimes with cruel misrepresentation and slander, for until the hearts of men are changed, persecution in some form or other will continue. Those that are born after the flesh will always persecute those that are born after the Spirit.

For us, then, our only defense is holy confidence—the confidence which sustained the martyrs—and to us Paul speaks as well as unto them. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.”

Let us notice, first, *the elements of this confidence* of which the apostle speaks. And then we shall speak upon *how it may be cast away*. God grant we may never attempt to do so. Thirdly, let us consider *why it should be held fast*—because it “has great recompense of reward.”

I. First, then, **WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF THIS CONFIDENCE** of which the apostle speaks?

Those who are acquainted with the original will know that it is not very easy to explain this word in one English word. The nearest approach to it would be *boldness*—“Cast not away your boldness.” It is frequently translated by that word. In Acts, where we read, “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John,” it is the same word in the Greek as that which is here translated, “confidence.” But it means something rather different from boldness, because we read of Christ, in the gospel by Mark, that He spoke *openly*—and there the word is precisely that which is here used and translated “confidence.” And the apostle says, “We use great *plainness* of speech,” and there the word is the same also. It means that freedom, that peace, that at-home-ness, which makes a man feel bold, free, confident. We come back to the word in the text—your confidence, your child-like plainness, freedom, quietude, peace of heart, rest, sense of security, and therefore courage. The apostle meant a great deal when he said, “Cast not away therefore your confidence.”

And the elements of it seem to me to be these. First, *confidence in the principles which you have espoused*. Some persons appear to think that a state of doubt is the very best which we can possibly reach. They are very wise and highly cultured individuals and they imagine that by their advanced judgments nothing in the world can be regarded as assuredly true. Some of the broad church school would seem to believe that no doctrine in the Bible is worth dying for, or worth anybody’s losing over and above a halfpenny for. They do not feel sure of any doctrine—it may be true and there is a good deal to be said for it, but then, a good deal may be said on the other side—and you must hold your mind, “receptive,” and be ready to accept “new truth.” Some Robinson or other said something about new truth, as if there ever could be such a thing, and under cover of his probably misinterpreted speech, like chameleons, they are always taking their hue from the particular light that falls upon them. They have no light in themselves and no truth which they hold to be vital. Such people cannot understand this confidence, but the smallest babes in the family of faith know what it means. Here are certain things which God has taught me. I believe them and am sure about them. “Dogmatical,” one says. Exactly so, call it what you like, but we are bold to confess that there remains no doubt to us after God has spoken. The question is solved by God’s Word. The doubt is laid to sleep forever by the witness of the Holy Spirit. Oh, to know the grand truths of the gospel and to know them infallibly. For instance, the grand doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God—to know it and hold it and be able to say, “Let others question and quibble, but I believe it. It is my only hope, it is all my salvation. I stake my soul upon it. If that is not true, then am I lost.” And so with regard to all the other grand truths of revelation, the thing is to know them and grasp them firmly. There must be leverage if we would move men and to have a leverage you must have a fixed point. There must be certain undoubted truths about which you can sing, “O God, my heart is fixed. My heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise”—things which you perceive to be plainly taught in the Scriptures—things brought home by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the groundwork of true confidence. But to make it complete there must be *an open acknowledgement of our belief in our Lord Jesus*. The apostle has said, “Hold fast the profession of your faith,” not merely your faith, but the profession of it. To hold a truth which I am ashamed to utter is to be false both to God and man. To have convictions which I stifle and principles which I dare not profess is to be unworthy of the Lord that bought me and unworthy of the Spirit who has instructed me. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God forbid that we should refuse to glory in that. Let us never cloak our faith in Jesus, whatever the company, and though we are not to cast pearls before swine, yet if a time comes to exhibit pearls, let us not conceal them, even though swine should gaze upon them. We are not sent into the world to comfortably sneak through it into heaven, but we are

sent, like a troop of soldiers, to fight our way and to win a victory all along from the beginning of our pilgrimage even to the close of it. The colors are not to be covered up and kept by the color-sergeant in a tent somewhere in the rear. They are to be unfurled to the breeze and borne in the front and every believing soldier is to labor earnestly to bear them farther forward and to smite the foe that dares to insult the standard of the Lord. “Cast not away your confidence;” that is, hold confidently the truths which God has taught you and never blush or stammer, or show the slightest sign of hesitancy in avowing them.

To do all this you must *know your own interest in those truths*. A man will readily let go a truth which may condemn him. Who will die for a truth in which he has no share? The man who can live and die for Christ is the man who believes that Christ has lived and died for him. A doctrine—what is that? A mere statement written in a book. It stirs no man’s heart and awakens no one’s enthusiasm. But a blessed truth which has been verified in one’s own experience, in which one feels that he has a share, no, which is all his own—this is a thing for which a man may well be willing to be counted the offscouring of all things. Beloved Christian friends, do you know that you have passed from death unto life? If so, you do not doubt the doctrine of conversion. Do you know that you have been washed in the blood of Jesus? If so, you do not doubt the doctrine of atonement. Do you know that Christ has saved you, and that you are one with Him? Then you do not doubt the doctrine of union to Christ. Do you know that He has preserved you to this day? Then you do not doubt His faithfulness—you have proof of it before your eyes. We must “eat this roll,” as Ezekiel did, before we can bear testimony to it. The truths must be the food of our spirits, the sustenance of our inward life, before we can have that confidence in it which the apostle bids us never to cast away.

These are the first points of confidence—a full conviction of the truth of the gospel, willingness to confess it, and a full assurance of our own interest in it. But the word, as I have said, cannot have all its meaning brought out by this word boldness. It means beside, *a full and firm reliance upon the faithfulness of God*, so that we are free from all mistrusts, fears, and simply rest in God. It is a very sweet thing to admit that God is true and to sing with the psalmist of old, “His mercy endures forever.” “Why,” says one, “that is a very simple fact and I never doubted it.” Dear brethren, when the Holy Spirit taught the psalmist to make that psalm whose many verses conclude with, “His mercy endures forever,” He knew very well that we do not so easily believe in the Lord’s enduring mercy as we think we do. And therefore He has given us line upon line and precept upon precept. Do you not feel that you have a very great deal of faith in God when you have no afflictions? Do you not feel sure about your daily bread when you have a good job, or have an excellent pension, or a good sum of money in the bank? Such faith is very easy and very unreal—the publicans and sinners have that faith. But to trust in God when you see nothing but starvation before you, to believe when you cannot see, ah, this is another kind of faith, and *the* faith and the only faith that is of the operation of the Spirit of God. I wonder whether you could have believed in Jesus if, for having been here last night, you had been arrested at the foot of the steps of the Tabernacle and taken off to Horsemonger Lane jail, and kept there in prison in the dark, with only bread and water for several months. Suppose you were occasionally stretched upon the rack, or beaten with rods? Would you feel, in the loneliness of the prison, smarting under the wounds you endured, quite sure that all things worked together for good—quite certain of that promise, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? If it were intimated to you that tomorrow morning you must go out to be burned to death in the great square of the city, or to be torn to pieces in the amphitheatre by wild beasts, would you be quite sure that the promises of God were faithful and true? Yet, beloved, that is the kind of faith we must have, for God deserves it. He cannot lie. He has promised that those who trust in Him shall never be forsaken or confounded world without end. Now, to have the confidence of the text, we must subscribe in heart to a full surrender—“Whatever happens, I believe in God. Come what may, I rest in His promises and I leave my matters entirely in His hands, resting them with Him as with a faithful Creator.” Happy is the man who has this confidence. Let him take care that he never casts it away.

Where that confidence really reigns in the soul, it takes the form of a sense of *full acceptance before God*. Let me illustrate that by the condition of a child. A child that lives in full confidence with its father is quite sure of its father’s love. It is also sure about its father’s wisdom and consequently, quite content with all its father’s dealings. This is confidence and the sort of confidence which is meant in the text.

That, at least, is part of what is meant—confidence towards God—confidence that all is well between my soul and God. Confidence that I can walk with Him in the light as He is in the light—that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin and therefore I have fellowship with Him as a man has fellowship with his friend. We must have confidence so as to avail ourselves of perpetual access to God, so as to be able to speak with Him at all times, not merely in the closet where we are accustomed to pray, but everywhere. True confidence makes the believer feel, “I am God’s child. I can speak with my Lord whenever I will and I can hear His voice everywhere—hear it in nature as well as in the Bible. I dwell always in my Father’s own house at home and I know that ‘goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.’” Oh, what a sweet feeling that is, to know that you are always near to God, that He is always with you and consequently, you are always at home and your Father is always accessible.

Upon this there follows that further confidence, of which John says, “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us”—confidence that *when we pray we shall be heard*. Now, all Christians accept this as a matter of doctrine, but very few Christians really believe it. When you talk to them about God’s hearing prayer, they open their eyes at you. You tell them some cases in which He has answered you, and they look upon you as a wonder. Dear Mr. Muller’s orphanage at Bristol is thought to be a sort of miracle and we ourselves, in that and other cases, are conscious of a feeling of astonishment when we hear of God’s answering prayer. It should not be so. If we have the confidence we ought to have in our heavenly Father, we shall be astonished at His goodness, but we shall not be astonished at the fact that He keeps His promises and answers His children’s prayers. I sometimes felt, when I was a child, astonished at my father’s goodness in giving me what I asked for. But not when he had previously promised it to me. A loving child asks with expectation. Probably if he had not the expectation he would scarcely ask, but he asks because he expects to receive. And oh, what a sweet confidence that is—to know that God is your Father, that you are on happy terms with Him through Jesus Christ, and that you may speak to Him and whatever you desire you may ask of Him, pleading that promise—“Delight yourself also in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Oh, blessed, blessed confidence! May we always enjoy it!

Over and above that, how delightful to feel that *even what we do not pray for, by reason of ignorance or forgetfulness, our gracious God will bestow*. “Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.” I would pray as if I had to remind the Lord of everything, and yet feel when I have done that, He has never forgotten, nor could He fail to give anything that was good for me, for did He not say, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly”? Beloved, this is the confidence that we have towards God that He will bestow upon us all things necessary for this life and godliness. That He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able and that when He sends a trial, He will also make a way of escape. “Ah,” says one, “that is a happy way of living if we could only attain to it.” That is how you ought to live, dear brethren, and if you ever do so live, then remember the text, “Cast not away therefore your confidence.” If you get it, hold it. If you have a childlike simplicity of confidence in God, reckon it to be a priceless jewel and watch it night and day. Let no one rob you of it, but labor with might and main, by His blessed Spirit, to abide in this confidence as long as you live.

You may add to all this the confidence that *He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him*, for we have this confidence—that whether we sleep or wake we shall be together with Him. “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord,” for we are confident that though we shall drop this tabernacle, “We have a temple of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” With confidence we are looking forward to resurrection after death. We are looking forward to a grand reunion with the beloved ones that have gone before. We are looking forward to being satisfied when we awake in His likeness. We are looking forward to seeing the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. We are looking forward to sitting upon Christ’s throne, even as He overcame and has sat down with His Father upon His throne. We comfort one another with these words. Yes, we joy and rejoice and we reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Oh, blessed confidence, the confidence that He will keep us while we are here and will glorify us hereafter. As sure as Christ is glorified so must His people

be. “If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.” This is the confidence we have in Him. Cast not away your confidence.

II. Having thus labored as best I could to show the confidence, let us now spend a few moments in considering how WE MAY CAST IT AWAY.

It strikes one, at once, on reading the passage—and the best expositors think so too—that there is here an allusion to the Greek soldier with his shield on his arm. When he went out to battle wearing his shield, which covered him from head to foot, the rule was that he must either come back with his shield or be brought back upon it—but he must never cast it away. Among the Spartans, there was a law that any soldier who cast away his shield must die—he was not fit to be a soldier. You remember how one of the old Scriptural songs speaks of the shield of the mighty which was vilely cast away? This showed that in the old war times, the casting away of your shield was a disgrace. It was showing the white feather. It was giving up the conflict and ceasing to hope for safety, much less victory. Our confidence is our shield and we are not to cast it away, or suffer any to tear it from us, but hold it fast until the battle is fought and the victory is won forever.

How can you cast your confidence away? You can cast it away by *exchanging it for self-confidence*. You can get off from the platform on which you now stand, which is that of simple confidence in your Savior, and you can very readily grow confident in yourselves. All along the road to heaven there are many junctions and at every one of these, the devil cries out, “Change here for self-righteousness!” The high level railway of the perfect brethren has been much infested of late by devils which cry, “Change here for self-confidence!” When I hear how good they are and how they have conquered their tempers, I am delighted to hear that they are on such good terms with themselves. But at the same time I remember the proverb, “Let another praise you and not your own lips,” and I conclude that if they had been quite as good as they say they are, they would have held their tongues about it. My dear brethren, you who have begun in the Spirit, do you hope to be perfected by the flesh? Hang on to Christ as a sinner’s Savior till you die. If it has been Christ up till now, do not put, “Christ and Co.” for that firm will fail inasmuch as one of the partners is already a bankrupt. Christ alone will stand and stand forever. Whatever run there may be upon that bank, it will pay out gold coin without end. When *you* come in, it is a *self-reliance* altogether. Better to yoke a cherub with an ant than to think of yoking yourself with Christ. You have cast away your confidence if in any measure or degree you confide in self. God keep us from that and hold us fast to the platform of simple reliance on Christ. I remember telling you years ago a story you have often met with since, of poor Jack the huckster who heard a little ditty sung—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”***

That exactly suited Jack because he had nothing of his own and so he took Christ and trusted Him. He wanted to join the church and they asked what was his experience, and he said he did not think he had any, only he was a poor sinner and nothing at all and Jesus Christ was his all in all. “But,” they said, “don’t you have doubts?” And he said, “Well, what is there to doubt? I know that I am a poor sinner and nothing at all, I cannot doubt that. And Jesus Christ is my all in all, for the Bible says so, and why should I doubt it?” They could never get him away from that standpoint—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”***

Ah, brethren, if you get an inch above that platform, you will have to come down again. Be empty and Christ will be your fullness. But if you become full in yourself you have done with Christ. Cast not away your confidence by leaving your simple reliance upon Jesus Christ.

Some, however, cast away their confidence by *giving way to sin*. Look at the child I spoke of just now who has such confidence in his father. He goes in and out the house and asks for what he wants and expects to receive it because he knows his father loves him. But see, he has done what his father told him not to do! Do you not see that his confidence is gone? At night he slinks away to bed. In the morning at breakfast he does not eat much, for his father is grieved. That child does not think that he has ceased to be his father’s child, but he knows that his father is grieved with him and he cannot act with freedom and confidence. If his brothers were to say, “John, ask father for such-and-such,” he would say,

“No, you had better; I am out of favor with him.” Perhaps the father has not said a word, yet, but the boy is conscious of having done wrong and is ill at ease. If he is a wise child he will go at once, and say, “Father, I have done wrong. Forgive me.” And after his father has said, “Yes, dear child, I forgive you,” his confidence will return. But by doing wrong, he has cast away his confidence. He has faith in his father that he will provide him with food and raiment and all things necessary—he never loses that faith—but when he disobeys, he has not that confidence towards his father which enables him to act as a loving, favored child should do. My brothers and sisters, we cannot enjoy confidence towards God if we live in disobedience. Old Master Brooks says, “Assurance will make us leave off sinning, or sinning will make us leave off assurance.” And depend upon it, it will. He who lives in the light of God’s countenance must mind what he is doing. Kings’ favorites live under a jealous eye. More is expected from those who lean their heads upon Christ’s bosom than from any other of the disciples. You cannot grieve your heavenly Father and yet feel the same confidence towards Him.

Perhaps some of you know that you have not this confidence. Remember that the Lord is ready to forgive you. He is waiting for you to come and say, “Father, I have sinned.” Never let sin rankle in your conscience. It is well every night to clear all out by confession. Dear Mr. Muller said from this pulpit, “Do not begin the day unless you feel happy in the Lord.” The advice is good. See that you walk in obedience with great watchfulness, so shall you have the freedom of children towards God. “Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.”

There is another way of losing our confidence, and that is *by getting into worldly company* and mixing up with the gay and frivolous. A child would soon lose his loving, confident feeling towards his father if his father had an enemy and he constantly went into that enemy’s house and heard all the language that was used there. Why, he would gradually harbor hard and wrong thoughts about his father—and if his father knew that he had been associating with his enemies, the child could not feel towards his father as before. Have you been cast into company some evening where the conversation was not at all to edification, but light and frivolous and perhaps worse? If you are a child of God, have you not felt unfit for devotion when you reached home? You wanted to pray, but you could not.

A deadening influence will come over your intimate communion with God if you are on close terms with unbelievers. You cannot walk with God and His enemies. You cannot be in league with Christ and Belial at the same time, or sit at your Master’s table and expect Him to smile upon you after you have partaken of the cup of devils. Do not lose your sweet confidence and holy boldness in God’s presence by associating with the world, but come out from among them and be you separate.

You can very easily lose your confidence *by changing your aim in life*. The Christian’s aim in life is to live for God’s glory. If he does so, no persecution can ever shake him. If his goods are spoiled, he says, “If it glorifies God for me to lose my property, I am no loser. I gave my goods to God years ago.” If he is put in prison, he says, “I have lost my liberty, but I am no loser. I gave up my liberty to God long ago.” If they tell him that he will die, he says, “Well, I am no loser, for I gave Him my life long ago. I am altogether Christ’s.” While your objective is God, you will be bold as a lion. But a sordid motive is the mother of cowardice. Suppose a minister preaches so that he may receive honor from men? How anxious he will be to please his hearers—and he will cut and trim to do so. But if his sole objective is the glory of God, he will not smooth his speech or withhold rebukes because of man’s anger. He will care no more for human criticism than for the sighing of the rushes by the river. If we once shift our motive, if we seek after honor from men, or for money, or anything of self, we have cast away our confidence. You can be perfectly confident when you feel, “What I have done I did for God’s glory. I have a clear conscience about it.” But your confidence is gone if your motive is selfish. Why, you can look 7,000 devils in the face and not care for one of them when your conscience will bear the piercing eyes of God. But if you must confess to sordid motives, you fall from your excellence and stand in doubt of your own honesty. Cast not away your confidence, then, by shifting your aim.

Alas, dear friends, some unhappy professors have apparently cast away their confidence *in utter unbelief*. They set out with a great confidence of a certain sort. Like Pliable, from the City of Destruction, they were going to have the Celestial City and enjoy it forever. But they fell into the Slough of Despond and they felt that their confidence could not be kept up—and so they got out of the slough on the side

that was nearest their own house—and went back through sheer despair of better things. May God keep you from this! Remember, if you really are Christians, there is nothing for you but to fight it through. This is what Bunyan impresses upon us in his portrait of the Pilgrim, who, when he saw Apollyon standing across the way and heard him swear that he would spill his soul, would have turned back, but he reflected that he had no armor for his back, so that to retreat would be certain destruction. For you there is nothing but to cut a lane right through your enemies till you come up to the throne of God. To turn back means sure damnation. God's vengeance rests upon the deserter and the apostate. Oh then, brethren, we must go forward. And may God the Holy Spirit help us to do so. If we think of turning aside, we are casting away our confidence and renouncing its reward.

III. I will close by noticing THE REASONS GIVEN IN THE TEXT FOR HOLDING FAST OUR CONFIDENCE.

The first argument in the text is “therefore.” “Cast not away *therefore* your confidence.” What does this “therefore” mean? Why, it means this—*because you have already endured so much*. You were made a laughingstock and you suffered the loss of your goods, therefore, cast not away your confidence, for if you do, you will have suffered for nothing. I have known a man begin to build his house and he has spent a great deal of money upon it. But, at length, he has thought, “I do not quite like the situation. Shall I finish the building?” One strong argument for going on has been this, “I have spent so much money on it; I must go through with it.” Now, some of you have spent much upon your faith. By God's grace you have been, for years, following on to know the Lord. You bore the troubles of your early youth when perhaps father and mother were against you and you were bold then for Christ. Some of you have been known as Christian working men for years and you have encountered the chaff of the workshop for many a month and yet you have not gone back. Well, you have spent a good deal upon your faith—never give it up, my brother—never give it up. If, for your Lord's sake, you have had the honor to be abused and scandalized, do not turn your back, now. What? Have you half routed the enemy and will you now flee? Believe me, the rest of them will be routed, too. Yon cowards have fled before you already, fight on till the rest are vanquished. “But,” you say, “They come up thick and fast.” So much the better, for so much the grander the victory in the end; you can overcome them—by God's grace you can. Do not lose the victories which you have already gained. If it was wise to go so far, it will be wise to go on to the end. Cry for grace to persevere, for he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved, and only he. Having gone so far, it will be disgraceful to turn back now. Do not even think of it. I remember going over the Col D'Obbia on the Alps and when I got a little way down I found myself on a steep mountain side upon a mass of loose earth and slate. There seemed to me to be some miles of almost perpendicular descent and no road. My head began to swim. I set my feet fast down in the loose soil, turned my back to the scene below me, my face to the hillside, and stuck my hands into the earth to hold as best I could. I cried to my friend, “I shall never go down there. I will go back.” He coolly replied, “Just look where you have come from.” When I looked up it appeared to be much worse to try and clamber up than it could possibly be to go down and so he remarked, “I think you had better go on, for it is worse going back.” So, brethren, we must go on, for it will be worse going back. Let us never think of retreating, but gird up the loins of our mind and push onward with firm resolution, by the help of the Spirit of God.

Here is the other argument—Do not cast away your confidence, for *it has great recompense of reward*. There is a reward in it *now*, for it makes us *happy*. When we are sweetly confident in God and do not molest ourselves with doubts and fears, how happy we are. Who has not read Cowper's beautiful description of the cottager with her pillow lace and bobbins, who knew no more than, “her Bible true, a truth the learned Frenchman never knew”—who was just as happy as the days were long? We are never so happy as when, in childlike simplicity, we trust our God without a doubt. Do not cast away your confidence, since it yields you such pure delight.

But it makes you so *strong*, too—strong both to bear and labor. When you are like a child in confidence before God, you can endure pain and reproach right bravely—

*“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,*

*I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For You'll remember me."*

You can bear, like Atlas, a world upon your shoulders when you have God within you. If He is near, you laugh at difficulties. And as for impossibilities, there are no such things. Brethren, hold fast your confidence, because it ministers to your strength.

And moreover, it makes you *victorious*. Many a man has been won to Christ by the confidence of simple Christians. Our doubts and fears are mischievous. They are thistle seed. They sow unbelief in others, but our childlike reliance upon God, our humble joy in our dear Father's care and our unmoved resolution through thick and thin to stick to our Master is likely to convert others, by God's good Spirit, to the right way. Therefore, cast not away your confidence.

And best of all, there is a *recompense of reward to come*. The day will come when the King will review His troops as the squadrons come back from the battle. The day will come when He shall come down our ranks and look at every one of us, and if we have been faithful in this evil day, O brethren, it will repay us for anything we suffered if He shall say to us, "Well done!" Oh, those two words! These were enough to make us eternally happy. But hear the rest—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord." Believe me, believe me, my hearers, kings and mighty men, who have rolled in riches and yet were enemies to Christ, when they hear Christ say, "Well done!" to His poor people, will think themselves accursed that they were not martyrs and that they did not lie in prison, or at least suffer reproach for Christ. The enemies of Christ laugh today, but they will laugh on the other side of their faces before long. Let them laugh, for *we* shall win. The day shall come when shame shall be the promotion of fools, but the royal robe shall be put upon each man's back who dared to be a fool for Christ. The scars of suffering saints shall shine like diamonds and they that were most abused shall be the brightest of the shining ones. Most glad of all will they be who have the ruby crown of martyrdom to cast at the Savior's feet—but each one of you who have boldly held on to Christ, though despised and rejected—and dared to suffer slander for His dear name's sake—you shall be among the first and brightest who wear the white robe and share their Master's victory. By the palm and by the white robe, by the unfading crown, by the halos of angels, and the streets of gold, cast not away your confidence, for it has great recompense of reward.

Oh, you that know not Christ and have no confidence in Him, beware! He is coming—coming to call you to judgement. Beware, for in the day of His appearing He will look upon you and He will know that you never trusted Him and never suffered for Him, but chose the broad road that leads to destruction. Oh, how you will tremble, then, and with what agony will you cry to the mountains, "Hide us from the face. Hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne."

God grant that you may not thus be carried away with terror, but may you believe your Lord and then have a full confidence in Him—a confidence which you will never cast away, "for it has great recompense of reward."

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 10:19-39.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—675, 632.**

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