

CHRIST NEVER FAILS

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Hebrews 13:5-6.

This recurring promise is used in different connections. You find it first of all repeated by God to Jacob in Genesis 28:15. "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The next instance in which we find this same promise is Deuteronomy 31:6. Moses said unto the people of Judah, by the word of God, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." The very same promise was made to Joshua and the people of God. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Joshua 1:5.

When Moses died and the children of Israel were left on the east bank of the Jordan, they were seized by fear for the future. How could they, without military organization, cross the river, defeat the large armies of the Canaanites, equipped as they were with formidable weapons of war? In that crisis, when the existence of God's people was at stake, God selected Joshua as the leader for the new age and promised, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." God kept His word. By a series of startling miracles Israel defeated all its enemies and took the Promised Land. Then, in Joshua's last charge to the Israelites, you find the promise mentioned again. When David left Solomon with instructions regarding the building of the temple, he also told his son that God would not leave him nor forsake him. Writing to the saints, among the many other good things which the author of this Epistle wrote, was the same promise for our own daily provision and comfort. This sounds so much like God to say things like this, so full of divine tenderness, so full of sympathy, and so very full of love. It is especially nice to hear these words because of the Person who uttered them.

Conversation without covetousness is emphasized in this text. "Let your conversation be without covetousness." "Conversation" means manner of life. Conversation means more than speech; it includes thoughts, words and actions: in fact, the whole of life. May we experience what it is to have conversation without covetousness! We are frequently sinning in this direction; we covet what some people have and what others wear.

Contentment amid all circumstances is emphasized in this text. "Be content with such things as ye have." Before contentment can grow, covetousness must be rooted out of the life. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). One of our prevailing sins is discontent, and yet we are enjoined by the Holy Spirit to "be content with such things as ye have." But such a verse might mock us if it had finished there. It is very difficult indeed for some people to be content with such things as they have. We think of many who are upon beds of pain and physical weakness, and of many others who find themselves in straightened circumstances; and approaching such people in their days of stress and strain, we would mock their feelings if we said, "You must be content with such things as you have."

Contentment is the feeling that enables one to make the best of a situation and not to pine over that which is unavoidable in it, nor fret over the hardships which it entails. When our text bids us to "be content with such things as ye have," it does not mean indifference, indolence, or unambitious stupidity, but rather such contentment as expresses itself in industrious fidelity.

We need to be warned against the opposite of contentment--a discontent that expresses itself in constant complaining and fault-finding, that spends its energies in murmuring

against the difficulties and hardships of a situation, without embracing the opportunity at hand to relieve or to remove them. We live the noblest and work the best when we have learned the secret of contentment. A spirit of contentment is worthy of emulation and is full of encouragement to us all. But, we must ever remember that contentment is the child of faith.

Companionship with Christ is emphasized in this text. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Here, then, is the secret of true contentment, namely, the realization of the companionship of the Lord Jesus Christ, for if we realize that He is ever near, "the secret source of every precious thing," then we can have conversation without covetousness, and contentment amid the adverse circumstances of life.

I. The Promiser.

Think of the One Who made this promise. The writer is not telling us what he had experienced regarding the companionship of the Lord; he is not giving his testimony. It is the Lord speaking for Himself. As we have it in the revised version, "Himself hath said, I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." The character of the person has much to do with the fulfillment of any promise that he may make. Many make promises but we never expect them to be fulfilled; we happen to know the promisers. As William Hazlitt said, "Some men make promises that they may have the pleasure of breaking them." Not so the Lord Jesus. "He is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:23).

David Livingstone opened Africa, the dark continent, to trade and to missionaries and the gospel of Christ. He was in such constant danger, and he endured so many privations that only an iron will and strong faith enabled him to press on through the almost insuperable difficulties until he had accomplished his purpose and made contact with the heathen tribes across the continent. Livingstone said, "I was enabled to go on because I had the word of a perfect Gentleman, never known to break a promise, that He would be with me always." The promise which he referred to is that of Christ in the Great Commission, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

II. The Promise.

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The force of that promise all lies in that one letter, "I." Take that "I" away and the promise will lose all of its significance. It will be left meaningless. Here we have the promise of the Presence of One Who is able to perform to the very limit all that He promises. What a comfort and consolation to lean upon such a promise!

There is a two-fold thought in this promise. The two parts of the promise do not mean the same thing. The Holy Spirit did not use tautology in the Word of God. He never wasted words. So in these two parts you have two wonderful truths. In the first expression the Lord assures us that He will never withdraw His guiding hand, and in the second part of the promise He tells us that He will never withdraw His protecting presence.

In the first part of the promise, "I will never leave thee," or, as you have it in the revised version, "I will in no wise fail thee," the Promiser presents Himself as the Unfailing Companion. Others fail us, but there is One Who will never let go our hands. The hand of the Lord will continue to lead and provide until traveling days are done. Then, when we get to the end of our journey, the same hand will guide us from the dusty lanes of earth to the golden streets above.

In the second part of the promise we have the constant companionship of the Promiser Himself. We have His provision and His presence. The Lord has promised never to leave us behind in any state or place. "I will never forsake thee." No greater calamity can be pictured than that of being forsaken. To be forsaken is tragic. "Forsaken" implies an utter loneliness, helplessness, friendlessness, hopelessness and agony.

All of the experiences of God's children through the ages, and all of our experiences, prove to us that the Lord does not forsake His people. It is the unwritten and eternal law that He never forsakes those whom He has undertaken to nourish and to protect. Therefore, let us accept it as one of the most assured facts in spiritual history.

Our Lord has fulfilled this wonderful promise again and again to the same person, as well as to multitudes of others. He will never cease to love His own. He will never leave them destitute of support. He will never let them plunge into the depths of despair. He is the most bountiful of all providers and the most powerful of all protectors. His resources will never run out in the day of stress and strain. No matter where we may be, He will be with us in all circumstances. He will not drop us or leave us behind when we grow old and are worn out. God will never forsake His children. They may, and sometimes do, forsake each other, but God never forsakes a one of His own. The lure of gain causes some to forsake their friends. The vision of peril causes some to forsake their nearest relatives, but the Lord will never be repelled by our needs. His promise is good in all circumstances and contingencies.

Those who appreciate the Lord's great and gracious promise will recognize Him as their Helper. "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." A helper is one who aids, supports, sustains, succors and relieves. These are just a few of the things that our Heavenly Helper does for Christians. Let not a day go by without acknowledging Him as your Helper in all things.

Those believers who recognize the Lord as their Helper refuse to fear man. "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Man may injure us in various ways, but we ought not to fear the unknown experiences of the tomorrows. It is well to remember the statements, "My times are in His hands," and "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."