

THE STICKING TO GOD'S TESTIMONIES

Preached on Lord's Day Morning, July 12th, 1840, at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London

"I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame." Psalm 119:31

If I were to say that every quickened child of God finds, at some time or other of his spiritual experience, the feelings of his soul described in the 119th Psalm, I should not state that which varies much from the truth. Now if we look at the state in which the Psalmist was when God the blessed Spirit worked in him "to will and to do," and taught him how and what to speak in this psalm, we shall find he was not at this time in the heights of rapturous enjoyment, nor yet in the depths of sinking despair; but he had been brought down by the work of God in his soul to a meek, quiet and chastened state of experience, so that his posture was now at the feet of his Lord, looking up for those words which should drop from His lips, and waiting for some manifestation of His mercy and favour, as his only food and soul-satisfying portion. Thus in the text he reminds the Lord what He had done for him, and what he himself had been mercifully enabled to do, and makes this a ground for asking more. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame."

I. Let us *first*, then, see what the Psalmist means by God's *testimonies* here. Does he mean merely the letter of truth, just so much of the Scriptures as were at that time revealed? The testimonies of God mean something more than this. For whatever reverence the children of God have towards the Scriptures, and however clearly and solemnly they receive them as a revelation from God, yet the testimonies to which

they cleave are those that come from the Lord's own mouth into their souls. They do not cleave to the bare letter of the Word—the mere vowels and consonants and syllables of Scripture, but to such testimonies as the Lord Himself is pleased to drop into their heart and conscience through the medium of the Scriptures of truth. Now before we can receive the Scriptures as a revelation from God, it must be shown to us by the Holy Spirit that they were inspired by Himself; and I am well convinced from soul-feeling that no man ever receives the Scriptures as an inspiration from God who has not received some measure of the same inspiration in his own soul. He may believe from external evidences that it is the Word of God, or he may have received it as such "by tradition from the fathers;" but as to any powerful workings in his own soul, as to any solemn feelings in his own conscience, as to any close dealings with God upon the matter, no man, I believe, ever did receive the Scriptures as a divine revelation from God, who had not something of a divine revelation made in his own soul by the Holy Ghost that inspired and dictated those Scriptures. Thus before we can stick to the mere written testimonies themselves as a whole, distinct from any peculiar act of faith on any one portion, we must have living faith in our souls, faith of God's gift and operation, to believe that the Scriptures really came as a divine revelation from God.

Now here it seems to me is one of the first teachings of the Holy Ghost in the soul, to enable us to receive the Word of God as coming from Him; as the apostle speaks, "Ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." And why? Because "it effectually worketh in you that believe." But this first reception is not of the whole of the Word of God, but of that part only of divine truth which He shall have Himself revealed to the soul; and then, when the Lord Himself has

shot forth a gleam of light into the conscience out of the Scriptures, in that light we see light; and that one ray of truth discovers the reality of all other revealed truth, just in the same way as when one beam darts from the sun through the clouds, that one beam gives us to know the existence of that glorious orb of day. Thus by receiving one truth from God into our soul, we receive the Scriptures as a revelation from God. But, if a man has never received a ray of truth into his soul out of the grand source of all truth, out of Him who is "the way, *the truth*, and the life," he at present has no real faith that the Scriptures are inspired by Jehovah, and has no real acquaintance with the Bible as a revelation from God Himself.

Well here, then, seems to be the first ray and gleam of heavenly light that shoots into the conscience and darts into the soul from the source of all truth. The Lord the Spirit rides as it were upon this beam into the soul, and conveys by this heavenly ray of light such special truth as He sees fit to bring into the conscience. All the children of God are not, indeed, quickened into spiritual life in the same precise way. The same individual truth is not brought with power to the conscience of each and all; but truth, that is, some part of truth, the Word of God in the substance and spirit of it, is applied by the Holy Ghost to the conscience of all; otherwise they would not be "begotten by the word of truth," otherwise they would not be "born again of incorruptible seed by the word of God" 1 Pet. 1:23), otherwise the Spirit of truth would not employ truth to convey to them spiritual life.

1. But we come to the *particular* testimonies which God reveals to His chosen. Now, I believe that one of the first testimonies that God seals upon the heart and conscience of His children is a manifestation of His own being, I mean His *spiritual* being; some discovery of Himself as He really is,

some manifestation of Himself as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures of truth. We may know there is a God of nature by seeing the works of creation; we may in some respects know that there is a God of providence by observing the interpositions of His hand in the various transactions of life; but to know Jehovah as He really is, to have a spiritual acquaintance with Him as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures of truth, to have such a knowledge of Him as is the beginning of eternal life, none can have such except those to whom He is pleased specially to manifest Himself. Then, whatever notions or opinions we may have about God—and they may be most clear and systematic, they may run most completely in the channel of letter truth—whatever outward notions, speculations, or imaginations we may have concerning the being of God, we only know Him spiritually so far as He is pleased immediately to manifest Himself to our consciences. All other knowledge stands in the flesh; it is the mere fruit of the creature, and falls utterly short of that knowledge which is spiritual wisdom and eternal life. But when we spiritually learn that there is a God, in learning His being we learn who He is. We learn also by an inward testimony from Himself, by His own mouth speaking home the Word with power to our hearts, that He is just and holy, and will by no means clear the transgressor, and that His heart-searching eyes pierce even into the very secrets of our souls. A man may know all this in the letter, but knowing it in the letter produces no spiritual feeling, no spiritual reception, no spiritual acquaintance with the truth thus laid hold of. But whenever the Lord the Spirit brings home the truth of God with power to the soul, He raises up, by the application of that truth, spiritual feelings, spiritual breathings, and spiritual exercises upon that which He is pleased to communicate. How do you measure your knowledge of truth? Is it by the number of texts that you have learnt by heart? Is it by your being able to explain what you see in the Scriptures? Is it by

the understanding that you have obtained by comparing passage with passage? If you have no better knowledge than this, it all stands in the flesh, and it is nothing else but dim letter speculation which leaves the soul barren before God. Measure your knowledge by this test, what feelings are produced by it, what exercises before God, what breathings in the presence of Him with whom you have to do, what drawings forth of heart, what solemn questionings of soul before Him in whose presence you from time to time stand. Now this test will apply to every degree and stage and state of spiritual life, so far as that spiritual life is in exercise.

But when we come to a more particular description of these testimonies, we may divide them into two grand classes—testimonies *against* us, and testimonies *for* us; that is, in the way of experience. In fact, all God's testimonies, whether of the law or of the Gospel, whether of conviction or of consolation, whether of pulling down or of building up—all of God's testimonies are really *for* the soul; but looked at as a matter of personal experience, viewed in the light of our own feelings, and weighed in the balance of our own exercises, all testimonies from God dropped by the mouth of God into the soul may be divided into two grand classes—testimonies *against* and testimonies *for* us. Now, my object will be to show how the soul that is quickened by God into eternal life sticks and cleaves to both these testimonies; and that it is a mark and test of spiritual life in the soul that it does stick to those testimonies which it has received from the mouth of Jehovah Himself.

We will begin, then, by looking at the soul in its first approaches unto God, in the first pourings out and breathings forth of its wants and desires after Him, in the first speakings of its misery and wretchedness into His gracious ear, in its first solemn convictions of the weight and

burden of sin, in the first deep-seated and deep-rooted pangs of a guilty conscience. Here, then, is a soul, into whose conscience God has dropped a testimony; that is, to whose heart He has applied the Word with power, be it in the very letter, or be it in the substance of it. This awakened soul has now obtained some sight of His holiness, some spiritual acquaintance with Him as a God not to be mocked or trifled with. Now no sooner has this testimony been dropped into a man's heart and conscience than he sticks to it; that is, he cleaves to it. Not, at first, with affection, but he cleaves to it with faith; and this is the province of faith, and "the work of faith with power," to cleave to that which God applies. Faith is not a traveller that roams up and down God's Word, as our tourists go exploring foreign countries to see their beautiful productions. Infant faith does not take ship, and travel from coast to coast, and from sea to sea of the Scriptures, to explore their beauties and discover their fruits; but it is a stay-at-home grace, whose province is to cleave to that which God reveals, to be exercised upon that which God manifests, and to deal with that which the Holy Ghost brings home. And he whose faith oversteps that which God applies, he whose faith busies itself in anything but that which is brought home with power to the conscience, he whose faith thus wanders abroad unrestrained, has a mark upon him that he has not the faith of God's elect. Well, then, here is the soul in the first solemn teachings of God, cleaving to that which God has revealed. He has made known His heart-searching presence; the soul cleaves to that testimony. He has made known His holiness; it believes it, feels it, is exercised upon, and acts towards it. He has manifested that He is not to be trifled with, not to be mocked, not to be insulted by false worship and the vain offerings of the flesh; the soul cleaves to this testimony, believes it, and is exercised with respect to it. He manifests to the soul that every thought, every movement, every stirring, every word

and action lie open before Him; the soul believes it, is exercised upon it, and cleaves to the testimony which God has thus sealed and applied.

Now, no sooner does a man begin to cleave to the testimony dropped into his soul, and to stick to that which God brings home with power to his heart, than things arise in every quarter to drive him from it. Here is the grand conflict in the soul, betwixt faith cleaving to the testimony which came into the heart from the mouth of God, and the enemies of faith who would seek to drive and dislodge faith from the position given to it. The Lord drops a certain testimony into the soul: no sooner has the testimony come than faith acts upon it and cleaves to it. Now, then, the enemy from various quarters seeks to drive faith from doing that which it is the province of faith to do, and to dislodge it from the ground which it is spiritually entrenched in. For instance, no sooner does faith begin to cleave to the Scriptures as inspired truth, than *infidelity* begins to start up from the depths of the carnal mind to fight against the solemn testimony which God Himself has brought in. I can speak for myself, that I never knew what infidelity was till I knew what faith was; I never knew what a giant it was, what a son of Anak, and how this giant could carry me away in his arms, resisting indeed and struggling, but unable to resist effectually. No sooner, then, do we receive from God His own solemn testimony that the Scriptures come from Him as a revelation of Himself, and no sooner does faith begin to believe this testimony, than the slumbering giant is aroused, and starts up from his den in the depths of the carnal mind, to grapple with this infant faith, to seize this new-born babe in his arms, and bear it away from that spot where God Himself has placed it. Then here comes the conflict. Faith says, "The Word of God is true;" Infidelity says, "It is not." Faith says, "I believe, because I feel;" Infidelity says, "Your feelings are no

evidence." Faith says, "I know, because I have had a discovery of it to my heart and conscience, I could not resist the evidence;" Infidelity says, "You know nothing about it." So here is the conflict between faith which sticks to God's testimony, and is exercised upon God's testimony, and infidelity which fights against faith, and seeks to bear it down, and to overwhelm it with the floods that are cast out from the mouth of this dragon. But faith must stick to it, because with faith is godly fear, and with faith in its first actings there is guilt and condemnation, and sore exercises, and cutting feelings, and painful maladies and distresses; and all these are so many clasps to rivet down and keep faith in its right spot. Faith, being thus backed by godly fear, seeks to thrust back this infidel monster that would seek to bear it away in his arms. Faith, being mixed up too and working with condemnation, cannot receive the God-dishonouring lie that the Scriptures are not God's word. The soul that spiritually "knows its own grief and its own sore," can never long disbelieve its own feelings, nor give the lie to its own exercises.

Self-righteousness again, is an enemy from another quarter, which seeks to dislodge faith from the position it occupies. What does faith believe in these early exercises? That the law requires a perfect righteousness; that God demands perfect satisfaction; that all our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Thus speaks faith, acting upon the testimony of God. But self-righteousness would seek to drive faith from this position, to dislodge it from the spiritual receiving of the truth of God, as God has revealed it; would seek to cover it over with a covering not of God's Spirit, and bedaub and besmear that which the Word of God and the testimony of God has implanted; to plaster it over and bemire it, and hide it up, so that it should not shine in the light of God's countenance. Well, then, here is the struggle between faith,

amidst guilt, self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, godly fear, in all their exercises towards God; here is the conflict betwixt these and self-righteousness. We, on the one hand, being spiritually persuaded that we are lost, ruined, undone creatures; and self-righteousness seeking, on the other hand, to lull these convictions, to obscure this work, and to bury it beneath its own untempered mortar. But living faith, sooner or later, breaks through all disguises, heaves up till the untempered mortar cracks and falls; and thus the soul comes forth naked before God, that it may be experimentally clothed in garments of imputed righteousness. Thus far for testimonies *against*, and the sticking to them by faith. We come, now, to testimonies *for* the soul.

2. After a time, then, the Lord shall drop a testimony into the soul that He is gracious, that there is mercy with Him that He may be feared, that there is pardon through the blood of the Lamb, that there is a glorious righteousness through the perfect obedience of the Son of God. He thus raises up, by dropping in some testimony concerning Jesus, some faith "to receive Christ Jesus the Lord" (Col. 2:6) as all our salvation and all our desire. Now, here is still "the work of faith with power" to stick to the testimony. Faith cannot get beyond that spot where God Himself has placed it. If He shows anger, faith believes it and cleaves to it. If He shows mercy, faith believes it and cleaves to it. Whatever the Spirit of God brings into the soul out of the Word of truth, that is the office and province of faith to believe and cleave to. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies." Well, then, no sooner does faith begin to stick to this testimony, that some word of consolation has been dropped, that some peace has been enjoyed, that some dewdrops of atoning blood have been sprinkled, that some favour has been evidently and manifestly shown; I say, no sooner does the Lord drop such testimony into the heart and conscience than there rises up from the depth of the carnal

mind that which disbelieves it, that which fights against it, and that which would fain drive and dislodge faith from that position which it now occupies. O, what a work it is—"the work of faith with power!" Men speak of faith as though faith had no work to do. But there is no workman like living faith. Living faith is always at work; I mean to say when the Spirit of the Lord is working upon it; by "always," I mean to say at such times as the Lord the Spirit is drawing it into exercise; and only so far as faith is working in the soul, nay, and powerfully working too, have we any evidence that it is "the faith of God's elect," or "the faith of the operation of God." Thus, no sooner does the Lord settle us down into some sweet persuasion that we are eternally His, no sooner is some dewdrop of sweet favour experienced in our soul, than an enemy rises to beat down faith from that position which it now occupies.

For instance, sometimes *presumption* starts up from the depths of the carnal mind, to drive a man out of that place where God has set him down. Now, all God's people are not delivered in the same powerful way; there are degrees of deliverance. Some are delivered very powerfully, by a blessed revelation of Christ to their soul, so as to bring them at once into all the joy and comfort of the gospel; and in these cases the sweet season usually lasts long, and they have a blessed evidence in their souls that they are the children of God, whom He has loved from eternity. But all God's children are not so dealt with; the deliverance in some is not so manifest; the love of God in some is not so powerfully shed abroad; the testimonies of Jehovah's love and mercy are not so clearly revealed. This visit is short and transient; as it speaks in the Canticles (2:9) of the Beloved just "showing Himself" (or as it is in the margin, "flourishing," that is, moving quickly and hurriedly) "through the lattice;" just as we sometimes see a person move rapidly

past our window, whose form we immediately perceive, but cannot distinctly see his features. Thus, spiritually, Jesus sometimes moves rapidly and hastily by the lattice, and just gives a transient glimpse of His lovely Person, His grace, blood, and righteousness. Well, this last manifestation is weak and feeble in comparison with the former; it is more transient, and leaves less deep and enduring impressions, and thus it seems to be not that powerful work which the child of God is seeking after. This very thing, then, lays a foundation for unbelief to work upon—for the antagonist powers of faith to take their ground upon in the heart. A child of God who has not been very powerfully delivered, who has received some dewdrops of mercy, some glimpses of love, and yet has not been brought out into the full enjoyment of liberty and peace, falls sometimes into company with those who tell him of their wonderful comforts, their blessed consolations, how sure they are that their names are in the book of life, and what a clear evidence they have received of their adoption into the family of God. He begins then immediately to compare what he hears with his own experience; he looks at their large estate, and contrasts with it his own narrow field; and as he views his scanty strip, it all disappears, being swamped and swallowed up by the estate of his wealthy neighbour. Now in some cases up starts presumption, that cursed foe to the child of God; and as presumption starts up, it pushes him beyond the testimony which God has dropped into his soul. The testimony was weak, presumption would say it was strong; the visit was transient, presumption declares it was abiding. Thus presumption steps forward to push the soul beyond its real standing into a false liberty, into which God Himself has not set it down. Well, then, the work of faith is to cleave to God's testimony; and here is the difficulty, presumption pushing it beyond its real standing, and faith cleaving to its true spot against presumption; faith working with godly fear, faith

simply cleaving to what it has received from God. On the other hand, in some cases, *despair* will work. In the cases of some, presumption will push the soul beyond its real standing into false liberty; in other cases, despair will drive it back from the real standing where God has placed it, so as to make it shrink, as it were, and quiver with fear that mercy has never reached it at all. Each is the antagonist of faith, each seeks to dislodge the soul from its position, to drive it from its true standing, the one acting in one way and the other acting in another, the two winds blowing in opposite directions, but aiming each to drive the ship on one or other of these shoals. Then here is faith sometimes cleaving in spite of presumption, sometimes cleaving in spite of despair; here is faith hanging upon the spiritual testimony which God has given it, though finding it very difficult at times to make out that it was a testimony at all; but still, as it is wrought upon by the Spirit of God, it lives and acts upon that testimony which God Himself has dropped in. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies." Now if there were no difficulty, no obstacles—if there were nothing in the soul which prevented it from sticking to God's testimony, why does David put the Lord in mind of it? But he puts the Lord in mind that he has stuck to His testimonies, as though he would remind Him not only that He had given him some testimonies, but also some living faith to cleave to them with purpose of heart.

3. But there are other testimonies of another nature, not so much testimonies *against*, or testimonies *for* our interest in covenant mercies, as testimonies of *divine instruction*. The Lord has said, for instance, in His Word, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." That is a testimony from the mouth of God; and how does the soul first receive and then stick to that testimony? By the opening up of the depths of corruption in our heart, by the breaking up of the secret fountains of iniquity, that great deep that

coucheth beneath. Now this testimony to deep and desperate corruption does not come at first; it is usually after a man has received some testimony of God's favour; for he could not bear it unless there had been some discovery of mercy to his soul; he could not stand his ground unless there were some rock on which his feet were fixed when the water floods broke forth; he could not travel through this deep bog unless there were some standing ground—some dry tussocks on which he could set his feet—and therefore, usually speaking, little is known of the depths of internal corruption and inward pollution until after some testimony of mercy and love has been dropped into the soul from the mouth of God Himself. Well, then, here is a deep discovery of inward corruption; of the "workings of a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" of the overflowings of an imagination beyond description polluted with evil. His inward feelings now correspond with God's testimony to the desperate wickedness of his heart. He cleaves to this testimony. "I have stuck to Thy testimonies." That is, let men say what they will about the purity of the creature and the dignity of human nature, or what man is able to do, he cleaves to this testimony, having an inward witness of it, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" that from "the crown of his head to the sole of his feet there is no soundness in him, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores;" and he sticks to this testimony because he feels the truth of it. He is obliged to cleave to it, and that, not in letter, but in spirit; not in doctrine, but in experience; not to the mere testimony of the Word, but to the testimony of God in his soul. He sticks to it with every feeling of his heart, that his nature is fallen—that he is a corrupt and polluted wretch before God—that he stands before Him by nature filthy and vile, however he may stand by grace "accepted in the Beloved," through Christ's righteousness.

Again, God has said in His Word, "I, the Lord, hate evil." Now this testimony the Lord speaks out of the Word into the hearts of His chosen. He writes it as with a sunbeam upon the consciences of His living family that He abhors evil, that He hates it with a perfect hatred; and this He transfers from the Word and stamps upon a man's conscience; and he who has never had that solemn truth stamped upon his conscience is destitute of the knowledge of the only true God. "I, the Lord, hate evil." Then, if the Lord hate evil, and if the hatred of God towards evil is made manifest in a man's conscience, he will have workings and exercises towards this solemn hatred of God against it. If he is entangled in any sin, or caught in any snare of the flesh or temptation of Satan, this testimony of God once dropped into his soul, "I, the Lord, hate evil," works in him, and he works towards it; faith is exercised upon it, and a tender conscience brings him down to the Lord's feet to moan and sigh and groan, and to confess what a vile wretch he is to be so entangled with evil, what a monster of iniquity to be so overcome by evil; what a foul, filthy, polluted beast, to have so much evil at work in his heart, and continually carrying him away captive.

Again, God has said in His Word that Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Well now, here is a solemn testimony that God has given in His Word, and the substance and the spirit of that testimony He transfers from the Word into the hearts of His people. The soul then is exercised towards this testimony. "What am I?" says the soul, "a poor, guilty, filthy, polluted wretch, lost and undone, full of corruption from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot." Now when the Lord sweetly sheds abroad mercy and love in the soul, He brings in a testimony that He came to

save sinners, to seek the lost; that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; that His blood cleanseth from all sin; and thus faith acts upon this testimony, cleaves to this testimony, is exercised upon this testimony, and cannot be driven nor dislodged from this testimony when God is pleased to keep faith and the testimony close together. Then here is a great work for faith to do. If the work of faith is to stick to God's testimonies, and if the life of a Christian consists in receiving and acting upon various testimonies from God, then faith will have much to do, and will work very busily in the soul. Living faith is no presumptuous security, no Antinomian confidence; it is no wrapping one's self up in the garment of false peace, and lolling on the sofa, or sleeping in the armchair of flesh-pleasing ease; but it is a busy, active, stirring grace in the soul; one which is often hungry and needs food, is often thirsty and needs water, and yet can only feed on that which God Himself speaks with His own mouth to the heart. Then he who finds in his soul no such workings, no such stirrings, no such solemn exercises, has every reason to believe that he is not possessed of the vital faith of God's elect. If there is no testimony to faith in his conscience, and if there is no acting of faith on that testimony; if there is nothing revealed to faith, and faith has nothing to do with what is revealed to it, then we are bound to conclude that a man in this state is dead in sin, or dead in a profession.

Again, sometimes the soul gets entangled in some temptation, backslides from God, goes out after the cisterns, the broken cisterns which hold no water, deserts the living fountain, and seeks pleasure from its idols. Now the Lord will drop into the conscience some reproof—some solemn testimony of His great displeasure against this inward backsliding and departing from Him to worship the works of our own hands. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with

his own ways." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." This testimony in the Word falls in with the testimony of conscience. And now come the tossings of the body on the midnight couch, and the worse tossings of the restless spirit, the cries and sighs of the soul under the heavy load of God's displeasure. Well, here is a testimony that God is angry, that He is justly displeased with our offences. Now faith will not cast it off, and say, "Never mind, I am in the covenant; I stand firm upon the Rock; sin cannot damn me; a believer cannot backslide; my new nature cannot commit sin." I say faith will never stand for a moment in such presumptuous confidence. Faith hates such language from the mouth of ungodly professors. Faith falls down before the testimony of God's inward reproof, embraces it in the arms of feeling, if not in the arms of affection, receives it as from God, is exercised upon it, confesses before God *that* which the reproof testifies against, and thus sticks and cleaves to the testimony of God. Whatever God bears witness *against* in the conscience, *that* faith cleaves to; whatever God bears witness *for*, *that* faith cleaves to. Does He bear witness that we are acting with pure motives for His glory? Faith receives it. Does He bear witness that we are acting from insincere motives? Faith bears its silent though solemn and unanswerable testimony. Does He bear witness that we are backsliding children? Faith receives it; and, as faith receives it, it acts towards God upon it, and constrains the soul to fall down before the throne of His majesty, and loathe itself in dust and ashes. Well, then, here is the posture of a Christian, not towering aloft in vain presumptuous confidence; not scanning, like the soaring eagle, the whole outstretched prospect; nor hopping from twig to twig of God's Word, as the restless sparrow from branch to branch of a tree. Faith is a dependent grace, that can only move as the Holy Ghost draws it forth, and can receive nothing but what is given it from heaven.

Then if this be the case, the posture of faith will be, as the Psalmist describes, "as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God" (Ps. 123:2). The language of faith will be that of king Jehoshaphat when surrounded by his enemies, "We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee" (2 Chron. 20:12). The eyes, then, of faith, are upon God, seeking for some manifestation; and it stands waiting for some deliverance, suing after some testimony, sighing after the application of some drops of atoning blood, panting after some shedding abroad of His favour, and thirsting as the barren parched ground after some of the refreshing early and latter rain; not resting in presumptuous confidence upon anything which is imagined, but simply hanging upon that which God Himself shall speak by His own Spirit to the soul. Not like Martha, cumbered with much serving, running about the house to procure dishes for her guest's entertainment, in order to gain His favour; but like Mary, "sitting at His feet and hearing His words." Not resembling the mad Gadarene, cutting his flesh with stones; nor like the filthy swine that root up their food from the earth, and wallow in the mire, till at last they rush despairingly down from the mountain to the sea; but like the same Gadarene, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind," looking up to Him with the eyes of affection and gratitude, and "desiring to be with Him."

Now, my friends, in whatever state or stage of experience you are, it will be your wisdom and your mercy to stick to God's testimony. Has the Lord, then, just begun a work of grace in your heart? Is He showing to you what you are by nature, and bringing before your eyes the sins of your youth, and plunging you in deep convictions? It will be your wisdom, and it will be your mercy, to stick to that testimony; not to

be driven from your standing into despair, nor pushed forward into fleshly confidence; but to stick to that testimony which God Himself has implanted. Not to trifle with these convictions, not to patch up the old garment of self-righteousness, not to ease your restless mind by plunging headlong into doctrines, the power and sweetness of which are not known and felt; not seeking to lull the pangs of conscience by saying, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved; and if I am to be lost, I shall be lost;" but sticking to God's testimony in your conscience, with as much strength as you have.

Has God made you to sigh and cry from the depths of a broken heart?—to fall down before His truth? Stick to that testimony; He will not put you to shame. Again, if the Lord has done a little more for another of you, shown you the least glimpse of mercy and favour, and given you some little testimony of your interest in the blood of the Lamb; it will be your wisdom and it will be your mercy to stick to that testimony too. You will find those who would push you presumptuously forward, you will find those who would drive you despairingly backward, you will find those who would pull you down into those doubts and fears that their own minds are exercised with, and you will find those who would draw you aside into the vain confidence in which they are themselves standing. It will be your wisdom and mercy to abide by the testimony which God Himself has revealed, and He can work in your soul that faith whereby you can and will stick to His testimony.

But some shall say, "How do I know that I am sticking to God's testimonies?" I would ask what are the feelings of your hearts towards them? Is there godly fear? Is there holy reverence? Is there trembling awe? Is there any exercise of soul, any pouring out of the heart before God, any realising

of His presence, any trembling to offend Him, any desire after Him, any solemn feelings whereby your soul is exercised upon His perfections? Then there is reason to believe there is some testimony of God in your conscience, and that you are sticking to it. But if your religion be such as leads to vain confidence, to self-righteousness, to presumption, to false security, and to a careless, light, trifling, spirit, depend upon it you are not sticking to God's testimony, or else you have no testimony from God to stick unto. But if the Lord is bringing into your soul some sense of His displeasure; if you have trifled with Him, and brought guilt into your soul and trouble into your mind, it will be your wisdom, and it will be your mercy to do as the Lord speaks in Leviticus 26:41—"accept the punishment of your iniquity;" to put your mouth in the dust and confess that you are vile; not to turn aside to presumptuous confidence, as though you would blunt the edge of God's sword in your soul, but to receive it in your heart, embrace it in your conscience, and to cleave to it as the testimony of God Himself. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies." To cleave to everything which God makes known in the conscience, be it judgment, be it mercy, be it a smile, be it a frown, be it a testimony for, be it a testimony against, whatever it be that comes with power, and is brought to the soul by the application of the Spirit—to cleave to it, keeps the soul in a safe and blessed spot.

But sometimes worldly interest will seek to hinder our sticking to God's testimony. A man is afraid really to stand by that truth which he professes to believe. Sometimes "the fear of man that bringeth a snare" will keep him from sticking to God's testimony; sometimes getting amongst those who fear not God; sometimes a worldly spirit creeping over him; sometimes a light, trifling, careless frame, which is indulged in his carnal mind, and perhaps was first breathed into it from some dead professor—some or all of these hindrances

will keep a man from sticking to God's testimonies. Sometimes the secret baits, gins, and traps that Satan lays for our feet will keep us from sticking to God's testimony. Sometimes the applause of empty professors, or even the flattery of the children of God will keep us from sticking to God's testimony, by making us think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; and sometimes the frowns and scoffs, the jeers and jibes of those who stand in a presumptuous confidence will drive us from sticking to God's testimony. But conscience, as a faithful inward monitor, and the workings of godly filial fear will urge us to stick to God's testimony. Whatever professors or profane may say against us, the work of conscience wrought upon by the Spirit, the work of faith in the conscience is to stick to God's testimony, whatever the testimony be. Whatever has been received in power, whatever has been brought home into the soul with light and life and feeling, whatever has been riveted and fastened down by Jehovah Himself, to that the child of God is bound, and will, as the Lord enables him, cleave and stick. It is the bond of experimental union between God and his soul; it is the link which binds him to the eternal throne; it is the solemn clasping of him in the firm hold of God: and thus, while all the desires of his soul will be to cleave to this testimony, all the opposition in his soul will be to drive him from this testimony. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies." Aye, stick to them at whatever cost, stick to them at any price, stick to them through evil report and through good report, stick to feeling, stick to an experimental religion, stick to vital godliness, stick to the inward teachings of the Spirit, stick to that which God works in the soul, for he that sticks to that will never be put to shame. The raven flies abroad over the dripping earth after the carcasses; but the dove cleaves to the ark with the olive branch in her mouth.

I know, by soul experience, that sticking to these testimonies

has kept me from many errors. When I have been placed years back, before my mind was established in the truth, in circumstances of great trial; when I have seen dear friends fall around me, on the right hand or on the left, some into one error, and some into another, and my own mind was driven to and fro by these winds and gusts, it was this solemn conviction that made me stick to that testimony which God had dropped into my heart, not to go into things which I had not known, not to rush into doctrines which I was not spiritually taught. I have seen some friends dropping first into Arianism, then into Socinianism; others I have known to become Irvingites; some going into one error, and some into another. And what then kept me? Why this solemn conviction, which I trust the Lord Himself had implanted, to stick to God's testimony, to cleave to what I had felt, to abide by what I had known, and to hang upon that as the only link which held me up from making shipwreck altogether. And thus the Lord kept me by this powerful though invisible tie, when those who seemed to know more than I departed on the right hand and on the left. Therefore, by soul experience, I can, in some measure, say,—"I have stuck unto Thy testimonies;" and since then, I have felt the solid benefit of sticking to God's testimonies in my conscience, though it has cost me many sacrifices, and often made me on the right hand and on the left to encounter friend and foe. But to stick to God's testimonies will bring peace at last.

II. "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Lord, *put me not to shame.*" You see it is the want of sticking to God's testimony, that puts a man to shame. If a man does not stick to God's testimonies at any risk, at any sacrifice, at any cost, he will be put to shame. If he sacrifice his conscience for worldly profit, he will be put to shame. If he does not abide by God the Spirit's teachings in his soul, but swerves from them to

the right hand or to the left, he will be put to shame. He that will not be put to shame is he that sticks to God's testimony, for the Lord will own and bless and keep such, when thousands fall on the right hand and on the left. "O Lord, put me not to shame." Now there are solemn moments when the soul is afraid of being put to shame. Our religion, perhaps, may cost us the sacrifice of all we have. Some of us in this place, I believe, can bear witness to it, that you could not keep a good conscience and keep worldly possessions, that you could not hold the world in one hand and religion in the other; and, therefore, you were obliged "to take cheerfully the spoiling of your goods," and "counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Well then, we were afraid lest we should come to poverty. Many a child of God has been harassed, lest his religion should bring him to the workhouse: this makes him cry, "O Lord, put me not to shame." "Here I have been obliged to make sacrifices; I have been obliged to give up this source of gain, and to give up that means of living; I have lost customers in business; I have been compelled to leave advantageous situations for conscience' sake." "O Lord, put me not to shame." Let me pay every man his own; keep me from disgracing Thy cause and "feed me with food convenient for me."

Sometimes the child of God is afraid that he will be put to shame in that solemn hour which must come upon all and each of us, the hour of death; lest when he comes to pass through the dark valley he should be put to shame; lest his religion in that solemn moment should be sifted clean away, and his hope should prove a delusion; and therefore he says, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame in that solemn hour when I must stand before Thee, without any one to help, or any thing to hope in, except Thyself." Now, he that sticks to God's testimonies will not be then put to shame. He that has known an angry God, and he

that has known a smiling God; he that has felt the teaching of God in his soul, and known the power of God in his heart will not be put to shame; he will not die in despair, he will not die blaspheming, but he will die in the fear and love of God; or, at any rate, will die with a good hope through grace in His mercy, with some rest of soul, and some sweet confidence that he is His.

Sometimes the child of God is afraid of being put to shame openly before men, by being overcome by some sin; but he says, "I have stuck to Thy testimonies." Thou hast said, "I hate evil"—I believe it, Lord. Thou hast shown me what a desperately wicked heart I have—I believe it, Lord. Thou hast shown me my ignorance, and inability to keep myself—I believe it, Lord. Thou hast warned me by solemn rebukes; thou hast hedged me up by inward reproofs; thou hast shown me what I am, and what there is in my heart—I believe it, Lord. Let no sin entangle me, no disgrace overtake me, no corruption prevail against me. Let not the enemies of truth shout "Ah, ah! Ah, ah!" against me. "O Lord, put me not to shame." Again, the soul is sometimes afraid lest a furnace will come, when all his religion shall be proved to be untrue, when Satan shall say, "It is all a deception; it is nothing but the spawn of base hypocrisy; it was not the teaching of God; it was not the manifestation of God to thy soul; mercy never was received; it was but excited imagination; it was but the heated working of thy carnal mind." The soul says, "I have stuck unto Thy testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame. I cleave to Thy work, I hang upon it, I have nothing else to cleave to. O Lord, put me not to shame."

Thus, we see the connexion betwixt sticking to God's testimony, and the Lord not putting us to shame, and we gather this from it, that those who have never received God's

testimony, or those who do not stick to God's testimony will be put to shame. Now, there are many men who are in a vain presumptuous confidence, who are soaring away to the heights of presumption, God Himself never having placed them in their present standing. Well, if these are the children of God—and there is reason to believe there are some such, who have been puffed up beyond their real standing—the Lord will put them to shame. He will put them into the furnace; He will bring them into straits which they never before knew. They are not sticking to His testimony, they have gone beyond His testimony, and He will put them to shame, and His people shall see that they are not that which they profess to be. Again, there are others who trifle with sin, who say that it will not do them any harm, who are now standing, as they say, firm in Christ, when they are really standing firm in their own confidence; not sticking to God's testimonies of the helplessness, misery, ruin, and guilt of the creature; not sticking to His testimony, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" not sticking to the testimony, that none are safe but those whom God keeps. The Lord will put them to shame; perhaps, even, by letting them fall, by showing them that they can backslide and do backslide into sin, by making them naked before their enemies, and thus covering them with confusion. Ah, my friends, have not you and I been sometimes put to shame before God and His people, by not sticking to those *practical* testimonies which have been riveted in our conscience? And have we not had to confess with Ezra, 9:6, "I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee?" I have known both sides of the question,—to stick to them, and not be put to shame, and not to stick to them, and to be put to shame. And there are those in the professing church whom He will put to eternal shame, when He pours upon them the fulness of His wrath. So that we have three different classes. We have, *first*, the tried child of God, who has received Divine

testimonies, and sticks to them. The Lord will keep him as the apple of His eye. He never shall be put to shame. Then we have a *second* class, who have had testimonies, but by the power of Satan and their own deceitful hearts have not stuck to these testimonies in experience or in conduct. These the Lord will put to shame in this world, though not in the next. He will put them to shame here, so as to prevent their everlasting shame hereafter. He will bring them down from their false standing by painful exercises; by the fiery furnace within, if not by open disgrace without. He will put them to shame, and they will blush and be confounded, that they did not stick to God's testimony, but rushed beyond His work in their soul. And then there is a *third* class who have neither received God's testimony, nor have stuck to it; who have nothing from God in their souls, and therefore, nothing to stick to. These shall be put to shame and everlasting contempt, in that day when the Lord shall manifest the secrets of all hearts, and pour out His eternal wrath upon the transgressors.