

## The Feet of the Saints Kept

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Thursday Evening, July 31, 1845

"He will keep the feet of his saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The person that uttered these words knew their meaning spiritually and experimentally—the only way whereby divine truth can be known. I need scarcely observe, that they were uttered by that deeply taught and highly favoured child of God, Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel. There is scarcely any saint whose experience is recorded in the Scriptures that I have felt more communion with than this afflicted handmaid of the Lord; for she was led in a peculiar path of trial and temptation; and had to mourn over her natural, as I have had to mourn over my spiritual barrenness. She knew too the only place to which she could go for the removal of this barrenness—the throne of grace, where she could pour out her heart before the Lord. And she knew too by personal experience, what it was for "the poor to be taken out of the dust, and the needy to be lifted out of the dunghill, to be made to sit with princes, and to inherit the throne of glory."

Speaking then by divine inspiration, she utters *a promise* in the text. This promise, like all other promises dropped from the mouth of Jehovah, is absolute and unconditional; and yet, though absolute and unconditional, is limited—that is, to the children of God. But you will observe, the limitation is not so pointed, nor so particular as in some other promises. For instance; it is not confined to the "poor and needy;" it is not limited to the "hungry and thirsty." In a word, it is not restricted to the various marked and definite characters among the family of God; but it unfolds in its ample bosom,

and embraces in its widely opened arms all the living family. It is not, then, a promise limited to any definite experience; but it is one absolute and irrespective of all conditions; and yet manifestly embraces the whole of God's elect people. "He will keep the feet of his saints."

With God's blessing, then, I shall endeavour this evening to unfold the mind of the Holy Ghost in the text by describing *first*, who the "saints" are, for whom the promise is intended; and *secondly*, how the Lord fulfils his promise, that "He will keep their feet."

I.—With respect to the sanctification of God's people, each Person of the Trinity has a distinct share in that mighty work. The family of God are sanctified by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. And with respect to this sanctification by the Three Persons of the Triune Jehovah, is the remnant according to the election of grace called in the word of God "saints."

1: First then, they are sanctified by God the Father; that is, they are consecrated, or set apart, which is the original meaning of the word "sanctified." They were set apart in the original decree of election; as Jude speaks, "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." Here, you will observe, sanctification by God the Father precedes preservation in Christ, and calling by the Holy Ghost. In this sense we are to understand the words which God spake to the prophet Jeremiah (1:5): "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet to the nations." Now this is the root and spring of all sanctification. If God the Father has not sanctified us by his own electing choice in Christ Jesus from all eternity, not all the profession in the world can ever make

us saints before him.

2. But God the Son has also a part and a share in the sanctification of his own dear people. They were sanctified in him before all worlds, as having a vital union with him. He is their holy covenant head, in whom all the members being united by an eternal union are sanctified; as the apostle speaks, "If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom. 11:16.) If Christ the root be holy, the branches that spring out of the root are holy. If Christ, the first-fruits, is holy, then the whole lump also is holy, being sanctified by the first-fruits. Therefore, the Apostle speaking of Christ, says, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, *sanctification*, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.)

Again. The Lord Jesus Christ sanctified them also, in time, by his own blood; as we read "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 8:12.) He shed his blood for them; he laid down his life on their behalf; and by the pouring out of that sacred stream from his holy body, he washed away their sins; that sanctified and cleansed they might stand holy before God; "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.)

3. But God the Spirit also has a share in the sanctification of the people of God. And until they receive the teachings of the Holy Ghost and his secret operations in their heart and conscience, they are not vitally sanctified. They are sanctified originally in the purpose of God; they are sanctified actually by the work of Christ; but they are not sanctified vitally and experimentally, till they are brought under the teachings and leadings of God the Spirit. When that gracious Teacher visits their souls with his divine operations; when he begins a work

of grace on their hearts; when he begets them anew unto spiritual life, and implants a holy principle, radically and thoroughly holy, in their hearts, then by the implantation and possession of this new, holy, and divine principle, this "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," they become living saints.

Now, no sooner do they become saints by the operation of God the Spirit in their hearts, and by his secret indwelling in their souls, than they have conflict. All the Lord's people who are so, not merely by election and redemption, but also by the calling of the Holy Ghost, are a tried people. All the Lord's saints are, more or less, a tempted and a suffering people; for they are chosen in the furnace of affliction; they are "the third part" whom the Lord brings "through the fire."

II.—Now this may cast a light upon the words of the text, that "God will keep the feet of his saints." We see that God's people are a tried, tempted and afflicted people; and therefore that they need to be "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

But you will observe, that the text speaks of the Lord keeping "*the feet* of his saints." There is something spiritual and experimental intended here. It is by our feet that we have a *standing*; it is by our feet that we are enabled to *walk and move forward*. When the Holy Ghost, then, in the text, declares, that "God will keep the feet of his saints," he seems to have reference, *first* to their *standing*, and *secondly*, to their *walking*.

Now in both these points will Satan, the great enemy of their souls, direct all his arts and arms against the saints. And so weak and helpless are they, that it is only so far as the Lord puts forth his power, that the feet of the saints are kept.

i. The saints, as I have observed, have a *standing* in Christ, a standing before all worlds, a standing out of which and from which they never can be driven. And we may believe that the Spirit has some reference to this eternal standing in Christ, when he says, that God will keep the feet of his saints.

Have you ever observed how the Lord dealt with Satan in the case of Job? He gave him two separate permissions; one was, to touch Job's goods, his family, and his all; but upon *Job himself* he was not to lay his hand. Now as long as that restriction was laid down, Satan, however he afflicted Job in his property and his family, could not afflict him either in body or soul. This was a hedge set round about Job; a defence of God, through which Satan could not pierce. But this was not enough. It was not enough to hinder Satan from shewing his hellish malice; it was not enough to try Job; and it was not enough to prove a standing example to all ages what man is when tempted, and what the grace of God is to keep him under temptation. So God moved the hurdle, so to speak, a little more inward. He took down the outward hedge that kept Satan from touching the person of Job; he thus narrowed the space, and put the fence in a little nearer. But there was still a limitation to "save his life;" he might do what he would to his body, but he was not to touch the life of his soul. Thus God kept the feet of his servant Job. Had this restriction not been laid upon Satan; had he not been tethered by this chain, he would have soon hurled Job into despair; and let the life blood not only out of his body, but the life-blood also out of his soul. But God kept Job's feet. Satan could not touch his standing in Christ; he might tempt, try, and distress him, and drive him to his wits' end: but he could not touch his eternal standing. What a mercy it is, then, that all the temptations of Satan, all the snares he spreads for their feet, and all the violent assaults that the people of God are exercised with, cannot drive them from

their standing in Christ! They were given to Christ by the original act of God the Father, and are preserved in him; so that Satan cannot drive them from their *standing* in his Person, blood and righteousness.

ii. But there is another meaning of the word. It is by our feet that we *walk* in the ways of the Lord. Every movement of the soul; the whole progress from grace to glory; every step in the love and fear of the Lord, is taken by the spiritual feet of our souls. So that when the text declares, and the promise spreads its ample arms, that "He will keep the feet of his saints," it has reference not merely to their *standing* in Christ, but also to their *walking* in this vale of tears, their feet being upheld by Omnipotent power in this waste howling wilderness. Now, as long as a man's feet are kept, his whole person is kept. He may totter, he may stagger; he may turn to the right hand or to the left; but as long as his feet are kept upon the firm ground, he falls not. But if his feet are tripped up, he falls instantly. So that when the promise runs, "He will keep the feet of his saints," it has reference to their being kept altogether. For if their feet are tripped up, or slide, or give way, instantly must they measure their length upon the ground.

1. Now Satan is always endeavouring, in some way or other, to trip up the children of God. Sometimes, for instance, he endeavours to trip up their feet by *the inward power of sin in their carnal heart*. O, how Satan can work, when permitted, upon our depraved nature! What powerful lusts he can kindle into a flame! What vile imaginations he can raise up in our carnal minds! What sins he can stir up in our polluted heart! So that, if left to ourselves, we must utterly fall a prey to them.

There is one thing which I have felt, which seems in some

measure to be a mystery. It is the co-existence of two things in my heart, which seem contradictory. One is this, to feel myself every day worse and worse. There was a time when I thought I should be holier and holier: but now every day I seem viler and viler; nay, I feel the workings of sin more sensibly manifesting themselves, so as to be kept from actual evil only by the skin of my teeth. And yet what seems surprising, co-existing with all this fountain of abominable evil, I find my conscience more tender in the things of God than it was when I was not so tempted by the besetments of the enemy. When I was advancing, as I thought, in the path of holiness, I could do many things which I cannot do now. It puzzles me, to feel so distinctly the working of sins I was once not tempted to; and yet the workings of a conscience in some measure made more tender than before. That sin should become more strong, as the conscience, in some points, becomes more tender, is to me a mystery.

But when we feel the workings of sin in our carnal mind, endeavouring perpetually to entangle our steps, it makes us cry and groan to the Lord that he would keep our feet; and, through mercy, he does more or less keep them, though *how* he keeps them, we will endeavour to shew as we proceed onward.

2. Another way by which Satan seeks to trip up our feet, is by drawing us aside into *presumption and vain-confidence*. I believe many of God's people are here unknowingly. They have never been sifted down to the very bottom of their religion; their hearts have never been laid naked and open before the eyes of him with whom they have to do. They have the life and fear of God in their heart; but they want soul exercise. For want of being put into the fire, for want of a deeper work of grace upon their hearts, they often mistake what they have for what they have not, and what they have

not for what they have. In other words; they are often wrapped up in a measure of presumption and vain-confidence, which they mistake for faith, and think their confidence proceeds from the operations of the Spirit, when, for the most part, it is little else but a delusion of the Wicked One. Now if Satan can trip up our heels by getting us into presumption and vain-confidence, he has carried a great point. Presumption and vain-confidence eat out the very life of God in the soul, stop the mouth of prayer in the heart, entice us into a thousand snares of the devil, take us off our watch, and leave us to wander into paths that we should not otherwise think of walking in. Had the fear of God been more powerfully on the alert, we should not sink into the lap of ease; but through thinking we have faith that we have not, we are drawn away and entangled in the snares of Satan before we are aware. The Lord, therefore, keeps the feet of his saints by exercising them, and leading them into a deeper knowledge of the filthiness and depravity of their fallen nature; or by suffering Satan sometimes to fall upon them, and shake their religion to its very centre; or by letting down piercing convictions into their consciences; or by sending a whole army of doubts and fears that put to the rout all their vain-confidence and presumption; or by showing to them the fearful train of difficulties that lie in their road. By these and various other means he strips them of their vain-confidence.

3. Though Satan can trip up the feet with vain-confidence, yet he can also trip them up with *despair*. Some of the Lord's people are more entangled with vain-confidence, while others of them are more entangled with despondency. The one is a precipice, and the other a ditch, which have destroyed thousands. The Lord's people often seem staggering between the two like a drunken man. You have seen a drunken man: he cannot keep an even path, staggering sometimes to one side of the road, and sometimes to the other. So it is with



the Lord's people; as the prophet says, "they stagger, but not with strong drink." They stagger sometimes to the height of vain-confidence, and sometimes to the quagmire of despair. One hardly knows which takes us most out of the road, which leads us most away from the Lord of life and glory. The spirit of vain-confidence eats up the life of God in the soul; the spirit of despair drowns the life of God in the soul. The spirit of presumption shuts up the mouth of prayer; the spirit of despair also shuts up the mouth of prayer. They are two extremes; but each of these extremes is such as tends much to stop the crying and groaning soul from pouring out its desires before the Lord. But Satan will not more succeed in driving the saints into despair than he will succeed in drawing them into vain-confidence. The Lord knows exactly how to time his remedies; he knows how to suit his healing medicines to the state and case of the patient. Thus, is he lifted up with vain-confidence? God sends the arrow of conviction into his conscience. Does he see him well-nigh swallowed up in despair? He lets down a word of consolation into his soul, giving him some reviving testimony, or sweet smile. Thus, he lifts up the soul from despair by a smile of his countenance, as he brings it down from vain-confidence by the arrows of conviction. Satan does not care which evil we fall into. He has toppled down thousands from the lofty heights of vain-confidence, and has swallowed up thousands in the deep quagmire of despair.

But the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints." They shall never utterly fall down this dangerous precipice, never be wholly swallowed up in this awful quagmire. They may stumble on the brink, and stagger on the very edge; but the Lord will lay his arms underneath them, so as to keep them from being altogether swallowed therein. Have you not found it so? When you have been reclining on the lap of ease, has there not been an arrow of conviction that has roused you

from your sleep? When you have feared you should fall headlong into despair, has there not been some gentle word, some precious testimony, some sweet promise applied, whereby you have been kept from falling into that gloomy whirlpool?

iii. But again. The feet may not only be tripped up, but they may also be *beguiled*. If our feet are tripped up, we fall altogether. But, without being tripped up, we may wander from the right road; therefore we are warned (Prov. 4:26, 27), "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." We hear what the Lord says of the strange woman, that "her paths incline to the dead." Therefore he solemnly warns us, (Prov. 7:25,) "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths."

The promise, then, that the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints," not merely implies that he will keep their feet from being tripped up, so that they shall not fall utterly, but that he will also keep them from declining from the right path.

1. For instance; there are *paths of delusion*; and these paths of delusion apparently run side by side with the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. One of the things I most dread is to be left to a spirit of delusion; for I see how Satan can impose upon a man's mind, if not preserved. As an angel of light, he can come under such subtle forms, can cast such mists of error over the eye, can so insinuate his lies into the mind, and so dress out delusion, making it appear to come from God himself, that, next to falling into sin, I dread falling into a spirit of delusion. Satan knows exactly the persons he has to deal with. Our natural constitutions vary; our minds are cast in different moulds; and our education and habits materially differ. But Satan, who is intimately

acquainted with the state of our minds and constitution, and what is congenial to our disposition, like a skilful angler, who has a fly and a hook for every fish, knows exactly how to suit his temptation to our natural state and case. Some he sees superstitious, easily drawn aside, soon elated, readily entangled by craft and subtlety; and upon these he will come as a spirit of delusion, puffing up their minds with pride, deceiving them with some novelty, and imposing his own lies and errors upon them as though they were the solid teachings of God the Spirit.

But the Lord will "keep the feet of his saints." There is in the living soul a divine principle, which tastes heavenly food, savours heavenly fragrance, hears heavenly sounds, sees heavenly objects, and feels heavenly sensations. The spirit of delusion is always alien from, and opposed to, these spiritual senses of the soul. When the spirit of delusion, then, comes to the child of God, there is that in his bosom which secretly rejects it. "The voice is of the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." It does not come into his soul as from the Lord; there is no breath of the sanctuary in it, no divine influence communicated by it, no holy affections drawn upwards, no meltings of heart, no softening of spirit, nor any of those divine realities which living souls experience. But it puffs up the mind, sears the conscience, hardens the heart, inflates and lifts up the soul with vain imaginations, takes away the Cross of Christ, and sets up an idol. This delusion, then, coming into the heart of a child of God, meets an antagonist there, that has eyes to see the feet of this witch; that has ears to hear she does not speak in gospel language; that has a nose to smell her ill-savour; that has hands which when they touch her do not feel the same sensations as when they touch the Lord of life and glory. And thus, when the spirit of delusion comes before a child of God, there is that secret indescribable feeling in his soul which

rejects it, and is not overcome nor entangled by it. How many have I seen, in my day, entangled in some delusion or other that has come over the religious world! What blasts of delusion were continually blowing when Irvingism first came abroad; and how many thousands were entangled in that delusion! Let the devil come with any spirit of delusion, he is sure to catch some—but not the living soul. For he has that internal principle, that spiritual understanding, that heavenly light in his judgment, that peculiar discernment in his conscience, that divine apprehension within, which, as if instinctively, detects delusion. It does not produce in his soul those divine sensations which the Spirit of the Lord does; therefore he rejects it as the spirit of delusion. I admit that he may be entangled for a time; but sooner or later he will be brought out; for the Lord "keeps the feet of his saints."

2. But there is also a turning into *the path of error*. There are many "bye paths," that, as Bunyan says, "butt down upon the strait and narrow way." If the path of truth runs to the right, the path of error runs to the left. Satan, who is continually sowing tares in the Church, perpetually flying about upon the wings of novelty, introduces errors just as he sees opportunity; and raises up cunning and crafty, though apparently religious men, for the purpose of propagating them abroad. There is a principle in the natural heart which embraces error, and there is a principle in the spiritual mind which rejects error. I have never yet heard of any error abroad, however awful, that I have not felt something in my heart to cleave to *it*; and I have never heard any truth spoken of, that I have not felt another principle in my heart to cleave to *it*. I feel distinctly the workings of the two principles. When error comes before me—the vilest error—I feel a cursed principle in my heart, that closes in with it, and forms a fleshly union with it. But then, I feel, through mercy, another spirit, which hates it, rejects it, and dares not

embrace it, through the workings of a conscience made tender in God's fear. You and I have in our hearts a principle of unbelief, which would drink down every lie of the devil, and reject every truth of God. We have a principle of infidelity that doubts every revealed truth, and yet can believe every one of Satan's lies. But if God the Spirit has quickened your soul into spiritual life, you have another principle—the principle of living faith which loves truth, clings to it, receives it into the heart, and approves of it in the conscience. Thus there is a constant conflict betwixt these two things—the principle of unbelief, which believes nothing but the devil's lies; and the principle of faith, which receives, loves, and cleaves to the truth of God.

But, besides this, there is a *reasoning principle* in our mind, which falls in with the subtle insinuations of Satan and Satan's agents. A man may reason, till he reasons himself out of every truth, and reasons himself into every error. He may reason about the Bible, till he believes the Bible to be a fiction. He may reason about the being of God, till he believes there is no God. He may reason about the deity of Jesus, and the personality of the Holy Ghost, the existence of the Trinity, and every revealed truth, till he reasons himself into thorough infidelity. Thus, we have not only a depraved principle that cleaves to error, but we have a reasoning mind, that would reason itself out of truth into error. And this awful adversary of the faith of God's elect is always at work in our minds, to bring us into Satan's snares. But yet, through mercy, there is another principle—an understanding heart, a believing spirit, a feeling soul, a tender conscience, in the breast of a child of God, which rejects error, because error always comes to it distinct from the truth of God. Error hardens—truth softens. Error sears—truth melts. Error blinds—truth enlightens. Error deadens—truth quickens and revives. Error lifts up—truth lays low. Error leads the heart

*from* God—truth leads the heart up *to* God. Now as in our right mind we know what softening is, and what hardening is—what being led *to* the Lord is, and what being led *from* the Lord is—as we can trace in our souls the working of these two distinct things (as in our right mind we love to do), we turn away from error, because it leads us from God, and we cleave to truth, because it leads us to God. And thus the Lord keeps the feet of his saints. Error shall not entangle them. They may go on the very borders of it; they may, for a while, drink into a measure of the very spirit of it. But there is that in all error, Unitarian, Arian, Arminian, Pre-existerian, or Antinomian, which never finds a lodging in the tender conscience, never finds a resting-place in the renewed heart. But there is in truth something so vital, so sweet, that so drops into the heart, and (if I may use the expression) feels itself so at home in the soul, that the child of God cleaves to it at any price, any cost. The Lord keeps the feet of his saints. They shall never become Arians, Antinomians, Socinians, or Arminians. They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

2. But they may not only decline into error; they may also turn aside into *idolatry*. What says the Spirit by the Apostle John? "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Some of the Lord's people are not tempted by a spirit of delusion—others of the Lord's children are not tempted by a spirit of error. But how many who are exempt from these bye-paths, are not exempt from declining into idolatry! And O, what a burden idolatry is to a child of God! To feel there is that in his heart which at times he loves more than God himself—that there is that in his bosom which he nurses, hugs, and embraces, though it has stung him a thousand times as a viper! What a base wretch man is! what a depraved creature, nursing in his bosom these filthy idols! We wonder at the depravity of the heathen. We see their hideous idols, and

wonder that a reasonable man can bow down to such disgusting images. But do we not find a parallel in our own hearts? Did Hindoo or Otaheitan ever sculpture an idol so hideous as that which we embosom and enshrine in our breasts? Theirs is, after all, but a hideous log of wood or stone; but our filthy desires, our corrupt imaginations, our bosom idols, are ten thousand times more hideous in the sight of God. But the Lord will keep the feet of his saints. They may have their idols; he will keep them from being altogether entangled. He will sometimes convince them of the sin of idolatry, by laying the guilt of it upon the conscience. He will sometimes, when they hug the idol very closely, take it out of their bosom; and at others make that idol to be their torment, and turn that from which they seek lively gratification into a source of pain and misery. And thus, in one way or another, he will keep the feet of his saints from declining into the path of idolatry.

3. But there is also the path of *fleshly ease*. Do we love trials? Are we fond of being exercised, plagued, and tempted? Why, we know what a coward flesh we have—how glad we are to slip our neck out of the collar of sorrow and suffering—how unwilling we are to walk in the strait and thorny path before us—how fond we are of a little ease, though it be but, as Job says, "to swallow down our spittle!" We are very glad to get into this smooth path, this laying down of our arms, this settling of ourselves in our arm-chair, this resting upon past experiences, this slinking out of the battle, this going into the rear with the baggage. We are very liable to get into this path of carnal ease; so the Lord keeps us out of it by afflictions, temptations, and trials. But the church of God, in this age and generation, is much in a path of fleshly ease; almost, like the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot; like the people of Laish, dwelling carelessly; like Ephraim, "a cake not turned; grey hairs are upon him, and

he knoweth it not." But the Lord will not allow us to take our ease. We may try to make our nest comfortable, but there will always be a thorn at the bottom of it. We may attempt to settle down upon our lees, but there will be a shaking of the vessel. We may try to slink out of the engagement and creep into the rear; but there will be the "thunder of the captains, and the shouting" even there. We may try to rest our heads upon the baggage-waggon, but even there we shall hear the roar of the artillery. The Lord will visit his people with some severe and cutting affliction, some sharp rod, some heavy stripe, when they have turned out of the right track into the path of fleshly ease, and thus bring them back.

iv. The promise is absolute—"The Lord *will* keep the feet of his saints." But how, for the most part, does the Lord keep them, *instrumentally*?

1. The grand instrument whereby the Lord keeps them is, by implanting *his fear* in their hearts. It is the new covenant promise, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. 32:40.) The Lord puts his fear into the hearts of his people; and this becomes in them "a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death." This is their bosom companion all the journey through. This is that holy principle in their breast, whereby instrumentally their feet are kept. Would they stray into sin? The fear of God in their bosom checks. Would they rush into vain-confidence? The fear of the Lord in their bosom forbids. Would they fall into despair? The fear of the Lord in their bosom upholds them. Would they become inward idolaters? Would they fall into the entanglements of Satan? Would they get into the path of fleshly ease? The fear of the Lord, as a fountain of life, gushing up in their souls, and watering their hearts with its



blessed streams—this fear of the Lord, which is their "treasure," preserves them from the ways of the destroyer, and thus keeps their feet in the paths of the gospel.

2. But the Lord also uses his *word*. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," was the prayer of the dying Lord. By opening up his word to their hearts—by causing his precepts to drop with power into their consciences—by applying his truth to their souls, sometimes cutting, sometimes consoling, but always penetrating—he keeps their feet. Would they break every hedge? The word of the Lord forbids it. Thus he keeps the feet of his saints through his truth, by opening up that truth in their consciences, and applying it with power and savour to their hearts.

3. He keeps them too, every now and then, *by intimations from above*—by dropping in the dew of his grace—by secret meltings of heart—by softening the spirit—by raising up this question, "How can I do this thing, and sin against God?"—by raising up tender emotions and loving sensations towards himself. As Ephraim, "after he was instructed, smote upon his thigh," so the Lord's people, when he looks upon them, smite upon their breasts. By these secret intimations, their feet are kept in the ways of the Lord. Have you never felt it so? When you have been tempted to do something that your carnal heart loved, and to which Satan was urging you with all his might, has there not been some intimation, some word, some check from God? When an impetuous word was bursting forth, when anger rose in your bosom, was there not a secret restraint, that kept down the rising wrath? When the lust of the eye entangled you, and you would fain walk in the paths of the dead, was there not some feeling Godward, some check, some admonition, some opening up of the Scripture, some touch of God's finger upon your conscience, some secret emotion in your soul, that kept you from the

ways of destruction? And when delusion came before you, did no word from God drop, to open it up, and show you it was a delusion? If error crossed your path, and your carnal mind embraced it did no word come into your heart, to show you how contrary it was to the revealed word of God? And when the world spread out its snares, and allured you to its arms, was there not some secret admonition, something from the Lord's own mouth, that kept you from being entangled in the snare, and walking in the path of the dead?

4. And sometimes the Lord keeps us by his *providence*. There is a snare spread for us—he will send us in a path where the snare is not spread. Satan lays his snares, as poachers do in what is called "the run" of the hare. The spring is set just in the hole of the hedge through which the poor animal runs. So Satan, that cunning poacher, lays his snare just in our very "run." But the Lord determines otherwise. We have perhaps fixed to go down this street; had we gone, we should have fallen into a snare. An impulse comes to take another turn; by obeying that impulse, we are kept from falling into that trap. Could the Lord's people see how he has kept them from falling into snares, by his wonderful interpositions, how it would raise their admiration of his wisdom!

The promise is absolute—"He will keep the feet of his saints." What tenderness there is in it! The Lord sees his poor scattered pilgrims travelling through a vale of tears, journeying through a waste howling wilderness, a path beset with gins, traps, and snares in every direction. How can they escape? Why, the Lord keeps their feet, carries them through every rough place, as a tender parent carries a little child; when about to fall, graciously lays the everlasting arms underneath them, and when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip, mercifully upholds them from falling altogether. Thus the Lord keeps the feet of his saints. But do

you think that he has not different ways for different feet. The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike; and will he cause all his people to walk in precisely the same path? No; we have each our path, each our besetment, each our trials, each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet. And the wisdom of the all-wise and only-wise God is shown, by his eyes being in every place, marking the footsteps of every pilgrim, suiting his remedies to meet their individual case and necessity, appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good; watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of his affection were bent on one individual and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm. What a mercy it is there is such a promise in the Bible! "He will keep the feet of his saints," that they shall not be utterly tripped up, utterly cast down, utterly wander away from God and godliness. He will keep their feet in this vale of tears, amidst all the springs, traps, and snares laid for them, in the narrow path that leads to life, and bring them eventually to see his glory, and be with him for ever, where all tears shall be wiped away from off all faces.