

# Taking Heed Lest We Fall

*“Wherefore let him  
that thinketh he  
standeth take heed  
lest he fall.”*

*—II Corinthians  
10:12*

## THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

which the consecrated followers of Christ will observe this month was not instituted by Jesus to be merely a seasonal reminder of his life of dedication and service to God, and of his death as man's Redeemer. These are, indeed, the all-important basis of our fellowship with him. However, the bread and the cup of our Lord's Memorial are but empty symbols if their meaning does not also have a significant personal impact in our lives. It is our hope that this two-part article will bring to mind, in a very practical way, our continuing responsibilities to God, the Truth and our brethren.

Our opening text is only one of many in the sacred record which reminds us of the possibility of falling away from the position of special favor with God. The apostle's words also indicate clearly that there is a very definite part we must play in maintaining this standing—a part which he describes by the expression, “take heed.” To take heed means to look

at, to behold, to beware, to perceive. Taking heed, to the Christian, means to be continually aware and alert concerning his spiritual affairs, so that he may know of the dangers ahead, and be prepared to deal with them.

The apostle indicates that the importance of our taking heed is in order that we may not fall. That there is danger of the Christian falling is prophetically indicated through the words of the psalmist, saying, “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” (Ps. 91:7) A study of these words and their surrounding context indicate that the reason ascribed for some not falling is that they dwell “in the secret place of the most High,” and have made his truth their “shield and buckler.”—vss. 1,4

Obviously no one could fall away from a standing with God unless he had at one time enjoyed such a standing. Therefore, it is important to have clearly in mind just what it means to stand in order that we may intelligently take heed lest we fall. The Scriptures outline our standing from various viewpoints, and as we put together the various testimonies of the Bible bearing on the subject we learn that to stand in God’s sight is a very definite and essential thing. Consequently, the possibility of falling from this standing is a most serious matter to be considered.

## **STANDING IN THE LORD**

The Apostle Paul wrote: “Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” (Phil. 4:1) To “stand fast in the Lord” means to trust in the merit of Jesus’ shed blood, and, through full consecration

and immersion of our wills into God's will, to be counted as members of the anointed company of which Christ is the head. What a blessed standing this is! It implies and requires humility in recognizing our need of the saving grace of God through the blood. It calls for the full and unqualified devotion of our wills to the doing of the divine will. To take heed in maintaining this standing means a daily searching of our hearts to make sure that we have no will of our own that is in opposition to the will of God as it is expressed through our head, Christ Jesus.

To stand in the Lord also implies a standing along other lines. In another place Paul said, "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." (I Cor. 16:13, *English Standard Version*) The faith in which we are to stand firm is the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3) This faith has been, to a large extent, lost sight of by churchianity in general. This is the same faith which was first of all delivered to Abraham, then to Isaac and Jacob, and to all the prophets. The great central theme of this faith is the Messianic hope of a future kingdom to bless all nations, and God's High Calling to the Christian to be joint-heirs with Christ in that kingdom. Let us be sure we are standing fast in that faith, and that it has not become a mere tale, or old and uninteresting.

Paul indicated that it would require strength to stand in the faith. "Act like men, be strong." It has always required courage to stand in the pure faith of the Gospel. This is manifest by the rapid falling away that occurred after the apostles fell asleep. (II Thess. 2:3) Not long after their death, the pure doctrines of the faith were corrupted, and those

seeking spiritual nourishment were fed with contaminated food. Even today, many feel that these substitutes for the faith once delivered to the saints are the more desirable. However, we should always remember that if we want to dwell close to the Lord in our spirit of fellowship we must be interested in what he is doing, and spend our energy where he is working. That is only possible as we stand fast in the faith of God's plan.

If we are truly standing in the Lord, we will be standing in the liberty of Christ. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1) To stand in the liberty of Christ means to have liberty to do everything that Christ would have us do. Thus it implies that we cannot be subject to the will of man, nor to man-made institutions. If we find ourselves "entangled again" in bondage to the will of man, and thereby held back from saying and doing the things which we know to be pleasing to God and to Christ, then we are not wholly standing fast in the liberty of Christ. Let us likewise, then, take heed along this line in order that we may not fall.

The apostle mentions still another important phase of our standing in the Lord, namely, that of standing fast "in one spirit." He said, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27) There is a remarkable blending of important Christian principles set forth in these words. The apostle urges that we stand fast in one

spirit, not by compromising the faith, but by striving together for the faith centered in the Gospel. How different this is from the modern recipe for unity of the spirit, so prevalent in today's churches, which advocates unity not by striving together for the faith, but by ceasing to strive, contend, or even study the faith once delivered unto the saints.

It is in the spirit of the "truth of the gospel" that we are to stand together. (Col. 1:5) We cannot stand in the spirit unless we strive together for the truths contained in the Gospel message. Standing together in the spirit is very closely associated with striving together for the faith. To continue in such a stand will require courage, strength, fortitude, and the help of God to enable us to strive together, to contend, and to fight the good fight of faith. This means that we must be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."—Eph. 6:10

## **PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION**

There are various danger signals by which we may be forewarned of an impending fall, and these are readily discernible if we are alertly taking heed. One of these is the spirit of pride. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. 16:18) How easy it is for the spirit of pride to enter into our hearts, causing us to be haughty and self-important. The spirit of humility engenders meekness, gentleness, teachableness, patience, and forbearance. How important, then, that none "think of himself more highly than he ought to think."—Rom. 12:3

Another danger sign is that of indifference toward the truth of God's Word. The Word of God is his

voice speaking to us. If we are to maintain our standing in him, how alert we should be to listen to his voice, and how attentive and obedient we should be to the message. Our standing in the Lord depends upon our obedience to his truth, for it is by the Truth that we are sanctified. (John 17:17) Satan would like to have us believe that to stand in the Lord is one thing, and that to stand in the Truth is something else. He would like to have us believe that it does not make any difference where we stand with respect to the Word of truth as long as we love the Lord. However, this is one of those wiles of the devil by which he is endeavoring to draw us away from God by causing us to lose our appreciation of his glorious message of truth, through which he speaks to us and guides us in the narrow way. Let us continue to cherish the Truth, to feed upon it, that thereby we may grow strong, and remain strong, so that we will not fall, because we have made the truth our buckler and our shield.

Failure to assemble together with the brethren, or indifference to the privilege of fellowship, is another danger signal. God has so arranged the church's affairs as to make fellowship with others of like precious faith one of the important means of grace. If we fail to appreciate this provision of the Lord for our strengthening in the faith and in the spirit, whenever possible, we are neglecting one of the important means by which we are kept from falling.

The spirit of "bitterness, and wrath, and anger" is another danger signal which should be quickly discerned by those who are properly taking heed. (Eph. 4:31) These unholy manifestations of character are the very opposite to the spirit of love, which is

the Spirit of God. To permit their entrance into our hearts, and still worse, to harbor and act upon them, will sooner or later result in great loss as to our standing in Christ Jesus. Let us diligently take heed in this respect, by quickly and effectively rooting out every evidence of these sinful qualities from our hearts through prayer, and instead seek to be filled with, and controlled by, the spirit of love.

We should also not permit the spirit of the world to take control of our hearts and lives. The spirit of the world is one of self-seeking, ambition and vain-glory. In short, it is the spirit of selfishness, which is the spirit of the adversary. If we find the spirit of the world beginning to encroach upon our minds and hearts we should recognize it as a danger sign of pitfalls and snares ahead by which Satan is endeavoring to bring about our fall from steadfastness. Let us seek to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and so occupied with the things of the Spirit, that there will be no time or place for the spirit of the world to gain even the slightest entrance into our lives.

## **HOW WE MAY FALL**

There are many ways by which, through failure to take heed, we may fall away from the position of full faithfulness before God, and from our blessed standing in his grace. We may, for example, fall asleep spiritually by permitting a spirit of lethargy to creep over us, dulling our spiritual senses. (Prov. 6:10,11; I Thess. 5:6) This results, gradually, in a lack of appreciation of the Truth, a carelessness in seeking to do God's will, a lack of zeal for his service, and a coldness and indifference toward our brethren in Christ, and the privilege of laying down our lives for them.

We may fall by continued unfaithfulness along almost any line, and particularly by not seeking the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father when we transgress the divine law. We may fall by doing “despite unto the Spirit of grace.” We may “fall into reproach” by stubbornly endeavoring to carry out our own plans. We may “fall into temptation” by not faithfully taking heed to the danger signals along the way, and thus become enmeshed in one or more of Satan’s snares.—Heb. 10:29; I Tim. 3:7; 6:9

We may fall away from service in the faith. We may fall from our love for the brethren and our love for God. We may fall by willfully going contrary to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We may fall from our steadfastness by “being led away with the error of the wicked.” (II Pet. 3:17) However, Paul writes: “Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” “Therefore, ... be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”—Heb. 6:9; I Cor. 15:58

### **“YE SHALL NEVER FALL”**

The Apostle Peter gives us a splendid formula by which we may keep from falling. He reminds us of the precious promises upon which our hope for the divine nature is based, and indicates that these promises are also the groundwork of our faith. Then he bids us to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and love. “For if these things be in you, and abound,” the apostle says, “they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten



that he was purged from his old sins.” But, “if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:4-11

We should remember that when the Bible speaks of “falling” it means more than mere “stumbling.” In a sense, we stumble every time we make mistakes. Because of fleshly imperfection, we stumble and blunder more or less as we walk the narrow way. However, if our hearts are pure before God, he will watch over us and his everlasting arms will be under us to bear us up and start us out afresh every time we need his grace. Let us then take courage and press along in the blessed task of doing his will, knowing that eventually, if we continue taking heed, we will be “more than conquerors through him that loved us” and died for us.—Rom. 8:37

In Part 2 of this article, to appear in the April issue of *The Dawn*, we will consider further aspects of how we are to “take heed.” These will include taking heed to how we hear the message of truth; taking heed to deceptions which may present themselves to us; taking heed concerning how we are building our characters; taking heed so as not to depart from God; and taking heed to the ministry. In all these ways, let us be ever aware and alert that we might continue to stand strong in the Lord. ■