

## SERMON UPON 2 TIMOTHY II. 19.

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*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his ; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.—2 TIM. ii. 19.*

THESE words are brought in to prevent the scandal which the godly might take at the falling away of two such men as Hymeneus and Philetus, who in probability were men of note in the church; for there is not such notice taken of ordinary and mean persons. Their error was, they acknowledged only a metaphorical resurrection, and so weakened the comfort of the faithful. The scandal which they gave was threefold—*scandalum seductionis contristationis offensionis*.

1. There was *scandalum seductionis*: ver. 18, 'They overthrow the faith of some,' *fides quæ creditur*. It is principally meant, they turned them away from the truth.

2. There was *scandalum contristationis*. They were a great trouble to the faithful, and weakened their comfort; as surely it is a mighty disheartening to see such glorious luminaries fall from heaven like lightning. Some think the main drift of the text is to comfort them with an hope of preservation though these fell away. When others fall, those who are truly the Lord's, and do unfeignedly dedicate themselves to be his people, shall be preserved by his power, because the foundation, or first stone of this spiritual building, was laid in their election, which is firm and unchangeable. I am not against this sense, because I find election to be made the ground of our standing out in temptations: Mat. xxiv. 24, 'Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' The elect cannot possibly be deceived and drawn away from the true Christ, because of the wisdom, love, and power of God engaged for them: 2 Thes. ii. 13, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Their election did secure them from damnable errors. I am not against this truth, yet I think it not the full meaning of this place, though strongly implied in it. Truly the apostle doth confirm the hearts of the faithful in these words, by showing them their privileges and their duty: their privileges, when he telleth them that 'God knoweth them that are his;,' their duty, when he presseth them to holiness: 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' The apostasy of some should excite all to watchfulness, lest they be caught in the same snare. But yet I cannot induce myself

to think that by the foundation of God is meant his election; and it is an hard thing to conceive that a foundation of a building should be sealed.

3. There is *scandalum offensionis*. It might make them to stumble, and take offence, and raise a scandal of prejudice, or doubtfulness at least—(1.) Against the truth of the gospel; (2.) The honour of the church. The latter scandal is obviated in the 20th verse: ‘But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.’ The carnal and renewed, the sincerely godly and the hypocrites, live together in the church without any dishonour to the church, or derogation to God’s providence; as in a great family there are divers utensils, some for a nobler, some for a baser use. But the former scandal against the truth of the gospel, which seemed to be weakened in their minds by this perverse opinion, that the resurrection was past, is chiefly obviated in the text. They denied the future estate, and so there was no bliss for them that were persecuted. Now, to comfort them, the apostle telleth them that God hath a reward for those that were faithful with him, and that eternally both in body and soul. So that the meaning of ‘The foundation of the Lord standeth sure,’ is his obligation and covenant with them in Christ; and his purpose towards them remains unchangeable and firm, because it is sealed on God’s part by his providence, administering all things for the good of the elect; on man’s part, by their conscience of their duty: ‘Nevertheless the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ In the words observe—

1. The proposition concerning the sureness of God’s covenant, ‘The foundation of the Lord standeth sure.’

2. The confirmation—

[1.] In general, because it is a sealed contract.

[2.] More particularly from the nature of this seal, or the double inscription or motto of it. It hath an inscription or motto agreeing to the condition of the two parties contracting.

(1.) On God’s part, ‘The Lord knoweth them that are his.’ God will be faithful and constant in loving those who are his servants.

(2.) On man’s part. Yet we are not to be negligent of our duty: ‘And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’

*Doct.* That whatever errors or scandals arise in the church, yet God’s purpose, declared in the gospel, of bringing his peculiar people unto glory, remaineth firm and steady.

This was the truth assaulted by this error, which shook so many, and this is the comfort which the apostle propoundeth to the disciples and servants of Christ.

The point will be made good by explaining the circumstances of the text.

I. The proposition here asserted, ‘The foundation of the Lord standeth sure.’ All the business will be to show what is the foundation of God. *Θεμέλιος*, ‘foundation,’ is taken *sensu forensi* or *architectonico*, in the builder’s sense or in the lawyer’s sense. In the builder’s

sense, for the foundation of an house; in the lawyer's sense, for the foundation of an estate which I expect from another, upon any bargain or contract with him: the evidences and deeds of conveyance are the foundation which I have to build upon for my right and title. Now, to take 'foundation' here in the builder's sense, would make but an odd interpretation in this place. Whoever heard of the sealing of the foundation of an house, and inscriptions on that seal? And therefore 'foundation' is taken here for a covenant or bill of contract; as also, 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.' It would be incongruous to take 'foundation' there in the builder's sense, as if good works were the foundation of eternal life. No; they are only the evidences and assurances of it. The notion of a bond or obligation is more proper. Upon a contract I found or build my confidence of expecting good from another; so, Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.' Lending noteth some contract and promise, and expectation grounded thereon; so here, 'The foundation of God' is his bill or bond, which is as a pledge or security left with us; and thereby is not meant so much God's eternal purpose of election, as his covenant, that deed and instrument of law by which he conveyeth pardon and life to us. Now this may be considered two ways—either as offered or applied; either as externally preached according to the approving or commanding will of God, or as acted and effectually applied to the hearts of the elect according to the decree of God. As offered, so the proposition asserts the immutability of the gospel covenant, contrary to the doctrine and offence occasioned by these false teachers; as applied, so it asserts the perseverance of the saints; both which are confirmed by the seal annexed. Both are contrary to the scandal offered by these false teachers. They denied the resurrection, or hopes of the other world. God will give the blessings promised to his people; if they suffer here, or be miserable here, they shall be happy hereafter. The covenant is applied against the offence; God would be faithful, if they would be vigilant; and he would preserve them in a state of grace, though others did fall away. Well, then, the truth which we are to discuss is, that God's covenant will be sure, firm, and stable, to all those that are sincerely entered into the bond of it. It must needs be so.

1. It is everywhere sure on God's part; and,

2. He will make it sure on our part. If he will not depart from us, and we shall not depart from him, surely then it is steadfast.

1. On God's part there is no danger of failing. There is his eternal love, backed with an infinite power, and engaged by an infallible truth. God's love and mercy were the only reasons which engaged him to make this covenant with us; the pleasure of his will gave it a being, and his truth is engaged to make it good: Micah vii. 20, 'Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.' The promise was out of mercy given to Abraham, with whom the covenant was first made; but out of truth and fidelity it descended to Jacob, and was established with his seed. In the managing of the same covenant God showed his power:

Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God all-sufficient.' That solved all difficulties to Abraham. We have the same grounds to depend upon in the covenant made with the christian church in the promise of eternal life. Surely Christ would not feed us with chimeras, who was ever plain-hearted and open with his disciples: John xiv. 2, 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' He meaneth as he speaketh, and persisteth in the same mind, and is able to make his word good. His everlasting love provided this happiness for us before the world was: Mat. xxv. 34, 'Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' So Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' It is secured by the promise of the faithful God, and he hath confirmed it by an oath: Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. Yea, and it is possessed by our surety and head in our name: Heb. vi. 20, 'Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.' And the power of God is engaged to prevent the dangers by the way: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' Heaven is kept for us, and we for it; which power of God is engaged to solve all the difficulties about the end and happiness itself: Phil. iii. 21, 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.' So that on God's part it is sure. They that have the word of the eternal God to build upon, do build upon a sure foundation: Ps. lxxxix. 34, 'My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.' It is compared with the stability of hills and mountains: Isa. liv. 10, 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall never depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' It is compared also with the covenant of night and day, which cannot be disannulled by any created power: Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, 'Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar, the Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever;' Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21, 'Thus saith the Lord, If you break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant.'

2. It is secure also on our part, where all the danger lieth; as God will not depart from us, so he will take care we shall not depart from him; so that if once we truly and really enter into covenant with God, we do not only keep the covenant, but the covenant keepeth us. Two things maketh it firm on our parts—

[1.] Internal grace vouchsafed and granted to us by promise: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'And 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.' So Ezek. xxxvi.

27, 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' It doth not hang upon the mutable motions of the creature's will.

[2.] External providence, or the provision that is made for failings and slips, where the heart is sincere for the main. There is a clause put into the covenant, that every failing in the performance of our duty shall not make a forfeiture. See Ps. lxxxix. 30-33, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' It is the duty of God's children to watch over their corrupt nature and against temptations, that they may not fail, otherwise they are not sincere; but yet, notwithstanding their greatest watchfulness, they will in some things be found faulty, both in point of omission and commission, yet the Lord will not be severe upon every trespass; the covenant goeth on still, notwithstanding lesser transgressions on our part: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, 'Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.' We are not so firm as God, but remission of sins is one of the covenant privileges, and remaineth notwithstanding the defects and failings on our part. When we grow secure, and neglect our duty, and do not watch over ourselves, the jealous God will watch over us, and take away the fuel of our lusts, and quicken us to repentance and the remembrance of our duty. The sharpest rods and sorest stripes may stand, and do stand with his covenant love to them: Ps. cxix. 75, 'I know that in faithfulness hast thou afflicted me.' Yea, not only so, but they are part of his covenanting administrations; they are fatherly corrections, and medicinal preservatives against sinning; they are tokens of God's hating sin in his people, but not of the rejection of their persons, but rather effects of his love to the persons corrected.

## II. The confirmation.

1. In the general, God's bill and bond hath a seal annexed to it. A seal is to make a thing unquestionable. The prophet, in his bargain for the field of Anathoth, Jer. xxxii. 10, 11, saith, 'I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it; and I took the evidence of the purchase, which was sealed according to the law and custom.' The sealing of the deeds was an assurance by which an inheritance was made over; and a covenant and bargain ratified was sealed by both parties. So is God's covenant sealed, for the more assurance, by God and us.

2. I shall show particularly the nature of the seal on God's part and ours.

[1.] The seal of the covenant hath an impression suitable to God's part, 'The Lord knoweth those that are his;' where there is a double comfort and ground of assurance to God's covenant people—(1.) They are his; (2.) He knoweth them.

(1.) They are his.

(1st.) By election from all eternity: John xvii. 6, 'Thine they were.' By this there is a distinction between them and others in the

purposes of his grace. When the Lord had all Adam's posterity under his all-seeing eye, he did out of his free love choose some from among others to be the objects of his special grace.

(2*d.*) By effectual calling, which is their actual choice, by which a distinction is made between them and others in time: 2 Thes. ii. 13, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' His actual choice is there meant: John xv. 19, 'I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' The world knoweth not the secrets of God's election, but they see the effects. The first foundation of a believer's salvation was laid in election, but it is acted and completed when God calleth them from the rest of the world, and sets them apart for himself.

(3*d.*) They are his by entering into covenant with him, and an act of consecration on their part: Ezek. xvi. 8, 'Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.' They surrender themselves to the Lord's use: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord.' Give your hand to God. Now all this maketh the foundation or the covenant of the Lord sure to them, so that they shall not miscarry by damnable errors and wilful sin, as others do. God's eternal election keepeth them from the taint of errors: Mat. xxiv. 24, 'Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' The elect cannot altogether be seduced and drawn away from Christ, because of the purpose of God, which is backed by his invincible power and care over them. Actual election or effectual calling giveth them a discerning spirit: 2 Thes. ii. 13, 'But we are bound always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.' Their minds are savingly enlightened and their wills renewed, so that they are kept safe. Their covenant-dedication doth particularly entitle them to God's care, so that they are guided by God's Spirit, and guarded by his continual providence, till the work begun in them be perfected: Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

(2.) God knoweth them. Knowing is put for—

(1*st.*) His particular notice of them as his peculiar people of all that belong to the election of his grace. He knoweth their persons: Jer. i. 5, 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.' God hath a special care of them, that they may not die in their unregenerate condition. He knoweth their names: Exod. xxxiii. 12, 'I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight;' and ver. 17, 'I will do this thing also which thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.' And it is said of Jesus Christ that 'he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out,' John x. 3. He knoweth all his flock particularly, their names and their number by head and poll, even to the meanest and poorest saint:

John, Andrew, Thomas. He knoweth their necessities, straits, and temptations, cares, griefs, fears, wants, difficulties, and dangers : Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.' He knoweth who wanteth food, and raiment, and protection. His eye is never off the saints : Ps. lvi. 8, 'Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?' Not a drop but is in God's bottle. God doth number their tears, reckon all the steps of their wanderings and pilgrimages; every weary step through Ziph and Hareph. I tell you, it is God's business in heaven to look after his saints : 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him,' 2 Chron. xvi. 9. He knoweth all their employments, and how they are to be fitted for them : Gal. i. 15, 'It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.' He dateth God's care from that time. This child is appointed to be a vessel of mercy, to be employed in an especial manner for God's glory. Thus Jeremiah was designed to be a prophet before he was bred or born; Paul to be an apostle in his mother's womb. An instance we have of God's particular knowledge in Acts ix. 11, 'The Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth.' Such a town, such a street, such a person, about such a work. God taketh notice of every particular circumstance.

(2d.) As he taketh notice of them, so it is with love, delight, and approbation, *verba notitiæ connotant affectus*. He embraceth them with special love, delighteth in them as his peculiar people, and approveth of them. *Knowing* beareth this sense for approving; as Ps. i. 6, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' So Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;' that is, I do not approve you. The Lord seeth and beholdeth them with mercy, and according to the gracious tenor of the evangelical covenant he approveth and rewardeth all the good purposes and performances of the godly. Here the Lord rests in his love : Zeph. iii. 17, 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save thee; he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing,' as his peculiar people.

(3d.) Knowledge is put for the communication of saving benefits : Gal. iv. 9, 'Now after ye have known God, or rather are known of God.' Sinners in an unconverted estate are such of whom God taketh no notice and knowledge, to wit, so as to be familiar with them, and to communicate saving blessings to them; but thus God knoweth his people, that he will not suffer them to be taken out of his hands.

[2.] The impression that suiteth with our part, or our duty in the covenant, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' Where take notice—

(1.) Of the description of the parties concerned, 'Whoso nameth the name of Christ;' that is, maketh profession of being a christian. As the wife is called by the name of her husband : Isa. iv. 1, 'Only let us be called by thy name;' the father's name is put on the children :

Gen. xviii. 16, 'Let my name be named on them;' so 'every one that nameth the name of Christ,' that is, so as to entitle himself to him, to be one of his disciples and followers.

(2.) The duty required, 'Let him depart from iniquity.' Where note—

(1st.) That there is a duty required of those that would possess those blessed privileges. Those that presume of their election, and cast away all care of salvation, and let loose the reins to all carnal liberty, they have no title nor right to these comforts. No; it belongeth to them who live in a conscionable obedience and careful endeavour to please God in all things. No man immediately knoweth his election but by holiness: 1 Thes. i. 4, 5, 'Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.' We understand things by their effects. God carrieth on the business of salvation in such a manner that he will have his people co-operate by the power they have received from him, taking heed of all things which are contrary thereunto, both in life and doctrine: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure;' and 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.' God's counsel is fulfilled by means, and we can have no knowledge but by the effect.

(2d.) How his duty is expressed, 'Let him depart from iniquity.' Not only retain the faith and profession of Jesus Christ, but depart from all manner of sin.

(1st.) The thing quitted is sin. It is an indefinite expression, which implieth all sin; not only sensual lusts, as voluptuous living, but pride, ambition, contention, animosity, vainglory. See ver. 21 and 22 of this chapter: 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work: flee also youthful lusts, but follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace.' In short, our duty is to keep close to God; and the departing from iniquity is by sound repentance at first, and by constant holiness of life afterwards, which are as the gate and the way.

(2d.) Though it belongeth to our care, yet God affecteth and worketh this obedience in the hearts of the elect, or his peculiar people; they must attend upon this work, but all is done by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost: Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.'

*Use.* We learn hence two things—(1.) A comfortable dependence upon God till our salvation be accomplished; (2.) The necessity of all holy care and diligence, notwithstanding God's undertaking in the covenant.

1. A comfortable dependence upon God till our salvation be accomplished. (1.) You are his: Ps. cxix. 94, 'I am thine, save me.' (2.) He knoweth you, and will make a distinction between you and others:



John xiii. 18, 'I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen;' 2 Peter ii. 9, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.' (3.) He that knoweth you is the Lord, and what is too hard for the Lord? his divine power can give you all things: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness;' and 2 Cor. ix. 8, 'God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.' (4.) It is the seal of his foundation, therefore he will unchangeably pursue what shall be for our good: Isa. xiv. 27, 'The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?' Ps. xlvii. 10, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;' Mal. iii. 6, 'I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' We often complain, as Israel of old, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment passed over by my God,' Isa. xl. 27. He hath forgotten us in the throng of business that is upon his hands, and taketh no notice of us. But here is sufficient encouragement for a dependence upon God: 'The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are his.'

2. We learn the necessity of all holy care and diligence, notwithstanding God's undertaking in the covenant. *Qui fecit te sine te, &c.*—God, that made thee without thee, will not save thee without thee. God, that decreed the end, decreeth also the means. (1.) If you name the name of Christ, there must be holiness joined with profession, otherwise you are a dishonour to him, and make him the minister of sin: Gal. ii. 17, 'But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.' (2.) Consider the impartiality of your judge. You will not find favour for being a christian in profession only: 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' (3.) You lose your evidence if you do not live as one known of God. External profession is disclaimed: Mat. vii. 21–23, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' (4.) As you are concerned in God's foundation, you oblige yourselves to a strict holy life. 1 Peter iii. 21, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now also save us; not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God;' and Heb. x. 21, 22, 'Having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'