

The Penknife, the Sack and the Egg

by H. P. Barker

The sermon teaches that we are upheld by God's power through faith, especially during trials and weaknesses.

Scripture: Psalm 55:22, Romans 14:4, 2 Corinthians 12:9, James 1:2, 1 Peter 1:5

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Faith Assurance"

Description

H. P. Barker preaches on the assurance that believers are kept by the power of God, emphasizing the need to trust in God's strength to uphold us in times of temptation and weakness. He highlights the importance of faith as the means through which God sustains us, drawing parallels to a miller filling a sack with flour to make it stand. Barker also discusses how God uses trials and adversity to strengthen and support us, likening it to making an egg stand on its end by creating a dent through a hard knock.

Transcript

Kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5):

How many are deterred from coming to the Savior through fear of their inability to stand. Knowing something of their inherent weakness, and of the awful power with which the enemy can present his temptations, they hesitate to take upon them the holy name of Christ, lest by their subsequent conduct they should bring dishonor upon Him.

While respecting such conscientiousness, I venture to suggest that it arises from ignorance as to two great facts. (1) Our own utter and absolute weakness and (2) God's power and willingness to uphold us in the day of temptation. The knowledge of our frailty and the discovery of our complete lack of strength should lead us to conclude that power to sustain us must come from outside ourselves altogether. If we are to continue for a moment to stand, in the face of all the forces which Satan will marshal against us, it must be by the power of God.

I have a penknife which I will try to stand on its end. The end is rounded and smooth. You would say this is an impossible task and you can never make that penknife stand up on its end. Behold, the impossible task, the penknife is actually standing! But you say that you are holding it. Did you think I was foolish enough to imagine that I could make it stand in any other way? But to make it stand by holding it up is neither impossible nor difficult.

Let me now read you a line from Romans 14:4, containing a magnificent promise: "He shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand". Can you find room for those misgivings which have tortured you, in the face of such words as these?

But we are not mere machines, nor does God treat us as such. If we are "kept by the power of God," it is through the exercise of faith on our part: "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5). We need to know how God holds us up.

Come with me to yonder flour mill. Do you see that heap of empty sacks in the corner? Take hold of one and try to make it stand up. What! You cannot. You say I am asking you to do an impossibility! No, ask the miller to make it stand, and to show you how he does it. The miller takes the sack with a smile and holds it under the chute down which the white, newly ground flour is falling. Soon the sack is full. Now is there any difficulty in making it stand? No indeed, it stands by the weight of what it contains.

Learn then thereby, that in order to make us stand God feeds us and fills us with what will strengthen our souls. Christ is the food of His people. As we appropriate, by faith, His death in its far-reaching significance, as we feast on His love and enter by the grace of the Holy Spirit into the enjoyment of those things which will be our everlasting portion, our souls are made strong. We look up to Christ with grateful and adoring eyes, and as we walk with Him, study Him, listen to His words, feed upon all that He is, we are "kept by the power of God."

But there is yet another means by which God holds us up. Do you see this egg? What will you say if I propose to make it stand on its end without my holding it? You may think that is impossible. See! I take it and give it a hard knock upon the table. The shell cracks and splinters. There is a dent at the end of the egg. On that dent I set it, and lo, it stands!

It is by means of the hard knocks, the trials under which we groan, the times of adversity and sorrow, that God sometimes holds us up and makes us stand. Prone to be self-reliant, we have to learn, like Mephibosheth, we are not only cripples when grace first reaches us, but cripples to the end of life's story. And of this God has to remind us again and again. His gracious hand is laid upon us in sore affliction in order to break our self-reliance and stubborn wills; in order to save us from the fall that follows pride, through saving us from the pride that goes before the fall. Who would not then take these blows, these trials of faith, these infirmities and sorrows, with thanksgiving, when we remember that thereby God fulfills His faithful promise: "He shall be holden up"?

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