No. 89.

"Holding fast the profession of faith."

Communion sermon.

Jan 1821
Hab. 2.3. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."

Who does not at once admit the necessity of the caution of the pree of the promise, contained in these words? To hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, is a duty, which, as there is much temptation to disregard it, should be continually urgently pressed upon us: "For he is faithful that promised" is a motive fitted to operate upon us by all the force of that sentiment, which carries unspeakable weight, and makes our souls cling to faith in his perfections as the anchor of their peace. On the subject of religion, as well as in other subjects, man not only needs to be convinced, but he needs to be enabled to follow out the convictions. There is a fitness of being in an unfolding in—
tivity of religious feeling, as must enter into the composition of the true Christian character. It is not enough for him to secure his faith; he must hold it fast; it is not enough for him to lay a trembling hand upon it; it must be without wavering. The great danger of all is not so much that we shall not receive the good news of religious truth, as that we shall not retain them; yet it was therefore with great propriety of sense, that the author of the story says, that our trust is as shaded, as having complete proof of its existence, it is so uninvited at each point of the comparison, does he ever render the solemn exclamation, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;" to be so faithful that "promise.""

These words seem adapted at this time to suggest our useful reflections. At the commencement of a new year, we are about to celebrate the memorial of our Lord; if we are reminded not only of the value of our religion, to teach us how to bear and publish testimony of regard, but we are called upon to remember that the time is short, if that the day is not far off. For other places act the table of the Lord will be replenished by death; when the covenants shall no more receive us, we shall remove to a brightness unutterable, when we must have to other the means of religious instruction; the holy and sacred names of God, ye to render our account of the work we ourselves have made of them. We shall see not all this done when we come to the task of solemn reflection. Do we ever think of the death of the saint? What does it mean? Would you have the barrier of death ever stand upon a rebel to your God, clambering on the seat of duty, retaining but a weak and trembling shadow of faith, ready at the thought to break the mountain? Does this matter so much to us? Have we, as we go on in the followers of Jesus, if we cannot believe that they are associated from heaven to man, if we are desirous of knowing the name of the cause of our dear, yef we how the
Deepest sense of responsibility, and of course full aware of
breath, it's quite likely that we have an eternal interest in
considering the path of the celestial, and without
regard for the flight of time. The duty of cherishing that
blessed hope, which is the only thing that can survive the
seasages of time. We cultivate many a weak plant at
temporal growth, while it blooms fair, and bears fruit its
flowering leaves in gay & flourishing beauty are forget that
after all perhaps it is but a feeble & sickly plant, is
that the first cold blast will tear away its branches, they
will be bare. But there is a tree, whose roots are deep
down under branches reach to heaven, it bears fruit for
evermore, if allowed, and the roots of it are to hold fast in the
earth.

It is our duty to hold fast the profession of our faith
without wavering, as it regards our religious frames.
These frames may be divided into those who respect the
truth & reality of it, & those, who respect its particular
doctrines. The first are the most important. Further in any
a revelation from God to man is the key stone of the arch.
From this time, it becomes us to give the utmost lest that
we do not lightly overcome. We especially let these be
in wavering. With many, however, there is great chances
that they will not alter their minds sufficiently to strike
into infidelity. Their belief in religion would be one of those
hopes of floating notions, which requires no great force to
drive from their minds; & accordingly when assaulted
as it generally is, in a thousand different ways, it is so
the completely capable, or obliged to notice it and
abode among those thoughts that are not often called
up, nor after a while it returns a lingering uncertainty &
is finally lost. It is very easy to raise objections, &
to one accustomed to habits of thinking, it often
may appear formidable. The more superficial argu-
am mingled with the dust, because the evening had brought it around. Do the engines of war, arranged to demolish it, thus
the building of God? Yef no more less than this can destroy it. There are some too, who, although they are unwilling to
quash their faith, yet put it to become deceived by made wo-
men, by the ridicule of the sophistry, advantage in the enemy
of truth through the chivalryingers with them. The phantom
is gone. This is our attention to a point so easily distin-
guished: of the learning of the world, that no one can take the whole part of the
profession of our faith without meandering.
Again, the same subject may be applied, provided it be
with due qualifications & in a proper sense, to the question
for opinion or religion. Do these we should admire as the
men of our time and satisfy that they are susceptible
and sound, wise, but that. This is a subject in which there is
much mistake. Ordinary with all often less for religious
views. He who takes up his opinions without a common
restraint of the ground on which they rest, is whether they are
any ground to rest when proceeds to the blind. Great to do
not about them as if they were the whole of respect. He take.

ally the most captious, of many an uneasy mind. It has
been unsettled by nervous attacks. The mind is not
just enough to go wrong. It is not every one, to be sure;
who has the information or the opportunity necessary to
examine the evidence, or the exigencies. The investigation
requires no inconsiderable knowledge of things, a habit
of reasoning, weighing testimony, of siftiug the nature
of motives, watching their operations, - a moral likeness
of being moved by moral influences, of the times being
moral feelings. All this is not to be expected in a large
part of mankind. - of such it is the duty not to be
hastily disturbed by sudden severe objections, proposed
with an air of boldness of ingenious minds. Let them wait
or pursue. They will probably find, that what sounds
to them so much, is but an old & stale objection, that has
been a hundred times answered, by the reviviscence of a
spirit of a reformation. That had been adopted a hundred years ago. Let them
not desert the temple of plain truth, because its weaknesses are
sometimes shaken, is imagine that all its solemn grandeur,
its holy altars, its golden roof, could be destroyed unseen,
other senses to teach, if they cannot receive them, such a man is not fit, who in the Scriptural sense, holds fast his faith without reasoning. But be it as believing that his religious opinions are of too much importance to be received in trust from education or from any human authority, stories by all the means in his power to discover truth, as it is developed by the effects of reason of by the revelation of God, who searches the evidence of things hid in height, and having arrived at conclusions and has thinks he has reasons to be well supported, maintains them until tempted by passion; not obstinately, yet with noise, but every time in all occasions, but mildly, when they may be listened to without impropriety, you may say, this is the man who is a true plain, upright, devout Christian; this is the profession of his faith. It is not the most violent or eloquent, who have always the darkest sense of the importance of correct religious opinions; there are those who think much upon the subject, because they deem it highly important, are not able so easily to satisfy their selves in truths, and desires to them to acquire much modification and approach. The most ignorant are usually the most sure that they are right; yet spiritual thoughts are most sure that others are wrong. It is the shallow head, shallow ideas, and we have seen in the heaven's own face, the deep stream moves slowly by itself, but as not the imagine, that we can be made to hold fast the profession of faith in a profession because we are obstinately wedded to our opinions; when the only reason why we do not move, is that we refuse to consider the evidence. I welcome truth; the unwavering faith is still more.

But the precept of the text very well applies to something beyond their mere belief of any kind. We may consider it as a directing the heart and affections. We are to hold fast the profession of faith, by becoming mainly attached to it, by submitting it to every check into our feelings, in the direct, your own conduct. There is a great difference between a faith that merely exists in the mind, imperfect, unsafe, and one that is carried out in all its consequences, becomes a principle of action. Should make a king of the instances in our characters, and this practically, that last makes our faith without wavering.

We should then, adhere firmly to our profession in opposition...
to the temptations of ambition & avarice. When these become consuming passions, they do much to drive religion from the mind. We cannot serve God & mammon; and our sins, meaning, we cannot serve them both effectually in the account of the temptation in the wilderness, which is described in a Jewish manner, with Jewish feelings, the temptation is represented as understanding well the force of these motives, by which men are commonly governed; when he says, having shown all the kingdoms of the earth & all the glory of them, "all these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down & worship me," etc., the same allurement was but too often in all ages, in above manner to give up their love of the good & more enduring goods. But we should remember that no matter how much we love, when we cast our eyes on religion for that sake will be but as the dust of the balance, as the chaff in the mind, when we resign the light of the hopes we hold of mankind's improvement to serve upon toys & trifles, it is; "If these also may be bought out of their religion in such less terms, may be so easily parted from it, it is to be feared, that they have little or no religion to hold fast without renewal."

Again, the duty enjoined upon us in the text, implies that we should cleave to our religion, in spite of fashionable vice & evil example. What we constantly see is constantly doing an influence more or less strong on our minds, that is, that prevailing custom tends to the unholy part of the world. The stream of the multitude always along with a rushing & absorbing current, given plunged into it, is as those with current wherewith the water moving chance to bear them. We are especially prone to be range by great examples, by those, who shine along the higher paths in the ascent of life. We bend to them with easy drowsiness, & are ready at their beck not only to change our affections to persons or things, as they do. But to change our judgments also, of that even with regard to religion, our judgment thus. Now in this there is much danger. The influence of imitation is liable to great abuse; under proper control it is good & wholesome; but when it becomes indiscriminate
general, perhaps there is scarcely any principle by which
men are governed more likely to produce most mischievous
consequences. The principles of character of the wise and
good we cannot study or imitate too much; but those of
folly, it is generally to the evil. We should not recog-
ize that we have but one Master, that is, that we
have but one standard. What is the gospel? That we have
but one soul to rest upon; that is the soul of salva-
tion. There are some things we can not put to our
self for the sake of any custom, however new; lastly, some,
in the belief & practice of which a wise & good man will
stand, if he stand alone, not be once to prove from
this integrity by the example of the whole world. That
was a most noble resolution of Joshua's; that shall
be imprinted in the heart of every true, "if any be
the children of Israel, & if it seem evil unto you to
serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve;
but as for me & my house we will serve the Lord." The
affecting declaration of Peter to his Master, though he
also was too confident if this man strong, he should like
the more of his one of us, "though all men forsake thee,
yet will not I."

These are but a few of the temptations by which men are
carry from all human to their Spirit, are induced to
sins, & by the influence of their faith. These tem-
ptations assume various forms, & present themselves in many
different connexions. They deal with the mind & spirits be-
fore we are aware; they sometimes come recommended by special
stances, by fair appearances; but the spirit, in order to guard
against all these causes & threats to produce errors &
revolution in our faith & duty, let us remember in
mind the nature with all the means & circumstances &
the explanation in the text: "for to be faithful that per-
dev. This is our strong hold; here, in the unchange-
able nature of our God, we have that which is sufficient to
hasten us against temptations & against unfaithfulness.
We must not hold fast the performance of our faith with-
out moving, but when we remember that the Lord's
cannot change, hail forever that we will remain firm.
punish the transgressors. "For the mountains shall be removed, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not be removed, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee." The promises of the Lord are as sure as the frame of this house. All the perfection of his nature are pledged for their fulfillment. It is happy, she can say--the heavens, the earth, shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." This eternal covenant, is the inviolable seal of all that he has promised. In the elevated language of Isaiah, "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever." And though every thing else should shortly be forgotten, though all good faith should cease from the earth, though the confidence of man in man should be broken and destroyed, yet the promises of Jehovah shall remain sure, as when the first declared them, is the resting place of all our anxious feelings. If the God has promised, that promise is unchangeable, shall we not hold fast our profession of faith without wavering?

To those of us who have publicly acknowledged all this grace, by endeavoring to cherish, & honor, His memory in our hearts, have given a pledge, that we shall be, as our Lord Jesus, this subject comes with a peculiarly appropriate force. For if you have just done another year, why should we not meet at this same door? While we are daily thank God, that by his good providence we are yet permitted to enjoy the ordinances of the Lord, let us try our respect to the command of our Saviour, let us get promises from God to perform our faith without wavering. Every year brings us nearer to that time when we shall no longer see each other at the table of the Lord. Every year takes some from our number, & leaves vacant places among us. Of those whom we have been accustomed treat in the transaction of this sacred ordinance, during the last year, one more went to the grave in a most solemn &
relying the mind of the Almighty; the answer for the several

questions. If there was a duty to be performed, it was the

righteousness, and another present sense in the necessity of knowing the
case with a regard to salvation. 

The case with a regard to salvation. 

dark sense, form of grace is one nature, of the same kind.

in early spring. 

his is often not something in the event of the whole of the, and hardly

incorporate us to the last of the presence of God. without

renouncing? 

rational may not the voice of reason be last thing on me, may we live as the fathers did, 

that the time we may die. God to those who shall neglect the comme-

way, do this in remembrance of these, this subsiet is full of instruction. 

they may, why, think that you are 

Heeding of the late dying charge of mine, she heard as suffi-

ciently to give herself, 

and, during the last evening, 12 have proved our church. I am sure to say that the

very small number of so large a society. This neglige, the

insensibility to the duty of obeying the commandments, is some

melancholy thing. 

mourned with weeping.

Jan. 1821.
At home, Jan. 14th 1821 - forenoon
At home July 3, 1822 - Friday lecture
At home, Friday lecture, Dec. 31, 1830
Almighty God—our strength and help—give us the grace to improve the means of becoming good and holy, and to use them to the best advantage. May we be delivered from all the errors of our faith without wavering, knowing that He is faithful who hath promised. May we not be disturbed or shaken from our allegiance to Him, may our faith abide firmly in our hearts. May we carry out our convictions in our lives. May we not forsake the hope of the light of religion for the trifles, shadows of vain pursuits. Let Thy blessing be with us, who are now about to celebrate the memorial of our Saviour. May we reflect with subdued and grateful feelings on His sufferings and death. May we be delivered from all the errors of our faith through these solemn remembrances. Command Thy blessing on this church and multiply grace, mercy, and peace unto it. May its numbers daily be increased. May all false views respecting this ordinance be removed. Then is not our Memoir.