

## Hebrews 3:13 - The Lies of the Temptress

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### The deceitfulness of sin. — [Hebrews 3:13](#).

THERE is a possible reference here, in this personification of [Sin](#), as leading men away by lies, to the story of the First Temptation. There, the weapons of the Tempter were falsehoods.

There was a lie about the unlawfulness of the suggested act, insinuated rather than boldly spoken, 'Hath God said, ye shall not eat?' ([Ge 3:1](#))

There was a lie about its disadvantages, 'Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' ([Ge 3:5KJV](#))

There was a lie about its ultimate consequences, 'Ye shall not surely die.' ([Ge 3:4](#))

**And these three falsehoods are typical of the methods which [Sin](#) employs to draw us away from the path of right.**

The writer of this letter does not leave us in much doubt as to what he means by sin, for he includes in it not only gross outward acts, but goes a great deal deeper, and in the verse before my text, all but defines it as being 'an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' ([He 3:12-note](#)) Whether it come in the form of gross breaches of the common laws of morality, or whether it come in more refined but not less dangerous forms, everything by which my heart goes away from God is sin; and **every such thing gains its power over me by dangling before my credulous eyes a series of falsehoods.**

So then my purpose is just to try to unrip some of these lies, and see what is inside of them. The **deceitfulness 'of sin'** tells **lies** about the bait; — **lies** about the hook that it hides; **lies** about the criminality of the act to which she would draw us; and, lastly, **lies** about the possibilities of deliverance. Let me touch on each of these in order.

**LIES ABOUT  
THE BAIT**

## **I. First, then, my text suggests to me Sin's lies about the bait.**

The old story is typical, and may stand as a well-developed specimen of the whole set of evil deeds. 'When she saw that it was pleasant to the eye, and good for food, and a thing to be desired,' ([Ge 3:6](#)) then the inflamed desire, perceiving the attainable object, went straight at it. And that is the history of all the evil that we do.

It is either for the sake of **winning a desirable object**, or for the sake of **avoiding some undesirable issue**; **we never do the wrong thing, and go away from God, except under a delusion that we shall be better and happier when we have got the desired thing than we should be without it.**

Now I do not mean to say for a moment that there is not a very solid reality in the pleasurable results of a great many wrong things (cp [Heb 11:25-note](#)). If a man chooses to sin to gratify sense, he does get the sensuous enjoyment out of it. The food that is stolen will stay hunger, and be sweet upon the palate, just as much as that which is the product of honest industry. The things which tempt our desires we may get; and there will be no illusion at all about the reality and solidity of the pleasure.

But there is another question to be asked. You have got the thing you wanted; have you — what then? Are you much the better for it? Are you satisfied with it? Was it as good as it looked when it was not yours? Is it as blessed now that you have stretched your hand across the **flames of Hell** and made it your own as it seemed when it danced there on the other side? Is not the giant painted on the canvas outside the caravan a great deal bigger than the reality inside, when you go in to look at him?

**Is there anything that we have got by doing wrong for it, howsoever it may have satisfied the immediate impulse in obedience to whose tyrannous requirements we were stirred up to grasp it, which is worth, in solid enjoyment, what we gave for it?**

Having attained the desire, do we not find that it satisfies not us, but only some small part of us? If I might so say, we are like those men that old stories used to tell about that had swallowed some loathly worm. We feed the foul creeping thing within us, but ourselves continue hungry. We cannot slake our thirst out of empty cups, however jeweled.

**Besides, sin's pleasures are false, because along with them all comes an after tang that takes the sweetness out of them.** Like the prophet's book, they may be honey on the lip, but bitter as gall when swallowed. Some foul-tasting preparation of naphtha is put into spirits of wine to keep people from drinking it. The cup that sin brings to you, though it may be fiery and intoxicating, has got the "nasty naphtha" in it too. And you taste both the one and the other!

**There is only one thing that promises less than it performs, and which can satisfy a man's soul; and that is cleaving to God.** Go to Him, let nothing draw you away from Him. Let us hold by Him in love, thought, obedience; and the lies that tempt us to our destruction will have no power over us (cp [Ro 13:14-note](#)); and we shall possess joys that neither pall nor end ([Ps 16:11-note](#)), nor leave behind them a bitterness upon the lips. 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' ([Pr 14:13KJV](#)) Better what Christ offers in the cup which He drank off, whereof, though the taste may be bitter at first, what remains is His own joy, perpetual and full (cp [He 11:26-note](#))

## **LIES ABOUT THE HOOK**

### **II. Again, note the lies about the hook.**

The old story lends itself to us as a kind of general expression to which all the falsehoods of sin may be reduced. 'Ye shall not surely die.' ([Ge 3:4](#)) **I suppose that if any man had clear before him at the moment of any temptation, howsoever fiery and strong, the whole sweep of the consequences that are certainly involved in his yielding to it, he would pause on the edge, and durst not do it.**

But sin suppresses facts; and here are a few of the barbed points which she hides.

**(Barbed point #1) She does not tell you anything about outward consequences.**

I have been speaking about gross forms of sin. I wish I could believe that there is no man among my hearers to whom dehortations from them are appropriate, but I fear that in a great city like this there are never gathered as many men and women together as are here, without there being some whose

sin lies in the direction of sensuous passion and animal indulgence. And I beseech such to remember the hook as well as the bait, and to think of the outward consequences in broken constitutions, poisoned blood, enfeebled frames, damaged reputations, loss of faculty, position, prospects, and a thousand other things, which hang round about the path of the profligate man. Every year there come into Manchester young men who fancy they can **play the game** and not **pay the stakes**.

Every month, I was going to say, there drop out of this great city, bankrupt in reputation, ruined in health, driven from positions of hopes and profit, the heart-break of their families, and a curse to themselves, young fellows that listened to such words as I am speaking to them now, and went away and said:

‘We will chance it! It is exaggerated.’

Yes, it would be, if I said that this was true about the whole circle of evil-doers, but it is not exaggerated, if you remember that a definite percentage of all the young profligates of Manchester, year by year, go away to die, with their ‘bones full of the iniquity of their youth.’

**Did Pleasure show you that hook when she dangled her bait before your eyes?**

**(Barbed point #2) She suppresses the action of conscience.**

There is nothing more awful than the occasional swiftness and completeness of the revulsion of feeling between the **moment before** and the **moment after**. (Ed: Referring to knowingly committing sin). While yet escape from the temptation was possible, the thing looked so fascinating, so all-desirable; and the next moment, when the thing is done, and can never be undone, and you have got round to the back of it, it looks so hideous and threatening. Conscience lulled, or at least unheard during the hubbub of the clamant voices of the passions that yelled to be fed, lifts up her solemn voice sometimes, the moment that they are silent, gnawing the poisoned portion that is thrown to them, and speaks.

**Did Pleasure tell you about that hook when she dangled the bait before your eyes?**

**(Barbed point #3) She suppresses the action of sin upon character.**

We do not perceive how all our deeds, even the small and apparently transitory and incidental, are really linked together in an iron net-work of cause and effect, so as that every one of them lives on and on, in more or less perceptible and distinct effects upon our characters (**Ed**: Beloved, does not this statement cause give you a sense of "horror"? It does me!). **You cannot do a wrong thing, 'departing from the living God,' without thereby leaving an indelible mark upon your whole spiritual and moral nature.**

Loftier aspirations die out of you, the incapacity for better actions is confirmed, and that awful, mysterious thing that we call '**habit**' comes in to ensure that once done, twice will be probable, and twice done, thrice and innumerable times more will be **almost certain**.

There is nothing more mystical and solemn about our lives than the way in which unthought of and trifling deeds harden themselves into habits, and dominate us, whether we will or no. And so the sin which once stood in front of us with a smile and tempted us, because it was desirable, afterwards comes behind us with a frown, and is a taskmaster with a whip. Instead of being drawn from before by anticipated delight, we are driven from behind by tyrannous habit, and commit the old sin, not because we expect pleasure, but to get away from misery (**Ed**: While some might call this "**addiction**", **Maclaren** calls it by it's real name "**Sin**"!). The flowery fetters become iron, and the evil once done gets to be our master, and we are held and bound in the chain of our sins (cp [Pr 5:22-note](#), [2Pe 2:19-note](#), [Jn 8:34](#), [Ro 6:16-note](#), [Ro 6:19-note](#), [Ro 6:20-note](#), [Ro 6:21](#), [22-note](#)).

**And more than that, there is the necessity for perpetual increase, heavier doses, more pungent forms of evil, in order to titillate the increasing insensitiveness of the nature.** You take a tiger cub into your house when it is little; it is prettily striped, graceful in its motions, playful and affectionate; and it grows up, and when it is big, it is the master of you, if it is not the murderer of you!

**Do not you take the little sin into your hearts.  
It will grow, and its claws will grow, and its ferocity will grow.**

And now all these consequences suggest the last of sin's suppressions that I would specify.

**(Barbed point #4) They all make a future retribution a probable thing.**

And that future retribution is a plain and necessary inference from any belief at all in a God and in a future life. But the tempting sin has nothing to say about that future judgment, or if it has, has only this to say: 'Ye shall not die.' Is it not strange that it is almost impossible to get many of you — reasonable, farsighted, prudent men and women as you are, in regard to ordinary things — to look that fact fairly in the face? You are like sailors who get into the spirit-room in a ship when she is driving on the rocks, and as long as you can get the momentary indulgence, never mind about what is coming.

But you cannot 'jump the life to come.'

**'Let no man deceive** (present imperative + a negative = command to stop action already in progress) you with vain (kenos) words; because of these things (**What things?** Eph 5:5-note) the wrath (orge) of God is coming upon the children of disobedience (apeithes).' (Eph 5:6-note)

And so, dear brethren, let me plead with you. Weak my words are 'I know, to break down the walls with which we surround ourselves.' But oh, let me try to get within the defenses, and plead with you not to let wishes, inclinations, and earthly tastes make you so short-sighted (cp 2Pe 1:9-note, 2Pe 1:10-note); but take into view all the consequences of your actions, and then tell me, if, in comparison with the duration of their results, anything is so wise as to love and serve and cleave to God Who dwells in Christ, and in Whom is our portion and our all (cp Ps 73:25,26-note) 'It is an evil thing and a bitter to depart from the living God.' (He 3:12-note)

## LIES ABOUT THE CRIMINALITY

### III. Then notice again, the lies as to the criminality of the deed.

Once more the old story avails us. 'Hath God said Ye shall not eat?' is the insinuated suggestion that creeps into most men's minds. I suppose that the number of us who, with clear eyes, knowing the thing at the moment that we do it to be wrong, do yet resolve that, wrong as it is, it shall be done, is comparatively few. I suppose that by far the majority simply ignore the question of right or wrong, when the question of pleasant and desirable comes to be canvassed.

Before the committal — as I was saying a moment ago — we have an awful power of silencing our consciences. Just as housebreakers carry some drugged meat for the house-dogs when they intend to break into some lonely farmhouse, so we are all adepts in applying gentle phrases to our own evil, while if the same thing is done by anybody else we shall flame up in indignation, as David did when Nathan told him about the man and his one ewe lamb (cp [2Sa 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 17](#) with [2Sa 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14](#)).

**Therefore it comes to this — do not you trust to instinctive utterances of inclination calling itself conscience.**

Remember that you can bribe [conscience \(word study\)](#) to say anything but that it is right to do wrong. You will get it to say anything that you teach it about what is wrong and what is not. And therefore you must find a better guide than conscience. You have to enlighten it and educate it and check it, and keep it wakeful and suspicious, as the price of purity.

**The same set of lies about the criminality of our actions operates with still greater effect after the committal.**

I was speaking a moment or two ago about the sudden waking of conscience when the deed is done. But there is a worse thing than that, and that is when conscience does not wake. That is the condition, I have no doubt, of many people listening to me now. ‘She wiped her mouth and said I have done no harm.’

You can muffle the bell so that there will come no sound. You can sear your hand, if you once press a hot iron upon it; and you can make the cuticle of your conscience, if I may so say, just as insensitive by the same process.

So then, my friend, do you take care that you do not thus darken the light that is in you, till it becomes darkness. (cp [Mt 6:22, 23](#))

And remember also that your knowing nothing against yourself does not prove you to be blameless.

**There is nothing harder than to drive home the consciousness of sinfulness.**

I can fancy what is passing in some, as they listen to me now. Some of you refer all that I am saying to that other man in the corner there, whom it will fit

so well. Some of you are saying to yourselves, 'Oh yes, I admit it all in a general way'; but not summoning up in your mind any of the evils which cling and cleave to you individually. And some of you are trying to break the force of what I am saying by theories about responsibility, and how a man is the creature of circumstances and the like (**Ed**: Much like our modern tendency toward a "victim" mentality and its close "cousins" like "it's my family's fault" or "I'm not responsible", etc); or by pleading in arrest of judgment your better side: 'I am a respectable man. Nobody can find any fault with me. I am a good father, a good husband, an honest tradesman, a man of my word, a cultured gentleman perhaps, a student, a man abhorring gross sin, and so forth; and your words have nothing at all to do with me.'

Ah! have they not? '**Departing from the living God**'; that is the sin that I am talking about, brother — not going and getting drunk stealing, wallowing in the sty of sensualism; not the mere external acts.

### **The kernel of all sin is living to ourselves.**

That is what I want to lay upon all your consciences. And that is the hardest of all results for even the most earnest and pleading words to effect, in the minds of the respectable, self-complacent, gospel-hardened people that come and fill these pews.

## **LIES ABOUT DELIVERANCE THEREFROM**

### **IV. So the last word that I wish to say is in reference to the falsehoods of sin in regard to the deliverance therefrom.**

These other lies, like bubbles, sometimes burst. The first of them, about the pleasures, generally bursts as soon as the thing is done. The others about the pains and the criminality often disappear when pricked by some thought of God and contact with Him. But the repertory of the deceiver is not empty yet. And she can turn her hand and bring out another set of lies, in order to retain her dominion. For the sin that said to you before you did it:

'There is no harm in it; you do not need to do it again; it is only just once and it will be done with,'

says to you after you have done it, when you begin to feel that it was wrong, and try to shake off its guilt and power:

'You have done it now! You never can get away any more. The thing is past, and neither in regard to its consequences nor in regard to its power will you ever escape from it. What you have written you have written. You are mine!'

And so she lays her iron claw upon the man and holds him. Some of us put that into a philosophical principle, and say that in this great system of rigid interlocking of cause and effect, the idea of forgiveness and of a new beginning of life is impossible and absurd. Some of us that cannot talk in that strain, yet know what it is to have to say:

'There is no hope! I have loved evil, and after it I must yet go.'

**So sin lies to us just as she lied before.**

**And I have to come now with the message that, of all her falsehoods none is more false and fatal than the falsehood that a sinful man cannot turn from his evil; conquer all his transgression; begin a new happy, clean life; and be sure of forgiveness from His Father in Heaven.**

'Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness,' has died that it may be possible to bring to us pure and true promises of lasting and satisfying blessedness, and to avert from each of us, if we will trust in the power of His blood, the worst and penal consequences of our transgression, and if we will trust in the power of His imparted Spirit, to make our future altogether unlike our past, and deliver us from the habit and entail of our sins.

## **THE SORCERESS** OR **THE SAVIOR**

So, dear friend, these two stand before you.

**On one side the Sorceress with a smile on her lips, a lie on her tongue, and a knife in her sleeve. Do not go into her house. 'The dead are there; and her guests are in the depths of Hell.'**

**On the other side stands Jesus Christ Who has died to 'redeem our souls from' her 'deceit and violence'; and trusting in whom we may all say: 'My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken and I am escaped.'**



## Hebrews 3:14 A Momentous 'If'

**'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.'** — [Hebrews 3:14](#)

ONE of the great characteristics of this remarkable letter to Hebrew Christians is the frequency and earnestness of its warnings against apostasy. Over and over again we find these recurring, and in fact we may say that the whole letter is written in order to guard against that danger. The circumstances in which the persons to whom it was originally addressed found themselves largely explain that emphasis laid upon their danger of forsaking Christ. For they had to face what was perhaps the greatest trial to which faith was ever exposed, in the entire dissolution and violent extinction of the whole Jewish system which the prescription of uncounted centuries, in addition to the direct voice of God Himself, had consecrated. And they were to 'hold fast by their confidence,' though it seemed as if heaven and earth were being swept away. No wonder that there was danger of their becoming 'of those that drew back to perdition,' when such convulsions were uprooting the pillars on which their whole habits of thought and action had rested.

But, dear brethren, though our lot is cast in quieter times, the continual tendencies of our nature, and the continual stress of circumstances, make the exhortation of my text quite as important and as fitting for us. 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward,' must ever ring in the ears of Christ's disciples. And in these words of our text we have set forth very strongly and beautifully —

### **I. The necessity that is laid upon every believing heart.**

'Hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.' Now what is meant by 'the beginning of our confidence'? It may mean either of two things — I am inclined to believe that it means Both. The outward fact, from which our confidence took its Beginning as its ground foundation, or to use learned words, the objective fact manifested to us in the gospel which tells of the incarnate dying and raised Christ, is the beginning of all true confidence. On it, and on it alone, can there be built a solid, rational assurance that can give an account of itself, and face the facts of the present and the future. And if my text be understood from that point of view, then the exhortation is to keep a firm hold of the initial truth that first of all stirred faith in our trembling

hearts and breathed a tranquil assurance over our troubled consciences. Keep a firm grasp of the elementary initial truths which at first drew you to the Master.

But then, on the other hand, not excluded by this interpretation, but rather inextricably interwoven with it, is the other possible meaning of the text. 'Hold fast the beginning of your confidence' — the initial act on your parts. What was it, Christian man, that first breathed a little light air of hope through the stagnant calm of indifference in your heart? That new hope was the consequence of two simple but mighty acts — repentance and trust in Jesus Christ. From these two inward dispositions there sprung, like a rainbow over a cataract, the quivering, painted bow of hope. Confidence is born of penitence and faith. 'Hold fast the beginning of your confidence,' and ever reiterate the two initial acts from which it flowed. These two will be reiterated in proportion as our understandings and our hearts grasp the initial fact which, first of all, evoked them.

Now this exhortation, thus comprehensively understood, goes upon the understanding that in that elementary gospel there lies all that a man needs, and it goes also on the understanding that in these two primary acts of the Christian life, repentance and faith, there lie the seeds of all the growths and progresses which it may afterwards attain. In the first word that made these Hebrews Christians, there lay, like the leaves of the beech wrapped up in their tiny brown sheaths, in germ and miniature, and needing only sunshine and dew to open them out, all that their understandings needed for enlightenment, their wills for command, their hearts for their home — all that their hope could paint, all that their love could sigh for. The elements of this science, spoken first, are in one sense its last results. The Alpha is the Omega, and holds in itself all the alphabet — ay, and all the words and books that will be made out of the alphabet. For in that truth, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish,' there lie the beginnings, the 'Principia,' of all knowledge of moral and spiritual matters that a saint can learn or an angel can apprehend. There needs but development; there needs but the commentary of experience and of life in order to bring out of 'the beginning of your confidence' everything that heart and will and mind can need.

And this exhortation goes also on the other understanding that any advance — and advance there must be, for the very word 'begin' implies continuance and progress — that any advance which is to be according to the true law of the Christian system must not be away from, but deeper into that which we

apprehended at first. I believe in the advance of Christian thought through the centuries. I believe in the advance of Christian knowledge as well as character in the individual. But I believe that the advance consists in getting to understand more and more of the fulness which lies in the earliest word, and that whosoever construes Christian progress in the sense of leaving behind, as beggarly elements, the truths of a Christ divine, incarnate, dying, raised again, ruling, and coming again to judge, and of a Divine Spirit imparted by that Christ — whosoever supposes that these things are elements to be left far in the rear — will find that his progress is retrogression and not advance. The beginning of the confidence must be continued, and the continuance consists in plunging ourselves more deeply into the beginning.

But, dear brethren, is it not the case that a tragical number of so-called Christians have lost the very conception, not only of progress, but of holding fast by the initial fact and the initial act? I have no doubt there are some of you professing to be Christians, members no doubt of Christian churches, who not only have not advanced one step from the place that they stood in when, as they suppose, they were first of all converted, but who are not nearly as much under the influence of God's truth in Jesus Christ as they were at that far away day, twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. They have made no advance; they have not held their ground. The beginning of their confidence has been like some of those abortive shoots that trees and shrubs are seduced to put out by the warmth of a mild October, nipped by November frost, and destined never to bear any fruit. The message comes to such with immense and convicting power: 'Hold fast the beginning of your confidence.'

No man on this side of heaven, however deep his devotion, long his career, consistent his conduct, and progressive his piety, is beyond the need for the injunction. My text says, very emphatically, 'to the end.' There have been ships wrecked at the harbour-mouth, and which have gone to pieces with the loss of all hands, on the bar. And as John Bunyan saw long ago, a door opens down to the depths, at the very gate of the Celestial City. So that we can never relax our watchfulness nor our effort to retain what we had, and to continue to practise what we did, long ago. Let me say a word about

## **II. The hindrances that He in the way of obeying this exhortation.**

The Christian life is not different from all other courses of conduct in regard to this characteristic, that it is apt, unnoticed either by the man himself or by onlookers, to slide off its original foundations. All great causes, begun in enthusiasm, are apt to lose their first impulses, and to be actuated at last by

little more than use and wont. The deadening influence of habit comes in all our life, and in our religious life just as much as in any other department.

No doubt there are aspects in which it is seen to be a good thing that we should have the stay of a formed habit, instead of having, for each act, to find a fresh and distinguishable impulse towards good. But the evil that goes with bringing life under the sway of habit is no less real than the good. And we are all apt to drop into a complacent taking for granted that the old energy lasts; and that our religious life is bottomed on the old foundations, and that it yields to and is guided by the old motives, when all the while an entire change has come over the man, and what he used to do from fresh impulse he now does as a matter of routine. Is not that true about all of us in some parts of our lives, and about the religious life and acts of many of us? And do we not need to break up this custom, which 'lies upon us with a weight heavy as frost and deep almost as life,' and to go back to the original impulse and the initial fact which brought about the impulse, and while we fight against the evil of habit, to get all the good out of it that it can yield? Again, of course, there must be many changes in a man's attitude to the truth, in proportion as it becomes familiar to him. Wonder goes, excitement must necessarily pass, emotion will cool. A fire crackles when it is newly lit, but when it is well burnt up it glows with a steady and unspluttering heat. And so it is by no means all loss if we leave behind us our early agitations and keep our ancient confidence. Emotion is meant to consolidate into principle, and there will be pure gain if it does. But for all that, there is a danger of familiarity with the truth making us indifferent to the truth, and of repeated exercise of the act of penitence or of faith making the act not less emotional — that it must become — but less deep and real; and then there is nothing but loss.

Further, besides these necessary changes in the accompaniments of our confidence, there is the continual operation of our own wayward and feeble natures slackening the grasp that we have of Christ, and enfeebling the practice of the initial repentance and faith. And besides these there are the continual enemies that we carry within ourselves, and the continual operation of externals, which the writer of this letter sets forth in another striking image, when he tells us that we must 'give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should drift away from them.' Yes, the current of life, legitimate duties and occupations, our daily business, our daily joys, and the good and pleasant things which God has bestowed upon us, acting upon us like the pressure of a stream upon a boat not made fast to the bank, tend to sweep us silently down the river. And if the boatman is lying asleep in the bottom of it he will find, when he awakes and opens his eyes,

that he is surrounded by strange objects, and that those that he saw before he went to sleep are away far up the stream and out of sight. This unconscious, silent drift, drift, drift is sweeping away hundreds of Christian men from the firm moorings on the bank there, and unless we each make a continuous effort to retain it, we shall lose our hold of 'the beginning of our confidence.'

I need not say more than a word about the last thought suggested by the text.

### **III. The large, blessed result of holding fast the beginning of our confidence.**

'We are made partakers of Christ,' says the writer. He uses very remarkable language on which we can but touch lightly. I may point out that the words may either mean — and it is difficult to say which of the two things they do mean — either partakers of Christ, as if all of us together sat round that sacred board, and shared the common meal which Christ presents to us, or they may mean partakers with Christ, as if we were each of us partners with Him in the possession of all that He possesses. The difference is merely one of representation, the idea presented is substantially the same in both cases. It is this: we receive Jesus Christ and all that He has and all that He is on condition of faithfully holding fast by the beginning of our confidence. Not as though we did not possess Him until the end came. The writer is not saying anything so doleful as that. The initial act gives a real possession of Jesus. Observe the language of my text. It almost sounds inconsistent with itself, inasmuch as in the first clause it says, 'We have become,' if we render the Greek accurately, 'We have become "partakers,"' as if the partaking were an accomplished fact; and then goes on as if it were one lying still in the future and contingent. That is to say, the initial, feeblest, most rudimentary, most unintelligent grasp of Christ as Saviour and Friend brings a participation in Him in proportion to its depth and its comprehension of Him. But that participation is capable of indefinite increase, and the way to get more of Christ is to reiterate the initial act and to keep a firm grasp of the first facts, 'To him that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'