

## Practice Never Stumbling

Shallow Christianity is too merciful to the stumbling Christian. Single cell Christianity endorses quick self-forgiveness rather than deep conviction and repentance. Adolescent Christianity perceives backsliding and stumbling to be an accepted norm for Christians. A juvenile understanding of the seriousness of sin effortlessly tolerates cheap grace and nominal shame. In so doing, the ordinary lifestyle of the world becomes the accepted and expected lifestyle of the believer.

John Owen said, “The vigor and power of spiritual life is dependent on mortification of sin.”<sup>1</sup> What is the authority for Owen’s caution? God said, “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps in your frustration you exclaim, “How can God expect me to consider myself to be dead to something that I continue to do? I still sin! I do not want to sin, but I just do. How can I see myself as dead to desires that make me feel defeated?” Looking back on the history of God’s people always affords insight and encouragement.

Shortly after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile, they began to rebuild God’s temple. Sixteen years later the temple remained unfinished because they had neglected the Lord’s temple in order to selfishly work on their own homes. What did God have to say about their misdirected priorities?

“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate? Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes. Consider your ways!”<sup>3</sup>

All of their activity failed to yield contentment because God conferred emptiness when His people failed to apply their minds to the priorities He had established. God trespasses on His children’s souls when they fail to integrate their hearts and minds with His injunction to push toward His directives. Jesus was successful in His refusal to sin because His priorities were never mutable; they were Biblically fixed.

You cannot be alive to God in Christ Jesus unless your mind is riveted upon the life that Jesus lived to God. Jesus declares, “Truly, Truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me. I do nothing on My own initiative.”<sup>4</sup> You must live with the same commitments and purpose that Christ fashioned.

Jesus could reject Satan’s wilderness temptations because He was Biblically centered.<sup>5</sup> Jesus could determine the boundaries of His purpose in this world because He knew the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> Jesus could teach with authority because even the unclean spirits knew Him to be set apart to do God’s bidding.<sup>7</sup>

God expects your relationship with Him to be so meaningful that you will set your mind to recognize and resist every temptation.<sup>8</sup> You know that He has provided you with His “shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.”<sup>9</sup> The devilish dragon has no damning device that you cannot crush.

Though you stumble into sin, you hate the stumble.<sup>10</sup> Your sin is no longer enjoyed, but despised. The more vigorous your disgust of sin grows, the more alive you will become to God in Christ Jesus. Take a moment right now to pray for the increase of your repulsion of sin and to cogitate upon why you continue to allow yourself to be susceptible to living the way the world lives.

Many Christians are of the opinion that all the Lord expects of them is faith the size of a mustard seed. After all, they argue, one only needs mustard seed sized faith to be saved, and once I have been saved I am all the Christian God wants me to be. This line of thought is far removed from Biblical Christianity.

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy evangelized the people in Thessalonica. Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Thessalonica to encourage them in their new faith. In the context of his letter he made it clear that though they are Christians, they still lack something in their faith.<sup>11</sup>

For God, your salvation is not all there is to your Christian life. Your salvation is your beginning, not your end. God says that since you have been saved, you are “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.”<sup>12</sup>

Ask yourself the question, “What does my faith lack?”

You are a saved sinner. The vast preponderance of saved sinners delight in God’s promises, but not His laws. Saved sinners praise Him for His benedictions upon their lives, but not His jurisdiction over their lives. They love Jesus being their friend, but are not so ready to live as though He is their Lord.

Does your faith possess the foresight to suspect an offering as a temptation though it is yet in its infantile state?<sup>13</sup> Does your faith have the strength to stay your hand when you begin to pick the very fruit that God has forbidden?<sup>14</sup>

When Satan came to tempt Jesus, he found nothing in Him.<sup>15</sup> When the tempter comes to you, does he find nothing in you that brings the evil one pleasure? Are you committed to making the Lord Jesus your chief study?<sup>16</sup>

Some of your Christian friends have adopted practices that they describe as enablements to growing in their faith. They give testimony concerning the value of certain spiritual disciplines. As you survey their ways (keeping the Sabbath holy, fasting, abstaining from practices that could cause a weaker brother to stumble, etc.), are you defensive?

Do you attempt to justify the way you are living your life by declaring that your more godly friends are just legalists whereas you live in the freedom of grace? Does Scripture hold sway in your life, or does your own opinion dominate?

Be most careful when consulting with flesh and blood rather than the Holy Spirit. Satan is as good a counselor as your own flesh. Your fleshly mind is a proven traitor. Paul refused to make flesh and blood his immediate counsel.<sup>17</sup> Your flesh will sound like Peter when it rebukes you for even considering the sacrifice of present gratification so that you might assure God's smile upon your lifestyle.<sup>18</sup>

Mustard seed sized faith will run out of breath. In the courtyard of Caiaphas, the high priest, Peter responded to the servant-girl's accusation regarding his association with Jesus saying, "I do not know the man."<sup>19</sup> Peter lacked faith.

God says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."<sup>20</sup>

Faith is matured by degrees. Holiness is progressive. Are you excelling yourself in your Spirit-empowered accomplishment of sanctification? Be aware: "The righteous shall hold to his way, and he who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger."<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps you accept and practice a worldly undisturbed living because the teaching and preaching you receive is anthropocentric (man centered) rather than Theocentric (God centered). Never forget the words of your precious Lord Jesus: "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."<sup>22</sup>

Your lifestyle is not to be a stumbling fleshly lifestyle because you are God's human engine for transformation. Your life and the life of your family should be serving as a mini-society within a larger society tutoring the residents of your present world in the means to ready themselves for God's Christ.<sup>23</sup> Christians with an anemic understanding of God's grace, the divine power of the Holy Spirit and the glorious excellency of Jesus shall live lives defined by fleshliness and spiritual strength lacking in vitality.<sup>24</sup>

Stumbling is dangerous; it must be guarded against. Stumbling in a given area of your life is not inevitable for the diligent Christian.<sup>25</sup> Stumbling is the norm only for those Christians who fail to embrace aggressively the work of the Holy Spirit. God intends for you to "walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps you are desirous of enjoying a strengthened faith. Your question may be, "How can my faith become strengthened?" God provides the answer.

"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these

qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.”<sup>27</sup>

Shake off your spiritual sloth. If your profession or business disallows time for your soul to be nurtured, or if your occupation saps your sanctification, then for you, your vocation is against the law of God. Attend to the business of your sanctification pursuing it as a man dying of thirst would search for water. Never tire in your march to your heavenly Zion. Commit yourself to improving this very season in your life.

Everything in this world is designed to choke your passion for holiness. Intend to sweat all the way to the Promised Land. Narrow gates and narrow ways are more difficult to navigate than broad ways.<sup>28</sup>

Do not allow a fallen world to impede you coming to Christ every day as a little child.<sup>29</sup> You must keep your eye on Jesus and your hand on the plow.<sup>30</sup> Too many Christians are starving due to their refusal to step out in the grace of strengthened faith.

God is your *terminus ad quem*, your final goal. His back parts are more pleasing to you than any man’s face. The unsaved have given their strength to the creature. You have dedicated your strength to your Creator.

**“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,  
in your faith supply moral excellence...”<sup>31</sup>**

You are a child of God. His glory and excellence have brought you to Him.<sup>32</sup> He has applied the blood of His Son to your account.

Your nature has been actually changed.<sup>33</sup> Your free will is so free that you now have the ability to choose to participate in the process of becoming more like Jesus. As a matter of fact, in order for you to become more like Jesus you *must* apply yourself to the task of spiritual improvement.<sup>34</sup> Moral excellence does not just happen. No effort is too great; no cost is too high in your pursuit of holiness. Your cultivation of the faith you have been given will refine and polish your saintliness.

The initial virtue to be added to your saving faith is moral excellence. What is this rational affection of moral excellence that your Holy Spirit offers to you so that your life can be decorated with Christ’s character?

Moral excellence is a trait of divine character welcoming the qualities of piety toward God, uprightness toward others and blamelessness in the community of man. It is a singularly Christian virtue.

Moral excellence is often perceived in terms of outward performance. The person who is morally excellent is certainly one who does all things “properly and in an orderly

manner.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, it is much more. The cradle of moral excellence is a heart and mind committed to “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”<sup>36</sup>

Negatively, moral excellence is the opposite of “the corruption that is in the world by lust.”<sup>37</sup> There is no corruption or decay in this Christian attribute of divine moral excellence.<sup>38</sup> Instead, its holder is “an aroma from life to life.”<sup>39</sup>

Peter provides a contrast at II Peter 2:2 to clarify the enthusiasm that God has for your moral excellence. While the false teachers “follow their sensuality,” the Christian grooms his moral excellence. God expects His enthusiasm for your growth in Christlikeness to be met by your zeal for growing in Christlikeness.

Moral excellence excludes inappropriate discipleships.

The more morally excellent you are, the more like God you are. The more morally excellent you are, the more like Adam before the Fall you are. The more morally excellent you are, the more you look, and act and think like the Son of Man.

### **“And in your moral excellence [supply] knowledge...”<sup>40</sup>**

God expects Christians to pursue moral excellence. He insists upon His children being right in their relationship with Him, godly in their dealings with others and of good reputation in the community at large.

How does the Christian adorn his faith with increasing moral excellence? Initially, he must enlarge his knowledge of God and His will.<sup>41</sup>

The Lord is always challenging us to seek a well-tutored mind. Nevertheless, sloth is a factor in each of our lives:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity.”<sup>42</sup>

Annul the blindness that ignorance endorses. You know that you are hungering and thirsting for righteousness.<sup>43</sup> What are you doing about feeding that hunger and satisfying that thirst?

God’s people are a thinking people. They desire intellectual knowledge.<sup>44</sup> The sons and daughters of the living Lord want to know more about their Father. They want to imitate their elder Brother, but they cannot imitate what they do not know.

Imagine that you are engaged in an international war. America has been attacked by one of the major world powers. Your earthly father has been called to serve his country. He has been away from you and your family for a long time. As a matter of fact, your father left before you were born. You have never seen him, but you do have the letters he has written to you.

How often would you read his letters? How often would you get your mother and others who know your father to tell you about him? Would you want to know about his habits – about his likes and dislikes? Could you ever satisfy your hunger and thirst for your knowledge about him, his ways and his desires for you?

God wants you to know Him. You are made in His image. You want to look just like Him, and He wants you to look like Him.

**“And in your knowledge [supply] self-control...”<sup>45</sup>**

Paul was being tried for his life. One of his trials was before Felix, the Governor of Judea. Under Roman law, Paul was allowed the opportunity to speak in his own defense.

At the defense stage in his trial, Paul offered no personal defense. Instead, he unfolded the plain precepts of the Christian religion by way of three particular doctrines. Luke describes the scene in this manner:

“And as he [Paul] was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, ‘Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you.’”<sup>46</sup> Felix apparently entertained Paul’s defense until he approached the issue of self-control. Why was self-control such a distasteful matter for Felix?

The first casualty of unbridled passion is self-control. Inordinate lusts are the fruits of the uncontrolled self. Self-will perverts self-control.<sup>47</sup> Self-will is the seducer of true humanity.<sup>48</sup> Self-will is the inaugurator of death.<sup>49</sup>

Paul warns us in these last days that men will be “without self-control.”<sup>50</sup> Men will not have the desire to access the strength to do battle with their own passions.<sup>51</sup> Satan knows when you are out of control, and it is just then that you will stumble upon his strongest season of temptation.<sup>52</sup>

Jesus exercised self-control perfectly. He only did what God would do.<sup>53</sup> He submitted His will to God’s will in order to assure the Father’s control of the Son’s desires.<sup>54</sup>

Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup> Your embrace of the mind of Christ will improve your self-control.<sup>56</sup> Self-control increases in direct proportion to one’s humility and obedience to God.<sup>57</sup>

Some folks have difficulty controlling their thought-life. Others struggle with their eating habits. Still others are disappointed with their ability to control their tongue, their lustful eyes or their desire to buy more paraphernalia than they should.

How about you? In what areas are you struggling with your lack of self-control? Perhaps the more important question is: In what areas are you failing because you are not even trying to exercise self-control?

**“And in your self-control [supply] perseverance...”<sup>58</sup>**

You were born again without any effort on your part.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, that effortlessness plays no role in your Christian life. Christian, you are charged with the responsibility to persevere. You cannot fulfill this charge unless you keep your eyes focused upon the calendar of God rather than the sweep of the second hand. You must live as though you truly believe that the King is coming.<sup>60</sup>

Perseverance is a bearing up under stress with courage and patience. This virtue known as perseverance comprehends four fundamentals:

1. Strength,
2. Stress,
3. Courage and
4. Patience.

Any time God recommends an attribute, He will provide both the occasions for its accrual and the strength for its maturity. Difficult times are the sanctified occasions for the garnering of perseverance. You cannot learn perseverance unless you are subject to the world's troubles.<sup>61</sup> In addition, you cannot grow in your ability to persevere without the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Significant courage is required just for you to want to be instructed in the art of persevering. The best instructor is Jesus. He examples the courage and patience that perfected His perseverance.<sup>62</sup>

Perseverance is an essential personal constitutional temperament for the Christian. He cannot resist the pressures of the world unless he is committed to persevering.<sup>63</sup> You do not desire a partial occasional faith, but a universal, influential and effective faith.

Do not allow the multitudes to become your model in the matter of perseverance. Multitudes will never persevere. Perseverance is not a quality of the weak. The multitudes are weak.

You must lay low every rebel lust. It is God who has loved you, given you birth, placed your name into His book of life, purchased you with the persevering blood of His Son, washed you with that same blood and clothed you in His righteousness.

The devil will call you to be the non-persevering rebel that he has been. He wants you to fall from heaven.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, Satan's throne in this world is as temporary as was his perseverance in heaven.

In what areas of your life are you having the greatest difficulty with perseverance? Is there another Christian who appears to you to be persevering in those same areas? Why not talk with your persevering brother or sister about how he or she is handling that arena of temptation so well? You must be encouraged in your practice of never stumbling.

**“And in your perseverance [supply] godliness...”<sup>65</sup>**

Godliness is a trait of Christian character authenticated by an enthusiasm to be well pleasing to God. It is a consistent desire to be like God in every arena of life. And yet while godliness is easy to define, there is much mystery that surrounds it.<sup>66</sup>

The Greek word for godliness is “eusebeia.” This word literally means, “to worship well.” How do you “worship well?” Or, how do you make “worshipping well” a part of the warp and woof of who you are?

God enjoins His children to possess an ever-present awareness of His presence: “Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.”<sup>67</sup>

You just cannot get away from God. He will not leave you to yourself. He is going to pursue you with rejoicing.<sup>68</sup> He will not do to you what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>69</sup> Only the ungodly will be left to themselves and reserved for the final destructive judgment.<sup>70</sup>

In order for you “to worship well” you must make no room in your life for moderation in your worship. Your perspective of the wrongness of sin regulates the depth of your moment-by-moment worship. Never forget that the detestability of sin rests not so much in the character of the sin committed, as in the holiness of the Person sinned against.

You should have no patience with any dishonor you may bring to the name “Christian.” Labor to have impressed upon your mind the nearness of Christ.<sup>71</sup> Never seek in the creature what can be found solely in the Creator.

Even in his lowest moments, Peter wanted to be close to Jesus.<sup>72</sup> He knew that he had been an embarrassment to his Lord. He was sickened by his own cowardice.<sup>73</sup> And yet, this man who was chief among equals offered us great encouragement: “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”<sup>74</sup>

Peter learned to embrace the mystery surrounding godliness. He incorporated godliness into every sphere of his life. He viewed his life as a service of sacrifice to the God of the universe.<sup>75</sup> Peter could not be dissuaded from “worshipping well” his Lord.

Are you consistently aware of God’s presence? If not, what (or who) are the inhibitors of your awareness?<sup>76</sup>

**“And in your godliness [supply] brotherly kindness...”<sup>77</sup>**

Psalm 133 is one of the most tender of all psalms:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing – life forever.”

Brotherly kindness is an English translation of the Greek word “philadelphian.” It is a branch of God-honoring love. Your love for other Christians is to be sincere and fervent.<sup>78</sup> Brotherly kindness should be consistent and continuing regardless of the obstacles.<sup>79</sup>

One of the most impressive instances of brotherly kindness was the relationship Jonathan had with David. Samuel granted us generous insight into the fiber of their kinship: “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.”<sup>80</sup> Brotherly kindness cannot be enjoyed nor maintained without self-sacrifice.<sup>81</sup>

John the Baptist’s disciples were concerned that Jesus was usurping John’s position in Jewish society. They saw Jesus as an encroachment upon the work that John was doing. Nonetheless, John would not be drawn into rivalries and competitions with his Brother in the Lord. John declared, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”<sup>82</sup>

Brotherly kindness will be damaged if you begin to compare yourself to another Christian brother or sister. Comparisons often lead to competition. Spiritual competition seldom results in the enhancement of Christian fellowship.

How can you supply yourself with brotherly kindness in order to keep from stumbling?

First, listen to your siblings in Christ. What are they seeking from their relationship with Jesus? What weaknesses are they able to identify? How are they going about remedying those weaknesses?

Second, determine some contribution that you can make to your brothers’ efforts. It may appear to you to be slight, but it just may be exactly the encouragement and impetus that your brother needs in order to become more godly.

Thirdly, make the contribution. Pray for the opportunity to contribute and then have the discernment and boldness to give the gift. Do not worry so much about the “littleness” of the support. Every one cannot raise Eutychus from the dead. Just do what God has enabled you to do and you will be graced with a full supply of brotherly kindness.

**“And in your brotherly kindness [supply] love.”<sup>83</sup>**

Love is not so much a feeling as it is a deliberate choice. You choose whom you are going to love. This choice is not to be based upon what that person has done or can do for you. It is to be grounded in your character as a self-sacrificing lover of those whom God brings within your sphere.

Your love for others will not be effective unless you are involved in their lives. No one can enjoy the fullness of love unless they spend time with the ones loved. Love requires sacrifice.

One day a lawyer came to Jesus to find out how to inherit eternal life. Jesus pointed him to the law of God. He reported to Jesus that portion of God’s law addressing his relationship with God and with his neighbor. Jesus recognized the lawyer’s intellectual knowledge of the law and his failure of heart as to the law’s import.

Jesus told the lawyer the story of the “Good Samaritan.” Jesus wanted His inquirer to understand that the love expressed in God’s law never seeks to limit the universe of people it embraces or the level of commitment it requires.

Generally, it is easier for the Christian to love Christian brothers and sisters than it is to love non-Christians. Nonetheless, God says that we are to choose to love our enemies.<sup>84</sup> This class of folks we are to love even includes those who persecute us.

We protest this strong commandment of our Lord. It is too hard! He cannot expect me to love and bless my persecutors! He does because He did:

“And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”<sup>85</sup>

We may continue to protest this love-mandate because we just cannot love someone who hates us. After all, Jesus could do it because He was God. I am just a regular person. No normal person could do what Jesus did – and then there was Stephen:

“They went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, he fell asleep.”<sup>86</sup>

Love is the queen of the virtues:

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... Love never fails... But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”<sup>87</sup>

**“Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.”<sup>88</sup>**

The challenge that every Christian faces is the practice of never stumbling. You must not allow backsliding to become your default.

Second Peter is written to Christians “who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.”<sup>89</sup> You have the same kind of faith that the Apostles had. You, Christian, have been justified by faith, you are at peace with God, and you stand in God’s grace and rejoice in the fullness of God’s glory that you have begun to receive.<sup>90</sup> You are this Christian!

You have standing with God. Through Christ’s sacrifice you are positioned by the Lord to grow in your resemblance to Jesus.<sup>91</sup> You are to stand upon your position in Christ, and take back territory that your own sin has burglarized from you. Your present battles should be contested with the expectation of victory. You ought to be surprised when you stumble in your desire to defeat your fallenness.

God has gifted you with a relationship that is not designed to be inert. A progressive Christian should be experiencing less and less spiritual stagnancy in his life. Peter says that you “have received a faith of the same kind as ours.” Your faith is equal in value to Peter’s! What is the difference between the manner whereby Peter implemented his faith and you implement yours?

Peter trusted Scripture.<sup>92</sup> You cannot progress in Christ beyond the light that you receive from His word. Those eight virtues set forth in II Peter 1: 5, 6 and 7 are defined, illustrated and applied in your Bible. Wrestle with each of the eight ethical imperatives that God has gifted to you for your development.

If you are not growing in Christlikeness, be dissatisfied with yourself but not with God. Challenge yourself to pursue an increased level of sanctification. The Holy Spirit commands us to make our lives match our creed.<sup>93</sup> Do not be content with a static religion. You must participate in your own sanctification.

In the eye of your mind, “consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”<sup>94</sup> Envision the triumph that you can have over sin “in Christ Jesus.” As you begin to see the victory, you will be better enabled to pursue the holiness of God by devoting your life to Him.

Die daily to your self by choosing to delight yourself in the delights of God.<sup>95</sup> Say no to you and then attend your own funeral: “He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”<sup>96</sup> Peter says, “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, *arm yourselves also with the same purpose*, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”<sup>97</sup>

Practicing the eight qualities of II Peter 1:5-7 will reduce your stumbles.

**“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,  
to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.  
Amen.”<sup>98</sup>**

This doxology is a statement of the praise that Christians who are consistently refusing to stumble offer to God. This passage directs our attention to the power of the Guardian of our souls.

God is supreme because He alone “is able to keep you from stumbling.” Jesus gave definition to the breadth of His ability when He reminded John the Baptist’s disciples that He made “the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”<sup>99</sup> Jesus is able to keep you from stumbling because He is the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, and the truth and the life, and He is the vine.<sup>100</sup>

Paul, writing from a Roman dungeon, was so persuaded of his Savior’s capacity to keep him from stumbling that he trusted Him with his life declaring, “I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him.”<sup>101</sup>

In the strength of the Holy Spirit, Paul practiced not stumbling. He knew that God gifted him with Christ and the requisite faith to lay hold of Christ.<sup>102</sup> God enables you to keep from stumbling by adding to your faith the virtues of moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

Jesus not only keeps you from stumbling; He is able “to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.” Do you ever think about how breathtaking it will be to stand before the face of God Himself? Jude did and he liked it. He liked it because he knew that he was not going to be ashamed of who he was for he would stand with Christ: “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”<sup>103</sup>

One day, you will enter God’s courts with great joy for you will be blameless in Christ Jesus.<sup>104</sup> In your corporate and daily worship times with your Lord, sing to Him a

doxology of praise because of His unequalled mercy: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, in *Works*, VII, ed. Thomas Russell (London: Richard Baynes, 1823), p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> Ro. 6:11

<sup>3</sup> Hag. 1:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Jn. 5:19; 8:16,28; respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Mt. 4:1-11

<sup>6</sup> Lk. 4:18f.

<sup>7</sup> Mk. 1:21ff.

<sup>8</sup> I Cor. 10:13

<sup>9</sup> Eph. 6:16

<sup>10</sup> II Pe. 1:10

<sup>11</sup> I Thess. 3:10

<sup>12</sup> Tit. 2:12

<sup>13</sup> II Sam. 11:2

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 39:9

<sup>15</sup> Jn. 14:30

<sup>16</sup> I Cor. 2:2; Phil. 3:8

<sup>17</sup> Gal. 1:16

<sup>18</sup> Mt. 16:22

<sup>19</sup> Mt. 26:72

<sup>20</sup> Phil. 2:12f.

<sup>21</sup> Job 17:9

<sup>22</sup> Lk. 6:40

<sup>23</sup> Gal. 3:24; Phil. 3:17-21

<sup>24</sup> II Pe. 1:2f.

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 4:7; I Thess. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:35-39; II Cor. 2:14; 3:18

<sup>26</sup> Gal. 5:16

<sup>27</sup> II Pe. 1:5-9

<sup>28</sup> Mt. 7:13f.

<sup>29</sup> Mk. 10:13ff.

<sup>30</sup> Lk. 9:62

<sup>31</sup> II Pe. 1:5a

<sup>32</sup> II Pe. 1:3

<sup>33</sup> II Cor. 5:17

<sup>34</sup> Phil. 2:12

<sup>35</sup> I Cor. 14:40; 10:31

<sup>36</sup> II Cor. 10:5

<sup>37</sup> II Pe. 1:4

<sup>38</sup> Ro. 12:2

<sup>39</sup> II Cor. 2:16

<sup>40</sup> II Pe. 1:5b

<sup>41</sup> Eph. 5:17

<sup>42</sup> Heb. 5:12-6:1

<sup>43</sup> Mt. 5:6

<sup>44</sup> Phil. 1:9

<sup>45</sup> II Pe. 1:6a

<sup>46</sup> Acts 24:25

<sup>47</sup> II Pe. 2:10

<sup>48</sup> Gen. 3:6

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<sup>49</sup> Ro. 5:12; 8:13

<sup>50</sup> II Ti. 3:3

<sup>51</sup> II Pe. 3:3

<sup>52</sup> I Cor. 7:5

<sup>53</sup> Jn. 5:19

<sup>54</sup> Jn. 5:30

<sup>55</sup> Gal. 5:23

<sup>56</sup> Col. 3:1f., 5

<sup>57</sup> Phil. 2:5-8

<sup>58</sup> II Pe. 1:6b

<sup>59</sup> Eph. 2:8f.

<sup>60</sup> II Pe. 3:8

<sup>61</sup> Ro. 5:3

<sup>62</sup> Mk. 14-15; Heb. 12:2

<sup>63</sup> Ro. 6:11-13

<sup>64</sup> Lk. 10:18

<sup>65</sup> II Pe. 1:6c

<sup>66</sup> I Ti. 3:16

<sup>67</sup> Ps. 139:7f.

<sup>68</sup> Lk. 15:4f.

<sup>69</sup> II Pe. 2:6

<sup>70</sup> II Pe. 3:7

<sup>71</sup> Heb. 11:27

<sup>72</sup> Jn. 21:7

<sup>73</sup> Mt. 26:75

<sup>74</sup> I Pe. 2:25

<sup>75</sup> Acts 5:29ff.

<sup>76</sup> For further study on the awareness of God's presence, you may profit from reading a book by Nicholas Herman, also known as Brother Lawrence, entitled *The Practice of the Presence of God*.

<sup>77</sup> II Pe. 1:7a

<sup>78</sup> I Pe. 1:22

<sup>79</sup> Heb. 13:1

<sup>80</sup> I Sam. 18:1

<sup>81</sup> I Sam. 18:4; I Jn. 3:16

<sup>82</sup> Jn. 3:30

<sup>83</sup> II Pe. 1:7b

<sup>84</sup> Mt. 5:44; Ro. 12:14

<sup>85</sup> Lk. 23:33f.

<sup>86</sup> Acts 7:59f.

<sup>87</sup> I Cor. 13:1, 8, 13

<sup>88</sup> II Pe. 1:10

<sup>89</sup> II Pe. 1:1

<sup>90</sup> Ro. 5:1f.

<sup>91</sup> Ro. 8:29

<sup>92</sup> II Pe. 1:20f.

<sup>93</sup> Ro. 12:1f.

<sup>94</sup> Ro. 6:11

<sup>95</sup> Ps. 34

<sup>96</sup> II Cor. 5:15

<sup>97</sup> I Pe. 4:1f., italics mine.

<sup>98</sup> Jude 24f.

<sup>99</sup> Mt. 11:5

<sup>100</sup> Jn. 6:35; 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:5

<sup>101</sup> II Ti. 1:12

<sup>102</sup> I Cor. 1:31; 2:5

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<sup>103</sup> Col. 3:4

<sup>104</sup> Ps. 24

<sup>105</sup> Col. 1:27