

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

ABOUT HOLDING FAST

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It is all very well to go ahead, but it is particularly awkward after having gone ahead to have to fall back again. It is all very well to get large congregations and hosts of converts; but how about keeping them up to the mark? Few things have an uglier look than the great mud-marks where the water has been, after the river, which has just risen to an unusual level, has gone down into its natural channel. And few things appear worse than a congregation which has been "revived," and which has lost his first love and gone astray again with the error of the wicked. It is quite as important to hold fast that which one has, as to get anything.

I. WE HAVE ALL GOT SOMETHING WORTH HOLDING FAST.

The most hardened reader of this page has, in his heart, some faith in the realities of Eternity. Oh, do not let this slender remnant of Divine light perish from your soul, sinner, but think of the hell to which you are hastening, and of the heaven to which God invites you, till you see the necessity of seeking God now! Oh, how delightful it is to hear a man who has never thought of God for years admit the truth of coming death, and judgment even! Thank God for the slightest spark of light! Keep it in! For your soul's sake, keep it in, and pray God to fan it to a flame.

But the children of God especially have something worth holding fast—the favor of God—that is better than life; the comforts of the Holy Ghost; the testimony of a good conscience; a place in the Royal family, and in the Divine vineyard; power, talent, and opportunity to serve God and our generation by His will, grace, and glory, and every other good now, besides the untold treasures of the future, made ours today by living faith; all these, yea, in a word, "all" are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. A glorious heritage truly—well worth keeping, by every possible means.



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But most of us, I trust, have much more still in our partial possession—in our keeping, at the least; positions of usefulness, secured only by hard, faithful, toiling warfare—vantage ground of experience, from which we can much more easily defend the faith than we could as we began to climb away from the margin of the horrible pit from which our feet were taken—places suitable for our soul-saving work, often wrested from ungodly occupation, and, above all, precious souls snatched like brands from the burning—taken from the enemy, and transported into the kingdom of our God. These are not possessions to be lightly esteemed. How much of laboring prayer and faith they have cost, God and ourselves only know. Such gains are worth keeping, however hard it may be to retain them in our power.

II. WE CAN HOLD FAST WHAT WE HAVE IF WE PLEASE.

Have we really got anything? That seems to be the only question. If we only believe ourselves to be saved because someone has told us we are, no wonder we cannot hold fast; but if we really have got salvation—if we are become new creatures in Christ Jesus—if we have got a new nature, being “born again” of the Holy Ghost—then we cannot help feeling that we have got something which we really hold in our own faith-hand, and which we can keep if we please. A little child cannot be persuaded of its property except by holding what you profess to bestow upon it in its very own hand; but it is equally impossible to persuade even a baby that anything once in its hand may not properly be kept there during its pleasure. And a man must be a fool who can allow another to persuade him he has got a salvation, of which his own faith does not take hold, and which he does not feel the power in himself to hold fast.

Nor can any task be more hopeless or disagreeable than to hold fast “converts” who are unconverted—people who, while professing to believe, are not one with us in the Spirit. But if we have really got people—if we have led them away from their sins and sinful companions to our Savior, and got them enlisted under His banner, and led them to the fight—then we may have some solid hope of keeping them.

We can hold fast our possessions, or we can hold them loosely, and soon lose them altogether. God says, “Hold fast.” If things or persons are worth keeping at all, they are worth keeping well. Let us not merely keep up a profession; let us



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hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. Let us not be content with assembling ourselves together, but let us love as brethren, and live and labor together as members one of another.

III. HOW CAN WE HOLD FAST WHAT WE HAVE?

Let us first look well at it. Let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or no, and let us ascertain by practical test of fruits, rather than in any other way, whether those whom we look upon as brethren in Christ are truly His or no. Let us always be certain about our possessions in this spiritual world, which is so full of light and reality. In the outer world we may often be uncertain, for so many circumstances there conspire to deceive; but in the spiritual world the only darkness lies within ourselves. If we are pleased to have light, we may have any amount necessary to discern between the precious and the vile, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.

Then, once certain of what we have got, let us keep our eyes open to any foe or suspicious influence or person which may be likely to rob us. The devil and the world are watching their opportunity to take away all we have. Let us keep wide awake, ever watching unto prayer—watching which an eagerness and a diligent activity which ever appeal to God for help. The Bible is full of admonitions similar to the “Beware of pick-pockets!” which one generally sees in exhibitions and similar haunts of the multitude. Do not let us stand about idle, or stand or sit near suspicious characters, even if they bear the Christian name. The more constantly we are found in the company of our-and-our followers of Jesus, and at work for Him, the safer we shall be.

And let us take greater care of young converts. Many are ready to say, “Oh, if people are really converted they will be sure to turn up—in fact, if they are truly convinced of sin they are sure to come back to you again.” But we feel inclined to reply, “What will the devil and the world be about all the time?” A man who has never noticed religion for years comes into a hall. He is convinced of sin, and, it may be, he even yields to Christ there and then. He goes out, astonished and changed, like a sheep into the midst of wolves. Either he must don the wolf’s skin again, or be worried almost night and day, and that to an extent which only experience can explain. If he stand firm amidst the beginnings of the storm, well and good. If he dares not to show his colors, or gives way to his



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temper under the extreme vexation, and feels worse than ever, is no pity due to such? Is it not our bounden duty to watch over these with especial care, and not to allow them to be overcome if by any means we can prevent it? Let us not look every man to his own things, but every man to the things of others, watching over one another in love, and keeping a tight hold of every soul who comes within the reach of our grasp.

To imagine that God is going to keep for us what we are required to keep for ourselves is utterly absurd. The only way to be sure of anything we have is to keep hold of it. God will help us to do so if we rely upon Him and hold fast ourselves. Shall we be the careless, thriftless servants who always reckon upon everything going well, and leave everything to take care of itself; or shall we be the good and faithful servants who make their Master's every concern their own, and who burden themselves as completely as they can with all His affairs? Oh, let us labor so that He may look upon all we do with continual approval, and crown us by-and-by in everlasting glory!