

should say to Him: "I thank Thee for keeping me yesterday, and today Thou wilt still keep me. I do not know what temptations may befall me, and I do not know how I can overcome; but I believe Thou wilt keep me." 1 Peter 1:5 makes it clear that God keeps those who have faith in Him. It reads: "who by the power of God are guarded through faith." It is not we who have to grapple with temptations and try to overcome them; it is the keeping power of God that will get us through, and we must believe in His ability to save us from giving way to sin. Provided we rely implicitly on Him, even when we are unexpectedly assailed by temptations, an amazing thing happens. In a way we cannot account for something wards off "all the fiery darts of the evil one." It is "the shield of faith." It comes in between us and Satan, so that his fiery darts cannot reach us. Instead of hurting us they beat upon the shield of faith and rebound on Satan himself.

Paul said, "I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1.12). The Lord was able to keep Paul; but Paul did something that enabled the Lord to keep him. Paul committed himself to the Lord. If you believe in Him, then you must commit yourself to Him. He can only keep what has been handed over to Him. Many people fail to experience the blessedness of His keeping power because they have never put themselves into His care. They have never said to Him: "Lord, I hand myself over to Thee and commit to Thee the keeping of my life." Brothers and Sisters, have you placed yourselves in His hands? If you truly have, then you will be able to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

If your life is truly in His hands then God will fulfill in you the promise "to guard you from stumbling and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy" (Jude v.24). We stumble if we strike against something in a moment when we are unconscious of any obstruction

in the way. Praise God, His preserving grace operates beyond the realm of our consciousness. Brothers and Sisters, if you commit yourselves unreservedly into His care, you will marvel at the way you are kept even when you have been unaware of danger.

When temptation suddenly assails and love is required, you will find love welling up from within and flowing out spontaneously to meet the challenge. Or if a sudden temptation demands patience, without your giving it a moment's thought patience will rise up to meet the need. Praise God, as the life we receive from Adam expresses itself spontaneously, so also does the life we receive from Christ. We inherit our bad tempers from Adam and can get angry without the slightest effort of will. We inherit pride from Adam and we can be proud without any deliberate decision. In the self-same way, all who have received the life of Christ, and have committed themselves into His keeping, can be meek without making up their minds to be meek and can be humble without any attempt to be humble. The same spontaneity of manifestation that characterizes the life we have received from Adam also characterizes the life we have received from Christ. His life expresses itself unconsciously and without effort on our part. Provided we trust in His promises and commit ourselves utterly to Him, we shall be kept from this day to the day of His return, and kept without blemish. Thank God, the saving grace into which He has brought us today is worthy of our trust and will carry us triumphantly through every trial that lies ahead. Amen.

From the book: "Twelve Baskets Full" Vol. 2

— Author: Watchman Nee

*This book is out of print, and this copy was obtained from the Hong Kong Bookroom, Hong Kong, China, showing no copyright. Watchman Nee died in 1972 in a Communist prison since his arrest in 1940. This is reprinted with the prayer that what God intended in the message may be accomplished in the life of the reader.*

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# GOD'S KEEPING POWER

*Scripture Reading: Numbers 13.25-33; 14.4-10;  
Joshua 14.6-14*

It is a distressing fact that some Christians can believe in God's saving power, but they cannot believe in His keeping power. They do not realize that He who is the Giver of grace is also the One who maintains us in His grace. Let us see from the Scriptures how we who have been saved by God can be kept by Him.

In Joshua 14.11 Caleb says: "I am as strong this day as in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, and to go out and to come in. "To go out and to come in" refers to everyday life; "for war" refers to life under exceptional circumstances. As Caleb's strength was in the day when Moses sent him to spy out the land of promise, so it was in the day when he uttered these words. He was able to cope with the ordinary demands of daily life and also with the demands of life under conditions of special stress. Though forty years had elapsed in the interval, he was as strong as he had been in his earlier days. Here we see God's keeping power. As Caleb was in the prime of manhood, so he was in old age. He was no less vigorous at eighty-five than he had been at forty. There is only one explanation for this, he had been kept by God. We are totally unable to keep ourselves in the grace of God. There is no guarantee that even five years after we have been saved we shall be found in the measure of faith which we had in our earlier Christian life. We cannot by our own effort

abide in the grace of God; it is He alone who can maintain us in His grace.

How did Caleb come to experience God's keeping power? Joshua 14.14 answers the question. "Because that he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel." And how did he wholly follow the Lord? We are told in Numbers 13 and 14. After the ten spies had brought back an evil report of the promised land, "Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, 'Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'" "We are well able to overcome" is the declaration of a person who wholly follows the Lord. He believes that victory over every foe is assured because the promises of God are trustworthy and because the Lord is with His people.

Brothers and Sisters, do you believe? Many people believe, but their faith is a vacillating faith. They sing their song of praise, but though the words are right there is something wrong with the tune. In Caleb's case it was otherwise. He sang the right words in the right tune. Listen to the clear notes: "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome." "Let us go up at once!" A person who wholly follows the Lord and reckons Him to be trustworthy is one who does the will of God and does it at once.

What about the ten spies? They looked at the inhabitants of the land and saw that they were "men of great stature" and their cities were "fenced and very great." They looked at themselves too, and in their own sight they were "as grasshoppers." Their eyes were fixed on the difficulties that challenged their advance. And herein lies the reason why so many Christians fail to experience God's keeping power - difficulties fill their vision.

God does not want us to gaze at the mountains obstructing our path, He wants us to say to the mountains: "Remove hence!" (Matthew 17.20). Many people are all the time thinking of their failures, and by so doing they pave the way for

further failure. Defeat is certain if we are constantly contemplating defeat. If we keep thinking there is no way through, that thought blocks the way through. We are courageous only as we keep God's promises in view. Alas that so many of God's people lack the virile faith that characterized Caleb and concentrate their thoughts on the intensity of their sufferings and the insurmountable nature of their difficulties! But those who do not fear "the sons of Anak"—the giants that inhabit the land of promise - are "well able to overcome." Caleb was so unafraid of the Anakim that he actually requested Joshua to appoint as his portion in the land of promise the mountain in which they had their stronghold (Joshua 14.12-15). He was not dismayed by the fact that they were "men of great stature," nor by the fact that their cities were "great and fenced," so he overcame them without any strain.

The whole question in relation to overcoming is: Are you trusting in yourself, or are you trusting in the Lord? If you are relying on yourself then of course you have to consider whether the Anakim are strong or weak, and whether their cities are well fortified or not; but if your reliance is on God, then the question of human resources does not even arise. If you are trusting in God there is no ground for fear since victory is assured to all who put their trust in Him.

There is another noteworthy matter in connection with Caleb. He exhorted the whole congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "Rebel not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us." He sought to show the children of Israel that in the land itself there were resources upon which they could draw in order to possess it. "The people of the land . . . are bread for us," he declared. What is bread? Bread is something you eat. Bread is something that brings increased strength. The inhabitants of the land were admittedly "men of great stature," but Caleb proclaimed that they were food for God's people. He not only honored God's promises, he despised the difficulties that stood in the way of their realization. And every true believer, like Caleb, honors God and lightly esteems all obstacles. But this leaves no room for pride, for only they who humble themselves before God are able to take their stand on His side.

Every time you meet a difficulty, every time you find yourself in an impossible situation, ask yourself this question:

Am I going to starve here, or am I going to eat the food that is set before me? If you are relying on the Lord for victory and let His overcoming life be manifested in you, you will find fresh nourishment and increased vitality in accepting as "bread" those Anakim that are contesting your progress. Do bear in mind that people who do not eat well cannot grow into maturity. Many people take the Word of God as their meat and the doing of His will as their meat, but they reject the Anakim as unpalatable food. The more we eat such food the stronger we shall become. Caleb is a grand illustration of this. Because he accepted the Anakim as "bread" he was still full of vitality at the age of eighty-five. So many Anakim had been assimilated by him over the years that he had developed a constitution which showed no trace of age.

So it is in the spiritual realm. Some brothers and sisters have met few difficulties, but they are spiritually feeble. The explanation is, they have not consumed enough Anakim. On the other hand there are those who have met and overcome difficulty after difficulty, temptation after temptation; and they are full of vigor. The reason is, they have fed well on Anakim. Every difficulty and every temptation Satan puts in our way is food for us. This is a divinely appointed means of spiritual progress. The sight of any great trouble strikes terror into the heart of those who do not believe God, but those who trust Him say: "Praise God, here is some more food!" All our trials, without exception, are bread for us, and as we accept one trial after the other, we are more and more richly nourished and the result is a continuous increase of strength.

Let us now look into the practical outworking of this. We must not forget that there is a condition attached to God's keeping power. If we do not trust Him, He is unable to keep us. In order to know His keeping power we must believe wholeheartedly in His promises. If we are harboring doubts about our ability to overcome, then we are discrediting His ability to keep us. Every morning when we rise we