

BY HIS LIFE

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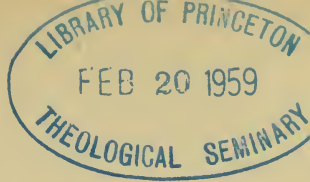
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BY HIS LIFE.



BY HIS LIFE.

BY

MATTHEW HALE HOUSTON,

LATE MISSIONARY TO CHINA.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	
A WONDERFUL THING,	7
CHAPTER II.	
HIS DESIRE,	11
CHAPTER III.	
SAVED BY HIS LIFE,	20
CHAPTER IV.	
THE PLACE OF VICTORY,	28
CHAPTER V.	
THE TRUE BRIDEGROOM,	42
CHAPTER VI.	
OUT OF THE WILDERNESS,	51
CHAPTER VII.	
THE PERFECT MAN,	64
CHAPTER VIII.	
AN INSOLUBLE QUESTION,	73
CHAPTER IX.	
AN UNCLOUDED GOSPEL,	85
CHAPTER X.	
CLOSING WORDS,	102

TO EVERYONE who is thirsting for a better life this little book is addressed, in the hope that the very simple manner in which the waters of life are pointed out may lead some—perhaps not a few—to drink and be filled.

BIBLE INSTITUTE,

ALTAMONT, S. C.

BY HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A WONDERFUL THING.

Do you wish to live a noble and happy life? Do you wish to be true and loving and brave? Do you wish to have good success, a triumphant career, and then to pass out of this world without fear? I write this little book to show you how all this may surely be yours.

You are aware that there is something, perhaps much, in your life that is wrong. As a result, you have had humiliating failures. You have sometimes wished for a better life, but have not secured what your heart desired. Has it ever occurred to you that there is such a thing as giving up your present life, with its failures, and receiving a new, fresh life in its place—a life which will insure success? Would not this be a wonderful and a very happy thing?

Suppose an army of ill-trained, demoralized soldiers. In camp, they are slovenly; on parade, they are awkward; in action, they

are cowardly. But they have a general who is a model in all military affairs. He was once a private in the ranks; he did every duty of a private fully. He was afterwards a captain, then a colonel. As he rose from grade to grade, he was always intelligent, brave, faithful. As a general, he is the very prince and ornament of army life. And now suppose that he is able to put his own spirit into every officer and every private in his command, what a transformation there will be! Every man becomes a model in his own rank. The whole force is now alert, full of courage, thoroughly efficient. Were it possible for the spirit of the commander thus to be infused into the life of all his troops, would not this be a wonderful thing?

Or, we suppose a good man who has adopted several boys and girls into his family, that he may be a father to them. These children are all careless, ignorant, vicious. But the father by adoption is so wise, so kind, that we could wish nothing better for the children than that they should be like him. Now, if we had a method by which the disorderly, evil life of each child could be taken away and the life of their good father put in its stead, would not this be a wonderful, a joyful change?

I have to tell you of something more wonderful than either of the things I have now mentioned. It is as true as it is wonderful. All we who are living on the earth were born into the world with much in us that was wrong. Many of us grew up with the wrong life still in us. Some of us learned that there was a better life, and thirsted for it. Some are thirsting now for a pure, true, perfect life. A promise has been left us that all who thirst in this way shall be filled. I wish to point out to you in a simple way how you may be filled.

There has been one perfect life in this world, and only one. Before that life was seen and known, the longing desire of many hearts was to see a perfect man. Prophets and righteous men, through long centuries, desired to see this, but saw it not. At last appeared the perfect Son of man, the peerless human being, our Lord Jesus Christ. As a child, as a youth, as a man, he was altogether lovable. In his intelligence and wisdom, in his purity and love, in his courage and truth, in his devotion to God our Father, in his sympathetic and lowly service for man, he was without a spot. From heaven the Father looked down on him with unalloyed pleasure. Here was a life on earth like the

clearest crystal, without a flaw. Here was a career, from the beginning onward, without a failure. At every point he triumphed. He so spoke that all enemies were put to silence. He so lived that the judge who passed on him the sentence of death declared that no fault was found in him. And now the Father has raised him to the highest point of honor in the universe. He is Lord of all. What a glorious life! Do you wish to live such a life? Do you wish to rise to such a summit of honor? Are you really hungering and thirsting for this? I have to tell you that your wish may be fully satisfied.

Do you ask how? I answer that the perfect, glorious Son of man will put his own Spirit in you. The general at the head of the ignorant, demoralized army could not put his own spirit into his troops to make them like himself. The good man who took vicious children into his family had no power to impart his own life of truth and love to them. But here is the wonderful thing in the universe: the Lord Jesus does put his own Spirit into everyone who is willing to be like him. He does give his own life to everyone willing to live as he lived. Is it your will to be perfect as he is perfect?

CHAPTER II.

HIS DESIRE.

I WISH now to tell you—it is tidings of great joy—that Jesus Christ most earnestly wishes to fill you with his own Spirit. You have heard of his love to everyone in the world. It passes all that we can think. “God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” His pity, his sympathy for us, who can measure them? With this love in his heart, he descended to the lowest place ever held by man. As a babe, he lay helpless in the stable at Bethlehem. As a man, he went down to the shame and agony and desertion of the cross. After this he ascended to a point which is far above the clouds; far above the sun and moon and stars. And why did he thus descend and then ascend? The Apostle Paul tells us: “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”¹ In that strange career of humiliation and suffering, and in that wonderful going up to the pinnacle of

¹ Ephesians. iv. 10.

the universe, his object was that he might fill everyone; that is, everyone who is willing to receive his Spirit, everyone who does not bar him out.

Here we were on earth wretched in our lives. Malice and envy and bitterness dwelt in us. We were false and mean. We had no rest and no hope. Our compassionate Lord wished to take away this wretched life, and fill us with his own life of love and joy and peace. To do this he became a man. As a man, he could have such a life himself only by being filled with the Spirit of God the Father—that is, with the Holy Spirit. So from his earliest infancy, the Spirit of the Father dwelt in him. At the age of thirty he stooped to a lowly act of humiliation. Though he was pure and without sin, he took the place of a sinner, and was baptized with the water of Jordan. It is by acts of humility that the capacity to receive the Spirit is enlarged. As he prayed on the bank of the Jordan, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended with all purity and gentleness, and filled him. Then he went out to his public ministry among men. Whoever saw him saw the Father, for the Spirit of the Father continually filled him. And yet he could not then do all that he purposed to do

for us. Though he was filled with the Spirit, the Spirit did not so fill him as to overflow and fill others.

There was to be a grander infilling. He must stoop to a lower point of humiliation than his baptism. He must descend to the ignominy of the cross. He knew that beyond this shame a joy unspeakable awaited him. He had the promise of the Father as to what the joy should be. He would be raised to the right hand of the Father, and so filled with the Spirit that from him the Spirit would come down and fill those on earth whom he loved. In this way their joy, like his, would be full.

The Father performed the promise. Jesus, in his heavenly exaltation, was filled with the Spirit of gladness and power. Then he sent down the Spirit to the men and women who were looking to him for the same gift of joy. He filled them with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and from that day to this he has filled all those who have looked to him as they looked. Other men and other women may not receive the same gift of tongues that excited amazement in the gathering crowds at Pentecost, for there are "diversities of gifts." There may not again be heard in any house the sound of a rushing, mighty wind as the Spirit descends to dwell in human

hearts. These are circumstances which do not affect the reception of the fulness of the Spirit by any man. You have received the Ten Commandments. They did not come down to you with lightning and smoke and the sound of a trumpet; yet you possess them with all their fulness and force, as truly as if you had stood at the foot of Sinai when the tables of stone were handed down. Just so you may now receive the fulness of the Spirit sent down by Jesus Christ, though no tongue of fire rest on your head, and no rushing sound fill your ears.

Can anything be more wonderful and glorious? Can anything be more joyful to you and to me? Think of it. Never stop thinking of it. There above the heights of the highest stars is our perfect Brother, a fountain of the Spirit of life to us. What is it you want? What is the object of your longing desire? Is it more joy, more wisdom, more strength, more love, more courage, more patience, more success? Whatever it be, now in Christ Jesus you may get what you will. He sees the cravings of your heart, and he says: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Any man; this is the Lord Jesus laying his hand of love on you and speaking to you. No matter what be the

thirst of your soul for good, he will satisfy it. John tells us in his gospel that Jesus, when he uttered those words, spoke of the Holy Spirit whom he would send down after he had been glorified—that is, after he had gone to the Father. And now he is ready and waiting to fill you with his Spirit. He wishes to give you his life to take the place of your own life. He wishes to assure your success. He wishes to make your whole career triumphant.

Have you ever considered what an immense advantage you have over millions of your fellow-men who once lived on the earth? Noah or Abraham or David or Solomon never knew such a thing as the spirit of a perfect man. "I have seen an end of all perfection," said David. As a result of this the Holy Spirit, like the dove sent out the first time over the troubled waters of the flood, found no place of rest in the hearts of sinful men. Then came the perfect man. In him the Spirit dwelt, and with him ascended to heaven, as the dove, on its second mission, brought back to the ark the olive branch, the token of a new, fresh life that should spread over the whole earth. And yet even at the time when Jesus stood on the earth, the Holy Spirit, as John tells us, was not yet.

This does not mean that the Spirit of God had not, in the years before, come down to bless men. David and Isaiah, Peter and John, and many others, had received the Spirit and been glad. But the meaning is that the Spirit of God bringing to men the life of a perfect man to abide in them, this was not yet. This could not be till Jesus went up to his place of glory. When he had received the Spirit there, his life of gentleness and love could descend to all men. Then the dove could come the third time to abide in any spot on earth. Then the splendid reservoir of a perfect manhood could pour down its waters of life to men. "Of his fulness have all we received," says John, "and grace for grace." Every grace in that holy life begets a corresponding grace in us. His courage becomes our courage; his love our love; his joy our joy. We are refreshed and satisfied with the crystal stream which broadens and deepens as it flows on.

But perhaps you say that you do not understand this; you do not know what is meant by the Spirit of life coming down from Jesus and filling us. Let me assure you that this is one of those simple facts which you may know as clearly as you know the facts of your every-day life. Do you not know that the

life and nervous energy of your head comes down and fills your whole hand? Do you not know that the life and sap of the vine flows in and fills the branch? Just so the life and Spirit of Jesus pours down and fills everyone willing to receive this fulness. You may not understand it, but you may know it.

Look around you in the world. On every side God is speaking to you in parables, reminding you and teaching you what it is to be filled. You rise in the morning; you draw back the curtain and throw open the shutter; the streaming light pours in and fills the room. You take your place at the breakfast table; before you is the empty cup waiting to be filled. The glittering rain descends from heaven; your cistern is open; how quickly it is filled! You look out on the landscape; every leaf on every tree, quivering in life, is filled with freshness drawn from the parent stem. Your heart throbs; at every pulsation the blood speeds onward to fill your whole body to the finger tips. You draw your breath; the free air presses in and fills every cell of your lungs. Filled! Filled! The works of God cry out to you on every hand. Many men and many women, the messengers of God on earth, take up the cry in this day, "Be filled with the Spirit." God, who wishes

you to have a fulness of blessing, lays on you the command, Be filled.

Do you say, "I am willing to be filled with the Spirit of Christ; but how may I be filled?" Here, again, I assure you that the matter is a very simple one. The Lord Jesus, though he is high and lifted up, is the King meek and lowly. He is very near each one of us, because his Spirit is with us. He delights to serve and help us, and he says, "Ask and ye shall receive." As surely as you ask for the Holy Spirit, you will receive. As certainly as you wait before the beloved Master for his fulness, you will be filled. Did he not descend to the manger and the cross, and did he not ascend far above all heavens, for this very purpose? How is it possible for him to refuse you now? To wait before him, to ask, to receive—this is faith. Do you want Christ to dwell in you and be your life? "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," is the word of God.

Unbelief refuses to ask; faith calls, stretches out empty hands, accepts. Unbelief clings to its own life; faith gives up the self-life that Christ may live instead. Unbelief breathes in the foul air that is from beneath; faith looks up to Christ and breathes with delight the pure air of heaven. Unbe-

Unbelief ties a cord around the wrist and cuts off the sources of life from the hand; faith unties the cord and lets the life flow in. Unbelief will not drink and ever thirsts; faith drinks abundantly and is refreshed. Unbelief is death; faith is life and peace.

We learn from John's gospel that it was with no ordinary tone Jesus said, "Let him come unto me and drink." He stood and cried. The prophet Isaiah had said of him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." But here was an exception to his ordinary manner of speech. The earnest, passionate appeal of love extorted from him a cry. So he loves you. He cries to you, Drink. Drink freely. Drink to the full. Be filled.

CHAPTER III.

SAVED BY HIS LIFE.

YOU have now heard the message of love from the King of heaven and earth. He urges you to accept his own life, with its abounding joy and power, which can never fail. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "I give unto them eternal life." "Christ liveth in me." "Christ in you, the hope of glory." As you read these lines I do not know what relation you have been holding towards our Father in heaven, or towards his Son, our Saviour. But I know that there is a sentence in the Bible which indicates your relation, for it sweeps over the whole line of experience now known to men. Here it is: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.¹ The line starts, you observe, at the lowest point of human depravity—enmity to God. It stretches upward to the height of that throne which is far above all heavens—

¹ Romans v. 10.

saved by the life of the Son. And it marks out the intervening space.

At what point on the line you find yourself, it is yours to judge. Are you at that fearful extremity—an enemy of God? Have you not yet been reconciled to your Father in heaven? Have you never known what it is to come to him and fall on his bosom, and say, “Father, I have sinned”? If this be your case, the first thing for you to do is to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Jesus Christ died for you, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God. He is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour, as Peter declared, to give repentance. Ask him to give you this royal gift—repentance. He will send you the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit will show you the grief you have caused our Father by your hard and wicked course. You will know and believe the love that God has to you, for God is love. You will bow before him with a broken, contrite heart. You will be reconciled to him, to be his loving, obedient child; and the beloved Son, who brought you to him, you will most gladly accept to be your Lord. This is what it is to be reconciled to God. My heart’s desire and prayer to God is that no one whose eyes rest on this page may fail to be reconciled to him.

But I assume now that you have been reconciled to God. I am addressing you these words because I take you to be one who has accepted Jesus as Lord. You sincerely desire to live his life of humility and uprightness and love. It is to you, therefore, God says that you shall be saved by the life of his Son. You have heard of the book of the life of the Lamb. All whose names are not written in this book shall be cast into the lake of fire. Only those who have the life of the Son of God are delivered from the wrath to come. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. We are saved by his life. The glad message set before you in the preceding pages is that he wishes not only to give you his life, but to give it more abundantly. He greatly longs to fill you with his Spirit of life. And now I wish to point out some important facts which you must clearly apprehend, in order that this fulness of blessing may be secured.

You have already received the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The proof of this is that you accept him as your Lord. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Since you have his Spirit, you are one with him. As the branch is one with the vine, as the hand is of one body with the

head, so you are one with Christ. You may have received but little of his life; you may have but a small measure of his Spirit. This cannot do away with the fact. You are one with him. The branch half severed from the vine, though the flow of sap in it be feeble, is one with the vine. The hand weakened by a cord tied around the wrist, though it receive but little nervous power, is one with the head. So you are one with Christ. I beg you now vividly to realize the fact.

When Jesus was about to leave the world, he said to his disciples: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." Though he was to be parted from them, they would see him. There is a clear-eyed vision of faith. It moves and acts as seeing him who is invisible. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor," I pray that you may see him this moment and every moment. Look off from the things that are seen to him who is unseen. Say to him:

Lord Jesus, make thyself to me
A living, bright reality!
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen,—
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie.

As you see him, recognize your oneness with him. Say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; we are one. He is my life. Because he lives, I shall live also." Be sure that here is the very heart and centre of all joy and strength and success. Everything depends on your real identification with Christ. Above all things, accept your place as identified with him. Then all his power becomes your power. His love is your love. His thoughts are your thoughts. His life is your life; and you can say in truth, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Because this is the heart of the whole matter, it is just at this point the devil does his utmost to foil you. He tries to keep you from claiming and realizing your entire oneness with Christ. His name is Devil; that is, the Accuser. In the Revelation he is called "the accuser of our brethren, which accused them before God day and night." You may be sure he has been accusing you to injure you. How? By declaring in your heart and mind and conscience that you are not worthy to be one with Christ; that you are not ready to be one with Christ; that it would be presumption in you to place yourself in the position of thorough identification with Christ.

He does not make these accusations, of

course, to affect God. He knows well that God understands all his lies. He makes the accusations to mislead and ruin you. When you were an unconverted sinner and were told to come to Jesus, he kept saying in your heart and conscience that you were not ready, you were not worthy, to come. He accused you day and night before God to hold you back. And now that you have come to Jesus, his object is to hold you back from the place of joy and triumph—your full identification with Christ. He keeps saying that you are not ready, you are not worthy, to take this high place of entire oneness with the glorious King. Now, you remember how you escaped the snare of the devil at the time you first came to Jesus; are you willing to be foiled by the accuser now?

Let me call your attention here to a fact which is most cheering. Jesus gives you his Spirit for the express purpose of casting the devil, with all his accusations, out of your heart. He said that the Spirit of truth, when he came to us, would convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world—that is, the devil—is judged.¹ You know that a wicked accuser, when he is judged in court, is cast out of court. So Jesus said,

¹ John xvi. 11.

“Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”¹ And so we read in the Revelation, “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”² Your salvation and strength, observe, come by the accuser being cast down. As long as you allow him a place in your heart, to charge you with being unworthy or unready to take the place of identification with your beloved King, you cannot have full salvation. But the Spirit of truth casts him out by showing you the truth.

This truth is that our King is so meek and lowly that he stoops to identify himself with the humblest one among us. He died for all. His love passes knowledge. By every form of speech he bids us identify ourselves with him. He is the bread of life; we must feed on him. The blood which he shed for us is drink indeed; we must all drink of it. He is the head; we must be baptized into him as members. Yea, we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. He is the vine; we must abide in him as branches. He is the noble bridegroom; we must forsake all,

¹ John xii. 31.

² Revelation xii. 10.

and give him our heart and hand to be one with him, as the wife is one with the husband.

In obeying these commandments, we must not delay in order to make ourselves worthy. When we first came to him, we did not wait till we were worthy. We said :

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God! I come.

And now that he bids us take the place of oneness with himself, let us say :

Just as I am; thy love unknown,
Has broken every barrier down.
Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God! I come.

By thy death thou didst reconcile me to God; now much more—O blessed word, much more!—shall I be saved by thy life. Thou hast put thy Spirit in me. Thou hast made me one with thyself. Now I am unreservedly, wholly, forever, one with thee. By thy Spirit seal me to thyself, that every moment I may say truly, Not I, but thou livest in me.—Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLACE OF VICTORY.

I ASSUME now that you have trustfully, lovingly identified yourself with Christ. Such being your relation to him, you hold a triumphant position as regards sin—that dreadful evil, that abhorred foe of your life. Let us see clearly how this is.

Since you are one with him, all that he ever did goes to your benefit. Much was done by him before you were born; but the interval of time does not affect your interest; all is yours. A man in an Oriental land plants a choice olive tree in his garden. Year after year he fertilizes and cares for it. Every year adds to its richness and strength. In the course of time a wild olive tree springs up in the wilderness. The man takes one of its branches and engrafts it on his good tree. The wild branch receives the richness that has been stored up in the years past. It has the benefit of a cultivation done before its own parent trunk rose from the ground. The history of the good tree is the record of all that goes to the present support and life of

the branch, for the branch and the tree are one.

The prince of an illustrious house is trained with a view to his ruling the kingdom over which his father has reigned. In due time, with all the advantages of a noble education, he ascends the throne. By his valor and wise administration he extends his rule over many lands. Meanwhile there is born in his territories a young girl whom he determines to make his wife. When she is come of age, he takes her to be his bride. In doing this, he gives her, with the fulness of love, all that he is and all that he has. His past history now becomes part of her wealth. His education, his cultured, generous heart, the kingdom which he inherited, his conquests, all are hers. She is one with him, and all that he ever did brings its treasure of joy to her life.

Just so you, one with Christ, have as your own all that he ever did, all that he now is, all that he now has. Nay, more than this; he knew you and your whole life before you were born, and he definitely associated you with himself in all his acts. He bids you regard yourself at this present time as having been with him—united with him—in every suffering and every triumph through which

he passed on earth. He puts in your mouth the words, "I have been crucified with Christ,"¹ "We died with Christ,"² "We were buried with him,"³ "Were also raised with him."⁴ Is not this a wonderful union! Is it not rich in honor and strength! Now accept joyfully all that this carries with it. Reckon yourself as having been associated with your beloved King and Head in his sorrows and in his victories. Do not look on the history of his marvelous career as something apart from yourself. He identified you with himself in it. The history is yours.

What can be more deeply interesting to you? Let us look at the matter more closely. You and I each say, "I have been crucified with Christ." Now, if I have been crucified with him, I may be sure that I richly deserved this penalty of death. And so it was. There is another statement I must make my own: "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."⁵ This is the utter condemnation of myself; and self is the flesh—the whole man as I am apart from the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. "That which is born of the flesh," said Jesus, "is flesh." That

¹ Gal. ii. 20, R. V.

² Rom. vi. 8, R. V.

³ Rom. vi. 4, R. V.

⁴ Col. ii. 12, R. V.

⁵ Rom. vii. 18.

which is begotten of self is selfish. That which springs from him in whom dwelleth no good thing, must be no good thing. So I, apart from the indwelling of Christ, am altogether vile. All my thoughts and words and works, apart from the influence of the Spirit of Christ, are completely evil. I, that is, the flesh, deserve the sentence of death. That sentence was passed and executed. "Knowing this," says Paul, "that our old man was crucified with him."¹

Notice that it was the *man* who was crucified; not merely some fault, some disposition, some trait, some tendency. It was the old man—the old self, that dated back to the moment when I began my existence. On me and my whole being, as I was born into the world without the indwelling of Christ, on me and my whole being, as I lived in the world without Christ in me, was the sentence of death passed. As to the manner in which the sentence was executed, you need not that I tell you. My Lord took my old, loathsome self and joined it to himself. When he died, I died. "I have been crucified with Christ."

You will surely see the justice of this. I, the old man, the flesh, the self, by whatever

¹ Rom. vi. 6, R. V.

name I am called, am only a robber and a murderer. God made me for himself, that I might give pleasure to him by loving him and doing his wise commands. Instead of living for him, I lived for myself. Instead of doing his will, I did my own will. I took what belonged to him and used it for self. I robbed God. He gave me many rich gifts, that I might thank him with a grateful heart and use them for him. I did not thank him. I took the gifts as though they were mine of right. I held them as though I were supreme. I used them for self. Again I robbed God. He made me that I might be a blessing to others, and spread life among those around me. By my self-life I was a curse in the world; I brought death to others. I am a murderer.

Deep as was this guilt, there was still a lower depth. When God set before me his beloved Son, and told me to choose between him and self, I chose self. I had read with some astonishment the history of that scene in the judgment hall of Pilate, where the Jewish leaders were called to choose between the Christ and Barabbas—the matchless Son of God and him who was a robber and a murderer. It seemed amazing that they should choose the red-handed robber and crucify the

peerless King. Yet this is just what I did. I chose that old robber and murderer, self, and rejected the Christ. I was unwilling to deny myself; I denied the Prince of glory. I refused to crucify the flesh; I crucified the beloved Son of God.

And now does not the flesh, the self, deserve to die? A thousand times over, yes. Away with it! Let it be crucified! Let me join in its destruction! And I do thank Jesus Christ, our Lord, that he associated me with himself in putting it to death. I, the self, have been crucified with Christ. I, the flesh, have been buried with him. I, the old man, have been laid in the darkness and silence of the tomb. There let that old life, with all its corruption, lie and rot.

For when our Lord rose with us from the tomb, he left behind all that loathsome burden of sin. He died to sin once for all. He is now "without sin," says the Epistle to the Hebrews. "He hath ceased from sin," says Peter. He is done with it forevermore. Rejoicing in his freedom from the cursed load, he lives before the Father. And now he has raised us up, that we may be associated with him in the victory over sin. Read carefully the words of Paul: "Our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be

done away, so that we should no longer be in bondage to sin. * * * But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. * * * For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. * * * Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body. * * * Present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you.”¹ Could there be a more cheering statement of your victorious position over sin?

But I hear some one say, “Ah! I know that Christ died as my legal representative, but I was not really with him at his death; I was not then actually united with him; yet the language used here seems to imply that, as a matter of personal experience, I have been crucified, buried and raised up with him. How is this?” The question is one that readily suggests itself, and I think the answer to it, found in the word of God, is clear.

It is a blessed truth that Christ, as our representative in law, died and rose for us. He “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.”

¹ Rom. vi. 6, 8, 10-14.

He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." We cannot praise God enough for this. And yet this is far from being the whole of the matter. In his death, burial, and resurrection our Lord gave us an example, that we should follow in his steps. He showed us the course of thought and purpose which we ought to take. It should be a counterpart of the course which he actually took. "Forasmuch as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind."

Did he give himself to die on the cross? With each one of us there must be the deliberate decision that self, the flesh, shall be given up to death; that the old man shall be nailed to the cross. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." Did he go down to the grave? With us there must be a full, honest consent that the old man be buried. "Knowing that our old man was crucified," we heartily acquiesce in his being laid in the tomb. Did Christ rise from the dead and ascend to the Father, forever parting company with sin? Then we must gladly accept the position in the heavenly places, to be one with him and forever separated from sin. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man." "If ye then be

risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." And so freely, decisively, in our own spiritual career, we go with our beloved Master from Calvary to the throne.

Does this mean now that we are to have no more conflicts with sin? Far from it. We shall have many conflicts with sin. Yet the meaning is precious and jubilant. It is that we are now in a position in which we can conquer every sin that shows itself in our life. We now have the attitude towards God and towards sin which insures our triumph. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

Beloved, God looks on the heart. He demands that we shall be true, honest men and women. He requires that our attitude towards him and towards sin shall be sound. He has told us in one sentence what this must be: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." To reach this point there is but one way. It has now been indicated to you. I assumed that you had identified yourself with Christ; now go with him to the cross, and from the cross to the heavenly heights. Remember that it was in the power of the Spirit he trod this path. He "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." Remember that he now gives you the Spirit that you may

offer yourself to God. It was "with power according to the Spirit of holiness" he was raised from the dead. So the Spirit is given you, with "the exceeding greatness of his power," to raise you up with Christ, and make you sit with him to-day in the heavenly places. Now, in the power of the Spirit at once, without delay, take this place of elevation and victory with him. Take it and hold it. Against every attack, in the face of all odds, hold it. You have only to be very bold, rejoicing in Christ, and your triumph is assured. For notice:

1. All the power in the life of Christ is pledged for your success. He has given himself—all that he is—to you for your good. Do you appreciate the power there is in this? The trouble with some Christians is that they have great faith in the power of sin in them, and weak faith in the power of the Son of God to subdue that sin. Will you dishonor your Lord in this way? Do you not know that all power has been given to him? Have you not read that all things are put under his feet? Has he not given you his Spirit to keep you one with himself in that position of supreme control? Then, no matter what be the sin you see in your life, be assured! that by the power of his Spirit you can now slay it

and put it under your feet. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify—put to death—the deeds of the body, ye shall live."¹ "Mortify—put to death—therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."²

As soon as you see one of this horrid brood in your heart, advance to destroy it. Have no truce with it. Bring forth the Achan, with all his belongings, out of the camp, and stone him to death. Is it some refined, courtly sin? Do not spare it. Be not like Saul, who slew some but kept alive the best. Lead out that royal Agag, who walks delicately, and hew him to pieces before the Lord. Let nothing escape. And such is the power of the Spirit of Christ in you, that you will surely be able to say, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ."³

2. Remember that the power of the Spirit of Christ in you reaches down to the smallest affairs of your every-day life. When Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,"⁴ he was not speaking of some great missionary enterprise; his

¹ Rom. viii. 13.

² Col. iii. 5.

³ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

⁴ Gal. iv. 13.

thoughts were not on any rare act of heroic endurance. He was speaking of those common matters with which you and I have to deal day by day. His subject was the supply of his bodily needs. In writing to his friends at Philippi, he acknowledged their kindness in having sent him some things to meet his wants. Their gifts had brought him joy, he wrote, but the joy was not because his wants were relieved. He had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. He knew how to suffer the humiliation of poverty and how to enjoy the abundance of prosperity; how to be hungry and how to be full. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." In the least of practical matters, the victory was his.

You see, then, that Christ in you brings complete success in the temptations of your pecuniary affairs and of all that relates to your daily bread. In the petty worries of business, in the doubtful competitions of trade, in the chafings of a year of want, in the enticements to luxurious self-indulgence of the day of wealth, "every where and in all things," to use the expression of Paul, the victory is secure. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

Not that the enticement to self-indulgence

or the allurements of some form of the flesh may not tempt you back to that dreadful condition, the self-life—enjoying your own ease, seeking your own reputation, satisfied with your own wisdom, serving God according to your own will. All this is the life of the flesh as contrasted with the life of the Spirit of Christ. Just here the Galatian Christians failed. They began in the Spirit, and then went back to the flesh. “O foolish Galatians,” exclaimed Paul, “who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?” Would you escape this folly? Remember that you have nothing so much to dread, nothing so much to watch against, as the flesh, yourself—your own life in all its phases apart from Christ in you. Hate it. Stand on your guard against it. Look up to him. Exult in him as your life. The Spirit is given you to seal you to him; that is, to keep you every moment in the closest, most intimate union with him, so that you may be aloof from the flesh and utterly dead to its touch.

Utterly dead! You may be told by some Christians that you are to regard yourself as “more and more dying unto sin.” This is not what God says. He commands you to reckon yourself as dead unto sin, just as Christ is dead unto it. Take the word as God gives it

to you. You have perhaps sung the lines of the hymn,

Then am I dead to all the world,
And all the world is dead to me.

You meant by this that you were dead to the world forever; you would not touch it, and it should not touch you. So now reckon yourself dead to every form of sin. When you see any sin in your life, recognize it only as an alien condemned to death; just as Paul said, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it." Be unwilling even for a moment to hold a passive attitude towards it. Do not stand waiting to die more and more to it. Obey God's command. In the power of the Spirit put it to death. So will you have life indeed.

An army is made invincible by the advantages of position, prestige, power. So with the sacramental host. Our position is, "dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ." Our prestige is, "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Our power is, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Then let us put sin, the world, and the devil under our feet.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUE BRIDEGROOM.

YOU have now seen the method by which the sin in your life is overcome. You admit Christ to dwell in your heart. The light of his life drives out the darkness. The power of his life puts under foot the foe. The bread of his life relieves the weakness. The water of his life quenches the thirst. The loving presence of his life supports and fills you with joy.

“But,” you ask, “what about the commandments? Are they not good? Is not disobedience to them sin?” Undoubtedly, yes. The Word of God abounds in commands. Everyone of them is holy and just and good; in the keeping of them there is great reward. Not to obey the least of them, in heart or in deed, is sin. These commands taken together are called the law. And now I have to state to you a paradox, which you will find in God’s word. In your oneness with Christ you obey the law, yet you are dead to it; you study and meditate on the law, yet you keep aloof from it. It is of the utmost importance to under-

stand this; yet here again, I would say, the matter is very simple.

Our Lord, when he was on earth, obeyed every command of God. He fulfilled the law. To do this was his delight. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The whole of his beautiful career was love to the Father and love to his fellow-men. Not a jot or tittle of the law did he neglect, or fail to meet perfectly. He did this to bless us in three ways: First, as our legal representative, he obeyed that his obedience might be reckoned as ours. In this way we are justified. Second, he gave us an example. In him we see the Father, that we may "be imitators of God as dear children"; in him we see also the model of a perfect manhood. Third, he lived a life of obedience to the law, that he may now impart this life to us, that we may indeed be imitators of him. This he does by the Spirit. When he lives in you, joyful obedience to the law is your life. Love to the Father and love to men fills your heart. This is what God means by his promise, "I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts."¹ "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye

¹ Heb. viii. 10.

shall keep my judgments and do them."¹ Christ in you means obedience to law.

But apart from Christ in you no command, no precept, given in the Bible, can do you the least good. You look at the law; you see that it is pure and just; you resolve to obey it. You begin your efforts to live according to it. You try; you strive; you struggle; you grasp first at one means, then at another. The result is always the same—disastrous failure. The good that you would you do not; but the evil which you would not, that you do. And the failure is exasperating. This law, which you have spent your energies in trying to satisfy, looks down on you with a condemning power. It seems to mock your fruitless efforts. Discouragement and resentment rise in your heart. "The commandment which was ordained to life," you find "to be unto death";² and your experience under the law ends in wretchedness and despair.

God knows all this, and he brings you full relief. He removes you entirely from under the law. He tells you to have nothing to do with it. He bids you be utterly dead to it. He puts you under the gracious power of the life of his Son, and this is to be your place

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

² Rom. vii. 10.

exclusively. Here it is he speaks to you those words of comfort and high assurance, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."¹ "Now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held."² "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law."³ "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ."⁴

Let us take up an illustration which is suggested by God's word. Here is a woman married to a man who is altogether just and upright; but she does not love him. She knows that she ought to love him; she wishes she could; but she cannot. He sees her failures, and draws up a treatise on wifely duties, setting forth many rules and precepts that should shape her life in the marital bond. He puts it in her hands for her guidance. As she reads it her conscience assents to the correctness and truth of every word; she resolves that she will try to live by it. But she finds that in all the precepts and all the rules there is one principle that she must obey; she must love, and that is the one thing she cannot do. She argues with herself. She makes resolutions. She summons the whole strength of

¹ Rom. vi. 15. ² Rom. vii. 6 (marg.). ³ Gal. v. 4.

⁴ Rom. vii. 4.

her will. She agonizes. All in vain! The spirit of the treatise draws her one way; her heart draws her the opposite way. In fact, this treatise has not only not wakened her love; it has deepened her aversion. It has made her conscious that her husband sees her evil heart; he searches her through and through; he sits in judgment on her; he condemns her. Her animosity is aroused. She dreads him. As she is subject to him, she cannot get rid of the bond that holds her: yet it is intolerable. In her weakness and despair she cries out, "O my wretchedness! Who can deliver me from a bondage worse than death?"

This is the picture of yourself subject to the law, and trying to obey it.

But the husband dies. He and his treatise are buried together. The woman marries again. Now she is wedded to a noble husband, whose tenderness and grace draw out all the love of her heart. She rejoices in the light of his smile. Her devotion is complete. How delightful the service that gives him pleasure! How precious the bond that holds her to him! How rich the hours she spends in his presence! She remembers now the buried treatise. All its rules and precepts on wifely duty are hers, yet how different! In

the first marriage the precepts were written on paper; in the second marriage they are inscribed on her heart. Then it was impossible to obey them; now obedience to them is the very impulse and movement of her life. Once her condition was worse than death; now all her days are joy and peace.

This is the picture of yourself separated from the law, dead to it, and one with Jesus Christ as the heavenly bridegroom. Listen to the word of God: "The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband * * *. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Now you see the beauty and truth of the paradox—dead to the law, and yet obeying the law. The law could give you no life, no strength, no joy. You are as dead to it as the woman is dead to the husband who has slept ten years in his grave. But you are again a wife. You are married to our living Lord. The Song of songs was written to celebrate the joys of this union. You and he

are one body. His life has become your life. He said, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." So now the law of God is within your heart; you delight to do his will. The spirit of love reigns. How easy obedience has become! It is the spontaneous movement of your life. When you were subject to commands and precepts, your experience was sin and death. Now you go forward leaning upon the Beloved, who pours into you the tide of his own purity and joy, and rejoices to adorn you with all the jewels of his grace. This is life indeed. This is life eternal. Well may you say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

And so you now readily understand the other part of the paradox—entirely aloof from the law, yet daily studying and meditating on it. The law is a mirror of the life of Christ. Every command shows you the lines of some beautiful feature of his character. The more deeply you understand it, the more clearly do you see the life the Master led—the life he now imparts to you. Scan closely every command. Take in all that it means. Yet, beware! Reach not out towards it for comfort or strength. Expect no help from it. It is a lifeless thing. It bears

on its face its own impotence. It shows you Christ; it brings you to him. It can do no more.

So important is this point that again I take an illustration. On that dark day which shadowed the crucifixion of our Lord, one of the Galilæan women who had followed him in ministrations of love finds herself separated from him. In the thronging streets of the city in which he has just been condemned, she knows not which way to turn. She is reproaching herself that she has allowed some object to draw her off from him whom she loves, and her heart aches to be with him again. Suddenly she espies a Roman soldier coming out of the judgment hall of Pilate, bearing something in his hand. As he hastens by, she sees that the thing he carries is a wooden tablet, and with a quick glance she catches the words, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King."

At once she divines the meaning. Pressing after the soldier, she threads the narrow streets and passes out of the city gate. The inscription borne before her deepens her self-condemnation. It is her King meek and lowly from whom she is separated. It was the King in his beauty from whom she turned aside. But now she has reached the knoll on which

three crosses stand. The soldier takes a hammer and nail, and the tablet is nailed to the central cross. No longer does the poor soul cast her glances on the bit of wood. No longer does the inscription speak reproach to her heart. She is with her King.

What the tablet did for her is just what every command of God's word must now do for you. Be wise, Be true, Be loving, Be humble, Be strong—such are the commands. Each of them bears on its face the inscription, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King." Just such is he. Are you self-condemned in view of the inscription? Undoubtedly; but do not pause. Follow immediately to the spot where he is who gave his life for us. The commandment was intended only to bring you to the crucified One. He is the end of the law. As soon as you reach him you are done with the commandment. It "was against us," to use the language of Paul to the Colossians: it "was contrary to us," and so God, he says, "took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.

THE law out of the way! The law nailed to the cross! Do not be surprised that your attention is pressed to this fact. Thousands of Christians are in sorrow to-day because they do not perceive it. They are trying by prayer, by reading the Bible, by resolutions, by doing many works, to keep the law as they see that it was kept by Christ. They are struggling in their own strength to be good. Did they understand their deadness to the law and their oneness with Christ, they might be filled with power and joy. The late Dr. John W. Pratt declared that, if all Christians could apprehend the truth that they are not under law, but under grace, "the whole complexion of the church would be changed."

Trying to keep the law is the experience of the wilderness. Dead to the law and one with Christ is the victorious march and the rest in Canaan. In the Seventh Chapter of Romans we have the wilderness experience of the New Testament. The key-words of that chapter are the law and the flesh. They

occur twenty-six times. Are you not familiar with the painful struggle, the almost despairing effort, presented there? "The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. * * I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. * * O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Is it not a wilderness indeed? In the Eighth Chapter of Romans we have the Canaan experience of the New Testament. The key-words of this chapter are the Spirit and life. They occur nineteen times in the first seventeen verses. "The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" makes us "more than conquerors," and gives us now a boundless inheritance of peace and good.

Are you willing to stay in the wilderness? Can you consent to make the experience of the Seventh of Romans the limit of your experience? You will be told by some Christians, perhaps by many, that there is no getting beyond the Seventh of Romans in this world. Just so there were some in the host of Israel—yes, many—who declared at Kadesh-Barnea that they could not advance beyond the wilderness. Such was not the thought of the primitive Christians—the Spirit-filled men and women who, in the

early centuries, went forth preaching the gospel to every creature. They saw in that vivid description of struggle and failure in the Seventh of Romans a portraiture of the man who has not yet learned what it is to be dead to the law. "It appears," says Dr. Charles Hodge, "that during the first three centuries the fathers were generally agreed in considering the passage as descriptive of the experience of one yet under the law."¹ In our day not a few Christians are waking to see the passage in the same light. The late Dr. John A. Broadus, whose praise was in all the churches, wrote:

"In this remarkable passage in the Seventh Chapter of Romans, over which so many religious controversies have been waged, and over which—what is ten thousand times better than religious controversies—have bent many troubled, yet trusting hearts, as they found themselves exactly portrayed—in this passage the Apostle first points out what is the best the law can do to make a man holy: what is the best that a man can do in the way of becoming holy by just trying to do what is right, simply trying in his own strength to

¹ In quoting from Dr. Charles Hodge and other authors, I need hardly say that a quotation does not imply concurrence in all that they teach.

do what he learns from God's law to be right.

* * * Here is the Apostle's answer."

"There has been a good deal of controversy between what are called Calvinists and what are called Arminians, as to whether this passage gives the experience of a renewed or of an unrenewed man. I think the truth is, as some recent writers have been showing, that it does not really give either, but gives the experience of any man, either renewed or unrenewed, who is looking to the law to make him holy. Renewed men often fall back on that." To fall back on that, let me say in passing, is what the New Testament calls "falling from grace."¹

Now, there are some expressions in the passage spoken of which, I think, belong especially to the renewed man; but, without pausing to discuss them, allow me to say that I venture to hope the day is approaching when the view held by the primitive Christians, and stated in substance by Dr. Broadus, will be generally held in the church. There is no doubt that the graphic style of the passage in which Paul gives his experience, has led some to the opinion that he is describing his condition at the time he wrote. The fact is, he was careful to mark it as a past

¹ Gal v. 4.

experience. In the fifth and sixth verses he says, "For when *we were in the flesh*, the sinful passions, which were by the law, *did work in our members* to bring forth fruit unto death. But *now we are delivered from the law*, that being dead *wherein we were held*; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." The law and the flesh with him were things of the past. Then to show that the struggle of sinful passion in the man who is under the law is no fault of the law, he draws the vivid picture of himself when he was striving in the flesh—that is, by his own efforts—to keep the law. The effect of the description is greatly heightened by the use of the present tense, yet it is the use of this tense which has misled some readers. We might illustrate the line of thought and the style of the Apostle by the case of a man who writes to show that blankets and ice will not cure chills and fever. There is no fault to be found with blankets and ice, but the remedy needed is quinine. The man writes :

"When I was a soldier in the swamps below Richmond, and had no quinine, I was racked with fever and ague. Now that I have quinine, I am entirely free from such attacks. Think of it! Here I am lying in a tent. A

chill seizes me. I pile blankets over me, but am not a bit warmer; in fact, am cold as death. The fever follows. I fairly burn. Ice is brought, but it does no good. How utterly wretched I am! I thank God for the discovery of quinine."

Here no one thinks for a moment that the writer uses the present tense to describe his experience at the time of writing. He has distinctly marked the experience as belonging to the past. So Paul writes in the Seventh of Romans. It was in the day when he strove to keep the law that he found no comfort. It was a desert through which he passed before he reached the land of corn and wine and oil.

In the best Christian life on earth there are three distinct stages. Painted on the historical canvas of the Old Testament they are, out of Egypt; through the wilderness; the victorious advance and rest in Canaan. Drawn with the lines of spiritual reality which mark the New Testament they are, out of the kingdom of darkness; the flesh in its struggle to keep the law; dead to the law, in Christ Jesus overcoming all sin. The experience of Paul in the wilderness conflict, we may be sure, was intense. He had been driven out to that gloomy desert over which Mount Sinai frowns with beetling crags (Gal. i. 17, iv.

25). Here, as is supposed by many, the struggle occurred. After this came the Canaan triumph and rest.

We speak of rest. It is not the rest of inactivity; not the rest of a stick or a stone. It is the rest of joy, the rest of peace, the rest of assured triumph. When the army of the nation is in doubtful conflict, and the tide of fearful battle surges to and fro, there is no rest. When the army moves steadily forward, victorious at every point, sure of sweeping the field, there is rest. Just so there is a difference among Christians. Some carry on a conflict that is strained, often marred by reverses. Others wage a conflict that is full of rest. Let us see how this is.

At the foot of Mount Sinai there was fought a battle. Amalek has attacked Israel. All day long victory hangs in the balance. Now Amalek presses forward with shouting, and Israel is driven back. Then Israel rallies, there is a new burst of courage and purpose, and Amalek yields ground. On the mountain above, the hands of Moses are lifted up to God. Israel prevails. But how wearisome! From sheer exhaustion they drop down. Amalek prevails. Aaron and Hur support Moses. The host on the plain below, for whom they intercede, is God's host. It has

come out of Egypt. It has been strengthened by the manna from heaven. It has been refreshed by the water out of the rock. It has the pillar of cloud and fire for its guide. Yet how hard and stubborn and changeable this fight! even though victory at last he won. Such is the battle at the foot of Sinai; and such is the conflict which the New Testament describes as the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.

You have come out of the world. You hear the command of Christ, Follow me. Every command is law. You rise to obey the law. On one side are the forces of the Spirit—the voice of the Spirit speaking the command of Christ; the light of the Spirit showing the example of Christ; the grace of the Spirit bringing some taste of the refreshment of Christ. On the other side are the forces of the flesh—the selfish, earthly desires which war against the life of Christ. Sometimes the Spirit prevails, sometimes the flesh. You pray; your friends pray for you; yet, again and again, the victory seems in suspense. It is an arduous, a wearing, and wavering struggle. The flesh is lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, that you may not do the things that you would. You do not perceive where your

difficulty lies. You have allowed yourself to remain under law. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

But there is another battle. No longer is Israel at the foot of Sinai. He has crossed the Jordan, the river of death. He is dead to the whole territory of law, and Moses, the personification of law, is dead to him. At Gibeon the allied armies of the Canaanites are massed to resist his progress. He advances to attack at daybreak. His strength is no longer sustained by that light food, the manna. His bold, sinewy movement comes from stronger meat; he has eaten of the corn of Gilgal, and has drunk of the wine of Engedi. On the march, his refreshment is drawn no longer from a single stream flowing through a desert; the land he is on is watered with the copious showers from heaven. Now he is not guided by a pillar of cloud and fire; at the head of the column which crossed the Jordan is the ark, which concealed, while it contained, the law—the type of him who said, "I delight to do thy

will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

Amid these new and inspiring circumstances he throws himself against the confederated armies. The onset is irresistible. At every point the enemy give way. The defeat becomes a rout. The pursuit is hot to Beth-horon. The day is not long enough to gather the spoils of conquest, and the sun stands still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon. The royal leaders of the enemy are all taken; the feet of the captains are put on their necks; and they are slain. It has been a day of uninterrupted triumph and complete success; and such a day is rest.

And now, who is the man that has this joyous, restful life? Who is the man that says, "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ"? Who is the man that exults in the words, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"? Who is the man that looks out over the whole domain of work and service and says, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me"? Who is the man that says, "We who have believed do enter into rest"?

It is the man who learned, perhaps through

many failures, that he himself could not follow in the steps of Christ, he could not keep the law. His own wisdom, his own strength, his own aspirations, his own goodness, have availed nothing. He crucifies them all. He crucifies his entire self. He is as a lifeless, helpless thing, waiting to be filled with the fulness of the life of Christ. And who ever waited thus before our most loving and compassionate King without being filled? The Spirit of life now flows into him with a joyous fulness. What a change in the whole man! As in the days of old the withered and childless Abram became the fruitful Abraham, as the lame and despairing Jacob became the princely, prevailing Israel, as the envious, struggling Hoshea of the wilderness became the Joshua of Canaan, so now the humiliated and helpless Simon, son of Jonas, becomes the bold and triumphant Peter, the dejected Saul of Arabia becomes the victorious Paul, the leader of the missionary enterprise for the world. Here we have the Spirit-filled man. With what confidence he may now advance against every foe. Every promise on the pages of God's word is made to him. Every place that the sole of his foot treads upon is his. No one shall be able to stand before him all the days of his life. He shall never be ashamed.

And now do you wonder that you are urged to be a Spirit-filled man? Is not this indeed the glorious gospel of the blessed God? As the love of the Master to you passes knowledge, could he offer you anything less than the success which is here held before you? At Kadesh-Barnea there were two men who preached a gospel of unqualified success. Those who preached a gospel of discouragement were against them five to one. The vast crowd around raised a cry to stone them. Yet Caleb and Joshua stood, faithful found among the faithless. They held fast the words of unclouded triumph which they had received. God commended them, and gave them a rich reward.

They did not withdraw from their brethren of the tribes. They recognized the truth that they were members of a body, and their aim was the welfare of all its members. They suffered: they were held back forty years by the unbelief of the host. Yet the day came when their testimony was acknowledged by every tribe. They entered the land flowing with milk and honey. At Ai they were again reminded that they were members of a body, and when one member suffers all the members suffer with it. But the record concerning Caleb remained steadfast, that he followed

the Lord wholly. He who bore the humblest name in Israel—Caleb, the dog,—won the choicest inheritance of Canaan, and all around him “the land had rest from war.”¹

The same gospel of success which was offered the men of Israel at Kadesh-Barnea has been offered to us. “For unto us was the gospel preached,” says the inspired writer, “as well as unto them.” “We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” “Let us give diligence therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”²

¹ Josh. xiv. 15, 15. ² Heb. iii., iv.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERFECT MAN.

WE HAVE seen that there is only one perfect man in the universe—our adorable Saviour and King. We have seen, too, that he sends down his own Spirit of life to fill his willing people. And now I wish to call your attention to the fact that, in the New Testament, those who receive this fulness of the life of Christ are called perfect. In that passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians in which Paul tells us that Jesus made his descent to this world and his ascent far above all heavens for the purpose of filling all things, a contrast is drawn between the immature Christians, who have not been filled, and the mature Christians who have the fulness of Christ. The immature are described as children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; the mature are described as those who have attained, through the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹

¹ Ephes. iv. 13.

“A perfect man” is the expression of the Holy Spirit. Yet we live in a day when the word perfection seems to be the dread of many Christians. In fact, this consummate term of God’s vocabulary has been changed by some into a stigma of reproach, and we hear certain Christians branded as being “perfectionists.” Unhappily, it does not seem to occur to those who speak in this way that, as God uses language, there is some reproach attached to imperfection. It is important, therefore, that we understand clearly what the Scriptures teach on this point.

To Abraham, the father of all who believe, the command came, with its assuring preface, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.” Then it was he received the rite of circumcision, the sign of the putting away of all sin. Then it was his name was changed from Abram to Abraham—the father of a great multitude; and then the promise was given him, “I will make thee exceeding fruitful.” Not till then was the son of promise born to him. It may be that not a few Christian workers, in the home land and in the foreign field, have found their work unfruitful because they have not accepted the command of God to be perfect, and have not obeyed in spiritual reality as Abraham obeyed in type.

When the heart-searching, yet most blessed, words of the Sermon on the Mount were spoken by our Lord, he said to his disciples, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The perfection of our Heavenly Father, of which the Saviour spoke, is his mercy and kindness to the ungrateful and the evil. There is one way, and but one, in which we may have this perfection; it is to be filled with the Spirit of the Father, sent down to us through the Son.

Our Lord made a definite offer of perfection to the young ruler. He said, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Had the young man been willing to part with all that he held dearest, he would have obtained this pearl of great price.

Many of the primitive Christians had the fulness of the Spirit of Christ, and were reckoned as perfect. Yet Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, was compelled to say, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect. * * * And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." In the church at Corinth there were men of learning,

gifted in speech—"enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge." They had received the grace of God, and were truly his children. But they lacked the fulness of the Spirit, and allowed envy and strife to dwell in their hearts. It is impossible for such men to apprehend the highest truth of a holy life on earth. Paul could speak this truth to the perfect, but not to them. As to spiritual intelligence and spiritual power, they were babes.

It was, therefore, the recognized object of the true spiritual leaders in the primitive church to have all the members of the church perfect. Epaphras was "a faithful minister of Christ" to the church at Colosse, and he was "always laboring fervently" for them in prayers, that they might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Paul declared that this was the great object of his own ministry: "Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." He rebuked the Hebrew Christians because he had to be repeating to them the elementary truths of the gospel. They were not able to receive and digest the "strong meat which," he said, "belongeth to them that are perfect."¹ "Therefore," he added, "leav-

¹ Heb. v. 14, marg.

ing the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go unto perfection.”

The Master himself, as he looked down from heaven, rebuked the messenger of the church in Sardis. “For I have not found thy works,” he said, “perfect before God.” The word perfect in this sentence is a translation of the Greek word filled. The works of the messenger did not fulfil the righteousness of God, for they were not filled with the Spirit of Christ.

With such declarations as these on the pages of God’s word—and we might quote more to the same effect—he is a rash man who neglects the command of God to be perfect, or is careless whether he be found in the ranks of those who, in the New Testament, are called perfect. It is needless to say, after the statements made on the preceding pages, that the perfection presented to us here is no perfection of our own. Our own life was a failure—worse than a failure; it had to be crucified. We ourselves are nothing; we must ever remain nothing. All that we have of wisdom or holiness or power is Christ in us. He alone is our perfection. Here it is, in the profoundest degree, we veil our faces and say, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” It is impos-

sible that the perfection of the child of God be found save in company with the deepest humility and self-abnegation.

Yet it is a perfection constantly reaching out to a higher and nobler state. It is a perfection of enlarging capacity. It is a perfection which is changing from glory to glory. It presses forward to better things. The stirring figure sketched by Paul, when he speaks of himself and those in the church at Philippi who were perfect, is that of the racer in the games. He is making a splendid run. Every movement is perfect. Yet see him. His eye is fixed on the goal. There is the supreme prize—the resurrection from the dead at the call of God. There he is to be perfected with a perfection thus far unknown. In view of it he counts himself neither to have attained nor to be perfect. He is unmindful of the course already passed over. He forgets what is behind; he reaches forth unto that which is before. He presses towards the glorious end. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect," he adds, "be thus minded."

Perfect and yet to be perfected: in this he followed the Master. Filled with the Spirit of the Father, Jesus was perfect; yet he looked forward to the day when he should be perfected at his resurrection. "Behold," he said,

“I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” He, too, had an enlarging capacity, and was changed from glory to glory. The Captain of our salvation was made “perfect through sufferings.”¹ “Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation.”² His whole life on earth was a growth, a progress from one stage of perfection to another.

Just so he desires his people to grow in grace. The branch on the vine, filled in every fibre with life and sap, as it first puts forth its tender leaves, is a perfect branch. Soon the fragrant bloom appears, shedding around the delicious proof of the blessing of God. The branch is more perfect now than before. The days go on: heavy clusters of fruit hang in the air, not ready to be gathered, yet beautiful in shape, with every emerald globe distended by the store drawn from the vine. We see that the branch is still more perfect. At last the sun has empurpled all the weighted clusters, and the kindling juices are ripe for the use of man. As the vine-dresser looks on the branch, with the highest satisfaction he pronounces it perfect. Its

¹ Heb. ii. 10.² Heb. v. 8, 9.

treasures are gathered in and laid at the master's feet. Perfect at every stage, because filled with the life of the vine. "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."¹

This perfection, too, not only reaches up to a higher state, it reaches down, in pity and love, to the poorest of the earth. "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." It holds back nothing from the destitute. Though it be rich, it becomes poor for the sake of others; and its record in the world is, "poor, yet making many rich." In pouring out its streams of beneficence to men, it makes no exceptions. It blesses those who curse; it does good to those who hate; it prays for those who persecute. This is the "perfect love" that "casteth out fear." What a wonderful effect! It casteth out fear. "It banishes all doubts as to our present acceptance with God, dispels all anxiety concerning the future, relieves us of all fear of the world, and fills us with peace and joy." The disciple that leaned upon the bosom of Jesus has told us, "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." And is this perfection in

¹ Isaiah xxvii. 2, 3.

love, this lily of the lowly life, at all a plant of our own heart? Again we say, far from it. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Perfect love is simply God dwelling in you; it is the fulness of Christ in you, the hope of glory.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INSOLUBLE QUESTION.

WHEN you accept the command of God to be perfect, and trust in his power to work this grace in you, you may expect some one to ask you whether you believe in "sinless perfection." The question put to you is, whether the man who has the fulness of Christ, the Spirit-filled man, is ever sinless in this world. We may be sure that the Bible teaches us what we shall say to this. Let us listen to the word that comes from the mouth of God.

And first, he tells us that he alone searches and knows the heart of man. "The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable." "Who can understand his errors?" "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." Only in the divine crucible can the lowest analysis be made of that which is precious in our lives and that which is dross. "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts." It is obvious, therefore, that no man of good judgment will undertake to render a verdict on his own life. The Apostle

Paul could declare openly to his fellow Christians the witness of his conscience as to the blamelessness of his own life; but there he paused. "I judge not myself," he said; "he that judgeth me is the Lord." Let us be imitators of Paul.

In the next place, we observe that God wishes us to set no limit to what he may do in us by the power of his Spirit. He says, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Because the "exceeding greatness of his power" is pledged for our good, his command to us, Be perfect, is just. "Give what thou commandest," said Augustine, "and then command what thou wilt." What he gives us is "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." In the magnificent prayer which Paul offered for the Christians at Ephesus, he seems to exhaust the resources of speech in summing up the fulness of grace which he desires them to possess in their hearts. "Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man," "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height," "filled unto all the fulness of God"—such are some of the expressions he uses. Can words compass a

greater measure of sanctification than is stated here? Can any limit be set to the grace which this language unfolds? Well, men sometimes show a curious art in limiting what God does not limit; so Paul proceeds to sweep away all conceivable metes and bounds. He tells the Ephesians that God is able to do not only what he prays for, but even more. "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus."

The man who limits what God is willing or is able to do in him by the Holy Spirit, dishonors God. "They limited the Holy One of Israel"—this is what shut Israel out from the triumphs and possessions of Canaan and caused the multitude to fall in the wilderness.¹ This it is that now holds back not a few of the people of Christ from a career of joy and success. Of course, if God has set a limit anywhere, we are bound, with all humility, to respect it. But what limit has he set to our ability to do the things that give pleasure to him? Which is the first and great commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. And what is the promise which he gives in re-

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 41.

gard to it? "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul." Is there any limitation here?

Nay, the constant effort of our Lord Jesus, when he moved among men, was to persuade them not to limit God. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible unto you." "Who-soever shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." If any man wishes to make the most of his life on earth, he must practice a sublime freedom; he must put no limit to what God will do for him and through him, according to the power that worketh in him.

"Ah!" says some one, "that is all very true about God; we must not limit him; but we have to do our part in this matter. Our part is to accept the Spirit of Christ, and here there must be more or less of failure, as our acceptance is imperfect." And pray, I ask, who gives you power to accept at all? Was not your hand withered and your whole arm

palsied? Who bid you stretch it forth, and gave you power to obey the command? And if you cannot stretch it forth to accept the smallest thing without the gift of power from Christ, do you mean that he cannot or will not give you the power to stretch it forth to the full, and to open your hand wide to receive all that he has to bestow? And when you say that your acceptance must be feeble or imperfect, do you not see that this is only a more subtle way of limiting the gift of God and the power of his grace?

We said that faith is the empty hand stretched out to receive the gift of God. We "receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"; we are "sanctified by faith"; Christ dwells in our "hearts by faith"; our hearts are "cleansed by faith"; "we walk by faith," and "by faith" we "stand." And do you not know that this faith is the gift of Christ? "Saved through faith," says Paul, "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Will you limit God's gift? Jesus is "the author and finisher (perfecter, Greek) of our faith." Will you limit the finish or perfection God gives to his own work? When Stephen is said to have been full of the Holy Ghost, he is said also to have been "full of faith." Surely Jesus took a broad view of

things, and do you think there was anything lacking in the extent of faith when he said, "O woman, great is thy faith"?

Of course every creature of God, whether in heaven or on earth, is a limited being. The question is not at all as to our limited capacity. The question is, whether our capacity being finite, there is any limit to our being filled to the utmost of our capacity. And here we declare that there is no limit. The tabernacle set up by Moses was a finite structure, but there was no limit to its being filled with the glory of God. The cloud which made the earth shine with brightness covered it, and the glory of the Lord filled it.¹ The earthenware jar is limited, but when it is plunged in the vast ocean there is no limit to its being full. It is in the ocean, and the ocean is in it. And so, we say, when a man abides in Christ and Christ in him, there is no limit to his being filled. This is "the fulness of the blessing of Christ." This is being "filled unto all the fulness of God."

When a man is thus filled with the Spirit of Christ, it seems a matter of course that he is conscious of being filled with the love, the purity, the humility, the courage and truth of Christ. His conscience—for so our Eng-

¹ Ex. xl. 34, 35; Ezek. xliii. 2.

lish Bible translate the Greek word for consciousness—is pure. His heart, to use the expression of the Apostle John, condemns him not. Look at that man who was once a blasphemer and a persecutor, the chief of sinners, now washed and filled with the Spirit. See with what variety of expression he asserts the purity of his conscience and life. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God we behaved ourselves in the world.” “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” “I am conscious of nothing against myself.”¹ “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” “Not I, but Christ liveth in me.” “For me to live is Christ.”

See how he sends down through the centuries the summons to us all to imitate him. “Brethren, be ye imitators of me, and mark them which so walk as ye have us for an ensample.” His commendation of the Thesalonians was, “Ye became imitators of us and of the Lord.” In writing to the Philippians he sums up everything true, everything honorable, everything just, everything pure, everything lovely, everything of good report,

¹ Compare R. V. and Greek Test. on 1 Cor. iv. 4.

whatever there be that is virtuous, whatever worthy of praise, and then gives two commands—one in the abstract, “think on these things”; the other in the concrete, “Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” The whole catalogue of graces was exemplified in him. After the labors of three years among the Ephesians, he said to the elders of the church, “In all things I gave you an example.” After a long and intimate association with Timothy, the aged apostle, in the closing days of his life, wrote to his young brother in words of praise. “Thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long suffering, patience.” His fellow-worker had seen and copied a model life.

Here then we have the pattern of a Spirit-filled man. With a pure conscience, he calls upon God and men to witness that his life is holy and just and unblameable: for him to live in Christ; yet he refrains from pronouncing the final verdict on himself. Do you admire the prudence with which he stops and refuses to judge himself? Do you commend this wise reserve? Then read all that he says about this matter of judging. “I judge not mine own self. For I know (am conscious of) nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the

Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts ; and then shall each man have his praise from God."

You see that just as he judged not himself, he commands others not to judge him. His own perception could discover nothing in himself but the Spirit of Christ—"For me to live is Christ." His conscience acquitted him. This acquittal might, or might not, agree with the judgment of his omniscient Lord. Only the last day could show how this was. As he therefore held his judgment in suspense, others should hold their judgments in suspense concerning him. The wise reserve which he maintained, his fellow-Christians must maintain when they spoke of him. And yet have his fellow-Christians in all cases done this? Nay, verily; repeatedly the reserve has been broken on two sides. On one side some have declared that Paul and every Spirit-filled man with him did daily break the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed. On the other side some have declared that Paul and every other Spirit-filled man did no sin. In both cases a judgment was rendered which no man is competent to pronounce.

There are some questions which God has put under the ban. They are indeterminate here. For us to attempt to decide them is wrong. "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid," says the Holy Spirit, "knowing that they gender strifes." An unlearned question is one which human learning cannot solve, and which a true learning therefore avoids. Such questions are, of course, foolish, and as the discussion of them can lead to no definite result, they are sure to excite strife. To this class belongs the question whether a man filled with the Spirit of Christ is sinning in his heart. From its very nature no human mind can penetrate it to the bottom and give a true answer. Therefore avoid it; pass it by.

If the man who believes himself to be Spirit-filled asserts that he is entirely free from sin, he takes a presumptuous position, from which there will probably be a fall through pride. If, on the other hand, it is declared that the Spirit-filled man daily sins in thought, word, and deed, a low standard of holy living is set forth, which is unwarranted by God's word, and which leads many Christians to palliate and tolerate their sins. In a religious paper not long ago an incident was told, which seemed to be presented as an amusing jest, though in reality it has a very serious side. When the late Justice Strong,

of the Supreme Court of the United States, was a boy, his father, who was a minister, found him one day stealing something from the cupboard. "Don't you know, my son," said the father, "that you are breaking one of the commandments of God?" "Yes, father," replied the boy, remembering the catechism he had been taught; "you know that every man daily breaks the commandments in thought, word, and deed." It is to be feared that many Christians of riper years argue about their sins as did this boy. "To sin daily in thought, word, and deed," they say to themselves, "is inevitable; not to be conscious of sins we are committing would be a bad state. We are conscious of committing various sins daily, therefore we are in the normal and unavoidable condition of all Christian men."

In opposition to this low standard the Word of God sets up the standard of the Spirit-filled man. He is one with Christ. The love of God is in his heart as overflowing waters of joy. His delight is in his Father in heaven and in his Redeemer. He is always praising and giving thanks. He loves men as Christ loves them; he suffers for them as Christ suffered. In all humble service he gives his life for them. He pities his enemies, and strives to do them good. He has no pleasure

when they fall; he grieves. Looking up to God as his witness, and looking his fellow-men in the face, he declares that his conduct is holy and just and unblameable. In the world and in the church he behaves himself with the holiness and sincerity of God, for God lives in him and is manifested through him. Though he is perfect now through this fulness of the indwelling of Christ, he looks forward with the utmost eagerness to the day when he shall be perfected at the resurrection of the dead. He bends every energy and presses forward that he may win the prize, and receive from his beloved Master praise and honor in that day. He makes no pretension of knowing his own heart in all its secret recesses. The Lord alone must be his judge. While he is conscious of nothing wrong in his life, he is sure that, if there be anything wrong of which he is not aware, the Lord will reveal this to him,¹ and it will be cleansed away. He always triumphs.

This is no merely ideal life that is sketched. It is the life that many men and women in the primitive church actually realized; it is the life now offered to us. Can anyone view it and not stretch out the hand of faith gladly to receive it?

¹ Phil. iii. 15.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNCLOUDED GOSPEL.

THERE is no cloud casting a shadow over the gospel. As given to us by our Lord, the message of life is radiant with sunshine and joy. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "These things speak I in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." The disciple who leaned upon the bosom of Jesus takes up the words that sound like golden bells: "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." The apostle who suffered above all others in the service of his Master is the one who emphasizes the most the joy of the life in Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say rejoice." To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with joy. It is to sing and make melody in the heart unto the Lord. Joy is love exulting in the presence of the object beloved. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." The

experience of the Spirit-filled men and women of the New Testament is jubilant triumph.

Yet you will meet Christians who imagine there is a sombre cloud resting on the gospel. They think there are passages in the New Testament which teach that every Christian is sinning every moment. God says of sin, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." Yet these Christians suppose that God has shown us in his word that we inevitably do this abominable and hateful thing all the time in his presence, as long as we live in this world. Now, if a man can have no better life than this, it is difficult to see how his joy can be full at present; and there are several other things told us by our Saviour which must be hard to explain. Still, if God has actually taught us in his word what these Christians suppose he has taught, we must believe him, whatever be the difficulties in the case. But I venture to think that a misapprehension has occurred here, and that some statements of God's word have been wrongly understood. I believe that when they are understood aright, it will be found that there is nothing in them which implies that all Christians are sinning every day.

The meaning of any text in the Bible is never certainly known until the spirit in

which it was written is clearly understood. The words may be very simple and direct; yet, if we fail to apprehend the spirit of the writer, we may be misled by his plainest statement. Let me illustrate what I mean.

A few years ago Professor Huxley made the remark in one of his writings that the Apostle Paul had thought it right to use deceit in order to advance his missionary work. He referred to the words in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Being crafty, I caught you with guile." It was pointed out to Mr. Huxley that, while he had quoted the words of the apostle correctly, he had entirely misapprehended the spirit in which they were written. Paul was defending himself against a charge of mercenary design in his work among the Corinthians. He wrote to them in substance: "When I was with you, I received nothing from you; I was not supported by you. When I come again, I will not be supported by you. But some of you say that, though I was not supported by you myself, being crafty I caught you with guile; that I sent some of my fellow-workers to you, and got a support from you through them. The charge is not true. When I sent Titus and another brother to you, Titus refused to receive anything from you. He and I worked

in the same spirit; we walked in the same path."

You see now Mr. Huxley's mistake. The words quoted were not a statement by Paul of the manner in which he had worked at Corinth; they were the statement of a charge brought against him by his enemies. When the spirit and sense of the passage were pointed out, Mr. Huxley candidly acknowledged the slip he had made.

Now to bring the matter nearer home. I was talking one day with a friend who thought that the New Testament teaches that every Christian is sinning all the time. "Does not the Bible say," she asked, "that there is none that doeth good, no, not one"? "Yes," I replied, "the Bible does say that, but where?" And I turned her to the Third Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There we find a description of the natural state of all men without the gospel: "There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood." Now my friend

would have been shocked if anyone had asked whether the Bible does not teach that every Christian is bitter, murderous, and full of cursing; yet there would be the same ground for this question as for the question she asked me.

In a similar manner we hear some Christians quote the statement of the Apostle James: "In many things we offend all." They seem to regard this as a confession of James that he and all other Christians were frequently, if not constantly, committing sin. And yet James says in the same passage, "The tongue is full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." Are we to conclude now that James and Paul and the beloved John cursed men with tongues full of deadly poison? Yet there is the same warrant for believing this as for believing that they, and others like them, did in many things offend.

In the ordinary speech of our modern life we do not so misunderstand men. Here is an address delivered by a devout evangelical Frenchman to his countrymen. He says, "God calls us to be a righteous nation. He

wishes us to be pure. But we people of France are vainglorious; we are given over to worldly pleasure; we are stained with immorality." What would we think of a Christian who, after reading these words, should declare that this good Frenchman has confessed that he and all his evangelical associates are given over to worldly pleasure and stained with immorality? Yet, just so some Christians have treated the Apostle James.

Does anyone so misunderstand the prophets of the Old Testament? Jeremiah, the purest and noblest, as the Jews say, of all the prophets, breaks out in Lamentations: "We have transgressed and we have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned. The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned." Now fancy a young Jew saying to himself, "Jeremiah here confesses that he was a dishonored transgressor, and did much that was sinful. I cannot hope to be better than he." So the young man acquiesces in a life of dishonor as inevitable, and allows himself to float on the current of sin. What would we think of such a handling of the inspired word? Yet we see Christians who are conscious that they offend in many things, and solace themselves with the delusion that they are not far from the apostolic standard, be-

cause James says, "In many things we offend all."

The Apostle James wrote at a time when dark evils had invaded the church. Rich monopolists occupied the best seats in the Christian assemblies; poor men went to the wall. The same tongues that blessed God in the public worship, cursed men in the marts of trade. James portrayed the sad condition of things. In doing this he used the style which prophets and wise men were accustomed to use when they depicted widespread evils in the church. "In many things we offend all. We bless God and we curse men. Out of the same fountain proceed bitter waters and sweet." But did James intimate for a moment that such a state of things was inevitable among Christians? Far from it. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." He points to the sure remedy for these evils, within the reach of all who believe. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The wisdom that is from above is the Holy Spirit. God's liberal gift is the fulness of the Spirit;

and the fulness of the Spirit, as we saw, is the perfection of the New Testament. James clearly indicates the marks of this perfection, and urges his fellow-Christians to obtain it. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Is it possible that any Christian can prefer the state of a double-tongued, money-worshipping church—"in many things we offend all"—to the state of the man filled with the Spirit of wisdom—"perfect and entire, wanting nothing"!

There is another text in the New Testament which I wish to notice, for I think it has misled not a few Christians. The Apostle John writes in his First Epistle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." A Christian minister recently published a series of papers, in which he put forward this text as a proof that every Christian sins every moment. If we do not admit that we sin constantly, was his argument, we deceive ourselves. Now, on the face of it there was something remarkable in this interpretation. The Apostle John declares that his object in writing the passage in which the text occurs is, that his fellow-Christians may not sin. "These things write

I unto you, that ye sin not." Yet here was a Christian teacher using the text to prove to his fellow-Christians that they would surely sin every moment. The object of the Apostle John and the object of the modern writer were widely diverse.

The passage that John wrote opens to us a wonderful view of God giving us his own life, with cleansing power. John tells us how clearly the life was manifested to us by Jesus Christ. Now we are sharers in the life. We have fellowship, we possess all in common, with the Father and with the Son. "All are yours." "My beloved is mine, and I am his." God is light. If we have fellowship with him, we walk in the light. To walk in the light is to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us." So "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The blood cleanses from the guilt of sin—a precious truth, yet only a part of the truth. "The blood is the life."¹ "My blood is drink indeed." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abund-

¹ Deut. xii. 23.

antly, O beloved." The blood cleanses from the pollution of sin by filling us with the life of Christ. It cleanses from all sin. There is no limit set here. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." But it cleanses only those who confess their sins. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession of sins brings not only forgiveness, but cleansing from all unrighteousness—again no limit set. When the prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned," the father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." So our fellowship with God has fullness of joy, and we live that we may sin no more. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

And now, with this light of God in you and around you, are you willing to accept the presence of sin in your life as inevitable? I hope not. God has made us sharers of his own holy life, that we may walk in the light as he is in the light; and he has set no limit to this. He wishes to impart to us the fullness of his own joy, and he has set no limit to this. He gives us all the purifying power that is in the life of his Son, that we may be

cleansed from all sin, and he sets no limit to this. And shall we say, either through indifference or through despondence, that we expect sin to be in us constantly, though we be thus the children of God? Does the best robe in our Father's house carry in its folds the evil odors of the swine? Does the richest feast of his board suggest in its flavor the husks of a famished land? When he says, "Son, thou art ever with me," is there no such thing as unbroken fellowship? When he adds, "and all that I have is thine," is there no such thing as fulness of possession? When he speaks to us the words, "cleanseth from all sin," must we daily say, "Not all, Lord; only some"?

Nay; the Apostle John adds statement to statement in this epistle to show us that there is no limit to be set to the cleansing from sin in this life. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." "Hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (R. V.) "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness towards God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (R. V.) "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from

the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." "This is the boldness that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him." (R. V.) So the beloved disciple follows his Master in persuading us not to set a limit to the blessed work which he, the Son of God, does in us.

The returned prodigal, though he had the best robe and the ring and the sandals, could never forget the pain he had sent to his father's heart by his guilty wanderings. The munificence of his father's love deepened his self-reproach. At every thought of the past he felt that he had but one place of rest, though that was assured—his father's forgiving grace. He was washed; he was cleansed; his heart was filled with joy and grateful devotion: yet the boundless generosity lavished on him only made him the more loathe himself for what he had been. So Paul the apostle could never forget the days when he had been Saul the persecutor. "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." As to purity of life and value of ser-

vice done for God in the world, he knew that he was unsurpassed in the college of the apostles. "In nothing," he said, "am I behind the very chiefest apostles." "I laboured more abundantly than they all." But the memory of what he had been before Christ became his life humbled him in the dust.

With still greater emphasis, in writing his First Epistle to Timothy and speaking of the time when he had been "a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," he pronounced himself to be the chief of sinners. Just here a remarkable feature of the case emerges, which is presented as a strong encouragement to us. The judgment which he pronounced on himself originated with the Lord Jesus. The Saviour of men had chosen him to be the eminent example of sovereign grace.

We may imagine a king dealing with a province in his dominions, which is wholly in revolt. He issues a proclamation of amnesty, offering pardon and the fulness of the royal favor to everyone who will submit. But the revolted subjects are suspicious and unbelieving; they hold back. So he chooses the man who has been the head and front of the rebellion; the man who is the most aggressive of all the foes of the kingdom; the one whose hands are the deepest dyed in the blood

of the king's friends. He pardons this man, and takes him into his most intimate confidence; he loads him with benefits. Then he sends him out as a messenger to all who are in revolt. The pardoned leader stands before his former associates. "You may certainly trust the word of the king in this matter," he says. "I am the chief of rebels; the king has pardoned me. He has made me his friend; he has loaded me with privileges and riches. Everyone of you may now confidently accept his offer. If he did so much for me, you may be sure he is ready to do as much for anyone of you."

Such is the statement Paul makes to a mistrustful, unbelieving world. In the presence of all sinners he stands as the vilest of the vile. We see him a man of wonderful capacities and powers. Every capacity had been filled with hatred to Christ; every power had been directed against Christ's kingdom on earth. His hands were red with the blood of saints. He was the ravening wolf of the tribe of Benjamin. He was the ringleader of rebels. In the proud, hard, self-righteous class that God declared to be a smoke in his nostrils, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was the chief of sinners. And because he was the worst of all, Jesus Christ chose

him and saved him, that no sinner might afterwards doubt; that every sinner might be free to accept. And so Paul turns to a world of revolted offenders; he reminds them that he had persecuted, blasphemed, outraged the king; and he says, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief (R. V.) Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Here is the most wonderful example of a sinner saved. If the Redeemer of men did so much for me, will he not do as much for you? This is the message of Paul to the world.

And now I think we may understand clearly the self-loathing of the man who is filled with the Spirit of God. He loathes himself for that which he remembers. He is filled with love to God and love to men, and the light in which he walks shows him how horrible was the sin which he did. I said that there is no cloud casting a shadow over the gospel. Self-loathing is not a shadow. It is the clear, gladsome, all-illuminating sun revealing the pit from which we are saved. It is the rescued man washed and cleansed,

loathing the mire with which he was defiled. Such is the account of self-loathing which God gives us in a promise that glitters with the purity which he bestows on his people. Listen to the gracious words :

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations.”¹

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 31.

Here is a self-loathing where all is purity and joy. In the experience of Canaan delights, in the land of corn and wine and oil, in the day when all his filthiness and all his uncleannesses have been washed away, in the full possession of the Spirit of God, walking in his statutes and keeping his judgments, the child of God, remembering the past that was evil and the days that were not good, loathes himself in his own sight. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"—this is the self-loathing of Paul. It was in the flesh he slew the saints; it was in the flesh he hated Christ. But what does he say of the flesh after all his filthiness has been cleansed? "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."¹ The pure Spirit of his forgiving King dwelt in him and filled him. The love of Christ constrained him. Old things had passed away; all things were now new.

Beloved, let us remember the command which Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit, has given us. "Be ye imitators of me."

¹ 2 Cor. v. 16, R. V.

CHAPTER X.

CLOSING WORDS.

THE last invitation of love sent down from heaven by Jesus Christ to men is that they come and receive the Holy Spirit in his fullness. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The water of life is his own Spirit of life. Such is his urgency in this matter that he issues commands which, if obeyed, will make the earth vocal with the invitation to accept the Spirit. The church, the bride of Christ, is presented as lifting up her voice in the power of the Spirit and saying, Come. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Everyone who hears the message is enjoined to repeat it, extending it to all around. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Everyone who feels any dissatisfaction, any longing, any unrest, is entreated to come. "Let him that is athirst come." And then, that every human being may know that the invitation is as broad as the earth and leaves out no one, the final words are, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Such is the longing desire of our beloved King that all men may be saved by his life.

In the closing part of the epistle in which these words occur—"saved by his life"—we are besought, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Does the expression, "living sacrifice," seem to anyone to carry a forbidding sound? Do you find yourself in any degree shrinking from the consecration to God which the words imply? Let me assure you that such a consecration is simply the opening of the channel by which the waters of life and power may flow in to make you glad. It is the signal for the beginning of a song and melody in your heart which will grow richer and deeper as the years go on. It is the repetition of that hour of triumphant praise when "Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments of David. The singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded." It is committing yourself into the hands of infinite love and wisdom, to be guided and kept for your good always. The living sacrifice means the highest possible success in life.

And yet, let no one of us disguise from himself the fact that, if we are saved by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must partici-

pate in the sufferings of his life. I need not tell you what those sufferings were. His own friends said that he was beside himself. The ecclesiastical leaders of the day declared that he had a devil. He was despised and rejected of men. And when his life was manifested in Paul and the other apostles, the result was the same. They were treated as the filth of the world and as the offscouring of all things. In this matter the history of the centuries does not change. The saying is of universal application: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Some who see this condition of things draw back from the fulness of the Christ-life. The spies who refused to enter Canaan affirmed that it was "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." So there are men now who decline to "go on unto perfection," or to take as their inheritance "the fulness of the blessing of Christ." They perceive that this is a region in which the inhabitants are stigmatized as "cranks," "fanatics," "mystics," possibly worse, and either ecclesiastically or socially are consumed.

But, beloved, if, under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, you enter this rich inheritance, you will find that all afflictions which come on

you are indeed light. Well does the Master say to each one of us, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." In the world you will have tribulation; in him you will have peace. He will stand by you and help you. His love will be to you better than wine. If you are cast out of the synagogue, he will come to you with words of comfort and cheer. If you are beaten in the council, you will depart rejoicing that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. He will so fill you with his own Spirit of pity that you will bless them who persecute you; and he may give you the great joy of seeing some of them receive the blessing which you and others know to be more precious than all riches. Though you may now be misunderstood and misrepresented, you will look forward with confidence to the day when all that is hidden shall be brought to light; and you will know surely that in that day, when the books are opened and the dead are judged out of those things which are written in the books, your name will be found written in the book of the life of the Lamb; for even now you are "saved by his life."

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